



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS, INDUSTRY
AND RECREATION**

(Reference: [Inquiry into barriers and opportunities for participation
in community sports in the ACT](#))

Members:

**MR T WERNER-GIBBINGS (Chair)
MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)
MR T EMERSON
MS E LEE
MR S RATTENBURY**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2025

**Acting Secretary to the committee:
Mr A Walker (Ph: 620 74843)**

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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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.01 am.

ELLIOTT, MS VERONICA, Executive Officer, ACT Parents

THE ACTING CHAIR (Ms Carrick): Good morning, and welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation for its inquiry into barriers and opportunities for participation in community sports in the ACT. It is the second public hearing for this inquiry. The committee will hear from a range of stakeholders, including advocacy and sports groups, and the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish 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 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

This hearing is a legal proceeding of the Assembly and has the same standing as proceedings of the Assembly itself; therefore, today's evidence attracts parliamentary privilege. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the Assembly.

The hearing is 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 will be useful if witnesses use these words: "I will take that question on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

We welcome Ms Veronica Elliott from ACT Parents. Ms Elliott, I will start with a question around public schools and the sports facilities in public schools—the facilities. I know there are volunteers, costs and a range of issues. Can you tell me what your views are about the level of facilities that are available for sporting groups in public schools?

Ms Elliott: Can I make a quick opening statement? Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the standing committee today. I acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging, along with anyone else with connections to this land.

I am representing ACT Parents today, the peak body for parent associations in public schools, representing over 60,000 parents and carers. Before I begin, I would like to note that I have a conflict of interest. In addition to my role with ACT Parents, I am a volunteer with a local sporting club. However, my appearance today is based on my capacity as Executive Officer of ACT Parents, and the information I will be providing reflects the views and experiences of our members, being P&Cs and parents and carers, and that has informed the submission to this inquiry.

We welcome the opportunity to share with you the parent perspectives on the barriers and opportunities for children's participation in community sport, including issues of cost, access, volunteer capacity and shared use of school facilities.

With that, I am happy to revert to the question around school facilities. We find that school facilities are primarily built for the purpose of schools. We have 90—almost 93—schools now coming online, and they are varying in age and infrastructure quality. More recent schools tend to have better and more useful facilities that can be multipurpose and used by sporting facilities, such as gymnasiums or ovals, for example. They lend themselves better to being used by local sporting groups. However, when we look at some of the older schools around Canberra, we would see that that usability is not as great, and it is challenging.

The other thing we need to think about—it is not a question for me, but for some of the sporting groups later—is around what would actually be an ideal usage for them, and what that would look like.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Some have a multipurpose sports stadium, and big clubs can come along and use it. It is about whether it is appropriate to try and have them in schools, or whether the schools have a different purpose, for more localised types of activities. I will hand over to Mr Emerson.

MR EMERSON: On that, the submission speaks about, perhaps, the opportunity for more collaboration between the Education Directorate and Sport and Rec. Is it your understanding that that is essentially not happening in relation to facilities on school campuses, on school grounds?

Ms Elliott: Our understanding is that local sporting groups would need to contact each school directly to arrange a potential hire or to investigate a potential hire. As to what the relationship is between Education and Sport and Rec, I could not say. However, from a user point of view, it might be difficult for local sporting groups to have to go around and seek individual contact with each school to arrange or investigate a potential hire.

MR EMERSON: Also, on the infrastructure investment side of things, do you see that as an opportunity? We have heard from different sporting organisations that they have not really had input into what is happening, whether it is at a new school or an upgraded facility at an existing school—whether there is an opportunity there, and also on the government side, for more cross-agency, cross-directorate collaboration and/or investment, given the value of these school assets for community sport organisations.

Ms Elliott: It is interesting because what we need, first and foremost, for school infrastructure is that it works for the school community. If we were to add on additional or multipurpose use of these facilities, there need to be other considerations. What works for a school, the needs of the school, and the needs of the community, is different. Just to clarify, that is in terms of sport, compared with school use.

MR EMERSON: I am reflecting on whether there is an ask in your submission for a co-investment model.

Ms Elliott: Yes. If we are going to invest in our school facilities, to truly multipurpose them, there needs to be investment in that, so that we can have facilities that work for both purposes—for the school purpose and for sporting purposes.

MR EMERSON: I also want to ask about cost barriers to participation. I think every other jurisdiction has a sports voucher scheme for kids. It is pretty well publicised—\$200 a year to cover registration fees and so on. Is that the sort of thing that parents across the ACT would support?

Ms Elliott: Parents probably would broadly support that. The cost of local sport participation is a barrier for some families. However, whilst that is desired by the community, it may also have other impacts, like increasing or changing where those costs are attributed, from a sports base.

In terms of barriers to participation, another barrier that exists for families is around supporting young people who have different needs, who maybe have a disability or a diagnosis, or some social challenges in integrating with their peers. That is another factor that we see and hear about—parents and carers being unable to keep their kids in a sport because of those challenges, and the capacity of volunteers in those organisations to effectively meet those needs is a real struggle.

MR EMERSON: Going back to the cost barriers in the ACT, we have the Every Chance program and the Youth InterACT Scholarships, which parents have to specifically seek out and apply for. Do you have any concerns in terms of access to those, whether they are means tested or programs that you have to deliberately seek out, compared to a blanket voucher scheme? I am thinking about stigma. Obviously, there is the cost of the scheme and having that available for everyone, but is there stigma that parents might feel, in having to apply?

Ms Elliott: If people have to apply for funding or support to engage in sport, that is another step that parents need to take to access that. Sometimes the more vulnerable families within our community are not aware of the opportunities for specific funding and may struggle with those processes and being able to apply, without additional support.

If we look at the parent perspective, I think parents would be supportive of a voucher system. However, in other jurisdictions, I think they have moved to means testing those, to make sure that the people who need them actually benefit more. I think Canberra parents would be supportive of a measure like that, which takes into account who needs the most support.

MS LEE: Continuing with the theme of cost, and cost being a barrier, you said, in answer to one of Mr Emerson's earlier questions, that whilst ACT Parents may broadly support a voucher scheme, you were concerned that there might be an impact where the cost may be attributed elsewhere. Could you expand on that? What does that mean?

Ms Elliott: I think we need to be aware that there are two emerging areas for sporting participation for young people in the ACT. There are local community sporting clubs, who largely run a volunteer-based organisation, and there are some other providers that may be for-profit or not-for-profit. The concern would be that providing a voucher system would essentially fund more of those for-profit services.

MS LEE: As opposed to directly helping the children, it might end up not being fully

borne out through that process?

Ms Elliott: Yes. I think the key concern is about encouraging young people to find a sport that works for them, and to participate and have a healthy lifestyle, and not so much an economic perspective of supporting businesses to make money. I am not saying that is wrong; there is a place for it. But what we see in the local sporting clubs, from the outside, from a parent and carer perspective, is that it is largely volunteer based. They work really hard to make sport work for young people, but they are also doing other things, and it is very similar to what our P&Cs are doing.

MS LEE: In terms of what is currently available, the government has spoken about the Future of Education Equity Fund. It says that it is able to be used for education activities, including sporting activities. Do you have feedback from your members about whether that is being taken up for sporting activities?

Ms Elliott: I do not have any specific feedback about that, but I do know that the equity fund has been well utilised since it started.

MS LEE: No breakdown of whether that is used for sport—

Ms Elliott: No breakdown. Our understanding is that the application process, including the criteria, is designed to support people who are struggling financially across a range of areas, and that it is designed to be potentially a little bit more flexible to support those people who need it.

MS LEE: Do you think that the criteria that the government has established for access to that fund are right? Do you think that they should be expanded or narrowed?

Ms Elliott: I think we would have to look at some data to see what that looks like in terms of a breakdown, because I am not aware of whether there are academic applications in a true sense for school, whether they are for sport or whether they are for a different area, like a musical kind of—

MS LEE: Yes. Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: I was interested in the recommendation you made around the government providing targeted support for volunteer governance, including training toolkits and simplified compliance processes. In your submission you talk about the burden on volunteers who are running clubs. Does Sport and Rec offer anything along those lines, or is it a completely blank space at the moment? We will check with them this afternoon, when they appear, but I wondered whether you had seen any examples.

Ms Elliott: They may run a course from time to time. Again, drawing on our experience in supporting P&Cs, it is a similar burden, and it is heavy. For a P&C, for example, they may not have any direct contact with students outside a school environment, and the requirements are quite high. When you talk about local sporting organisations, they have direct contact with students and young people, and they face additional challenges in the things that they need to address and be on top of.

MR RATTENBURY: Child safety protocols.

Ms Elliott: Child safety protocols, which we absolutely support and need to continue. We also need to understand that that direct contact brings additional challenges, not just from a child safety perspective, but in trying to support mental health and wellbeing. There are a lot more children in our community who are struggling with mental health and wellbeing concerns. There is a lot more anxiety in the community in our young people. Again, volunteers, potentially, are at the end of their workday, they may not even have had dinner or stopped in between, and they are heading out to sport to interact with our young people, so they might need some more support.

MR RATTENBURY: I take it that the point behind your recommendation is that it would make life a lot easier for people if there was a bit of a template. If you join a committee, you can pick the kit up and follow it, rather than having to work it out yourself. That is the essence of what you are trying to get at?

Ms Elliott: Yes, and some cohesion, I guess, across our different sporting organisations. Some of the challenges that they face are faced across the community and not just in sport, potentially. What are the ways in which we can support them to do what they are doing?

MR RATTENBURY: You also made an observation around government fees and charges to use public facilities. Do you have any data on fees?

Ms Elliott: I do not have any data. Sport and Recreation may be able to assist you there. We have heard anecdotally that people find the cost of sport in local community clubs expensive at times. However, that cost is derived from a number of other fees and charges that they might have to cover, like sporting body associations, as well as things like hire of facilities and insurance.

When you talk to local sporting groups, they will be able to give you a bit more information about what those costs look like. We would note that most of those not-for-profit local clubs are providing it as service delivery, not as a profit-making exercise.

MR RATTENBURY: Of course. It brings us back to the cost discussion, which colleagues have asked you about. I thought that, with your observation of the grant program to help to subsidise participation, you were clearly—I think this came through in your earlier observation—thinking about how we target most effectively to make sure the money goes to those who need it.

I thought it was interesting that you also talked about inclusive practices. You picked up a point earlier around children with different needs. What I am hearing you say, I think, in the discussion is that we have to figure out how we get it to the people who really need it and not, essentially, drop it out of a helicopter.

Ms Elliott: Yes. If we think about our kids in schools, we can identify through our schools who are the people who might have some additional challenges with accessing and being included in different sports. We also know from our schools who are the more vulnerable members of our community, who may not have the financial backing to enter into those things. Some greater collaboration between those two things could land some

more targeted supports.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I would like to bring it back to a planning issue. I think it is an interesting concept about the role of schools, and the role of a multipurpose type of stadium. What is your view about how the government is planning to ensure that we have the right understanding of the role of the school halls and the bigger facilities, to ensure that we are meeting the needs of young people and trying to attract them to participate?

At what scale can we support people with different needs in socialising? If it is fragmented across a lot of school halls it makes it difficult for the volunteers, rather than where you have a more centralised spot, where you have more people and role models to support different groups. What are your views about planning for how we support different needs?

Ms Elliott: I think that touches on an earlier answer. From our perspective, we need to think about what we are expecting from our school facilities. If we are building schools for school purposes, a school hall might be a specific size. I could not tell you what the current size is. Some of the new school halls have a double basketball court type set-up. Whether that is appropriate for sport needs to be explored further. Perhaps some of the community groups can talk to you about that. From the perspective of parents, there are benefits from accessing sporting sites en masse.

THE ACTING CHAIR: That brings me to public transport. If your team is training at a school that is six suburbs away, access by public transport to schools in the suburbs can be difficult, compared to accessing your local town centre or group centre, which public transport goes to. Is public transport access important, in getting kids where they need to go after school for training?

Ms Elliott: It is important. There are a couple of things around that, from a parent perspective. If a family is lucky enough to have the sport training conducted at the school site, that obviously involves less travel, irrespective of the means. However, that is unlikely, across a number of different sports, due to the style of sport, the facilities needed or the number of people engaging in those activities.

It would be difficult for parents and carers without private vehicles to access sport. It would take a lot more planning and travel time, depending on the venue and the needs. I know that some sports actually travel from home, away, and that travel can be from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong, or vice versa.

MR EMERSON: When we talk about barriers to participation in sport, sometimes we can conflate families whose children might not be getting involved at all with families whose children were involved and they are not anymore—separating those two out. I am curious about your perspectives on those dynamics and perhaps what role things like cost-of-living pressures and time pressures for families can play in not even thinking about trying to connect with sporting opportunities or not being able to, once that is conceptualised.

Ms Elliott: Naturally, there are people whose children try a sport, and maybe it is not for them, so they might withdraw. I think we need to make space for that. I think parents

and carers generally see sport as being a great opportunity to learn outside the classroom, to be a part of a team, to work hard at something. It is a different skill set from school, so that can also be very beneficial in helping students to achieve some success.

At the same time parents and carers want to see young people involved in some sport or some physical activity, and we need to encourage young people, who may have tried a sport and did not like it, or were not good at it, to try something else, because there is a wide range of sports in the ACT that they can access. However, we do have people within the community who would struggle. Most parents and carers whose children do play sport are very busy trying to manage their obligations around sporting commitments.

THE ACTING CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. You have not taken any questions on notice; thank you.

Ms Elliott: Thanks very much.

LANZA, MISS SHANNON JANE, Projects and Events Support Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT

MHISHI, MS NATASHA, ACU Social Work Student on Placement, Youth Coalition of the ACT

WATTS, MS HANNAH, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT

YANGDEN, MISS TSHERING, ACU social work student on placement, Youth Coalition of the ACT

THE ACTING CHAIR: We now welcome representatives from the Youth Coalition. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms Watts: Yes; thank you. Tasha and Yangden have actually prepared a statement, if that is okay.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Mhishi: We had the opportunity to conduct research into barriers and opportunities for community sports participation for young people in the ACT. It was important to hear the voices of other young people such as ourselves, and we did so through consultations and surveys. What we found was rich data on a diverse range of barriers and, consequentially, opportunities for community sports participation. However, through reading the other submissions in addition to the research we had conducted, we identified three main points of attention that may improve community sports participation. These are the state of infrastructure and facilities, mental health and accessibility and inclusion.

Mental health, inclusion and accessibility have been areas of concern that have permeated other areas of young people's lives. Unfortunately, they are also barriers to community sports participation. Therefore, we would like to raise special attention to these three areas, as we believe addressing them can significantly improve community sports participation.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Thank you.

Miss Yangden: I would like to thank everybody for this amazing opportunity today. As Tasha mentioned, our research highlighted three major concern areas about mental health, infrastructure and accessibility and inclusion. These intersect with other broader barriers of cost, transportation, discrimination and exclusion, whether based on your race, gender, sexuality or even just because a young person might lack a certain skill set. Many young people across both our survey and the consultations have shared that these challenges have a negative impact on their wellbeing, their confidence, their motivation and their overall sense of belonging within community sports.

We believe that it is important to address these intersecting barriers while developing and implementing policies and strategies around community sports, so that we can not only improve physical infrastructure but also create an inclusive and safe space for young people to engage in community sports and also so they can continue to be empowered and connected to our broader community here in the ACT.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. I would like to ask about the infrastructure side of things. We just had a witness that talked about schools and other types of facilities and the role of schools being to the school community first and then to the broader community. What is your view about the role of schools in providing sports infrastructure for the broader community and for the school as a priority?

Ms Watts: I think it is a challenge for schools: we have schools that are often in great, central locations for suburbs—places that young people and their families are familiar with and they are generally not utilised outside of school hours. So, if we are looking at places to provide facilities, they can be a really important part of that. But, at the same time, the balance is that schools have to provide education and safe places for the students who are in education.

There are also budgetary constraints, and we understand that, where we have a facility that we allow people to use outside of hours, and it does take resources to be able to do that. There is a balance for schools in how they allow those facilities to be available to community groups while also maintaining who manages the cost for those, if they do it at cost price for sporting organisations. Sports are generally non-profit and try to keep the costs low—and we know that costs are a huge factor for people. Where do we find that balance? I think that is something that those who are working in this space are all contending with.

Certainly hearing from young people, they see schoolgrounds as places that they would like to be able to access, and they feel quite literally locked out of those on weekends, in the evenings and things like that. I understand that, in the ACT, every school is different and has different approaches and different ways that they are able to do that. I think part of the issue is around communication and how young people can access those sorts of facilities and communicate with the schools around when they would like to do that and when it is safe for them to do that. If we had heaps of space and heaps of room and there were other places and opportunities that we could use, then that would be better for schools, of course. But we do not have that and so we need to find a compromise.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Yes, we need to find a compromise—you are right. When it comes to supporting vulnerable groups, does it make it difficult for the volunteers to deal with different groups that need support when it is fragmented across schools? Would it help if we were lucky enough to have more multipurpose sports stadiums around the districts to be able to have more refs and mentors—for example, if you have more in one space and different sports to be able to support minority groups or vulnerable groups? In the schools it is very fragmented to try and support people that need it.

Miss Yangden: That is something that came up during the consultations as well. Even in the survey they mentioned that there is often a lack of representation with certain things like coaches, mentors and leadership in clubs. I believe that what you mentioned would be helpful. Again, that kind of ties into the training resource and training them about inclusivity and being culturally sensitive and culturally responsive to not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but also culturally and linguistically diverse people and people with varying physical needs as well as other needs.

Ms Watts: A lot of young people volunteer in sports. It is not just parents who are coaches, volunteers and supports; it is also young people who have grown up in the sport and want to contribute back—young people in their late teens and early 20s who are still contributing to their sport through mentoring. Those young people often have the same issues around transport—for example, if they are utilising public transport to get there and they want to be a referee and they have to go to four or five different locations. Definitely having centralised places where multiple sports are being played, or multiple teams and opportunities can happen, would be helpful for those access issues.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Thank you.

MR EMERSON: I want to ask about financial barriers to access. We have the Every Chance program. What is your understanding of how aware people are of that program, what the level of community awareness is of that program and whether there are any barriers to engaging with that from kind of a stigma perspective?

Ms Watts: I had a chat to one of the people who coordinates that program earlier this week, which was really great. In terms of community awareness, they offer a trusted referral program through community organisations and schools. There are a lot of great referrals from school nurses, for example, and people who are engaging in providing supports to families. The idea is that they recognise that a family has a need for that funding support and they can make a referral into the program. One challenge that they have is that the sports organisations have to nominate to be a part of that program. One of the communications issues that they have is that a lot of sports clubs do not necessarily recognise that they can register as a group who can then be connected through. So communication to the sporting organisations is needed.

Another challenge that they face is that Every Chance pays up to \$300 of the registration fees, but they can only make that available to teams or clubs that are non-profit. I gave the example of Futsal. The overall sporting organisation is a registered non-profit organisation but, when it comes to the individual teams, if they are not registered as a non-profit, then they cannot make the payments to those teams, and it is the teams who take the registration fees. So there are only certain sports or groups who are able to access that. That is because of the rules of the grant funding that is provided by the government. They are looking at alternative funding that would allow them to provide that to the sports groups that do not necessarily fit that criteria.

They did speak about the challenges of communication. At the moment, they believe that their funding is adequate to cover the need that is coming through, but it is also not widely promoted. So it is one of those things that, if they start promoting more, then the need becomes more and then they do not have the funding to meet that need.

MR EMERSON: And it cannot be used for things like equipment, which can be a barrier too, right?

Ms Watts: No, it is registration fees only, capped at \$300, and they do not cover things like elite sports. I think that is a real challenge for young people whose families do not

necessarily have the financial means to allow them to continue going. If they get to the point where they are doing representative sport or elite sports, that is not covered, and the registration fees for some of the sports alone are \$2,500 or \$3,000 a year when you get to that level. What we have is a group of young people who may grow up in a sport, develop their skill sets and get to the point where they are able to do that representative sport and then the financial costs become way too high.

So we end up with a demographic of young people who may have the sporting skills and talent and then they cannot financially continue to play in that sport anymore. The Every Chance \$300 registration fee contribution, even at that level, is not going to meet those financial costs. So we also need to look at this in terms of particularly young people who have the talent, the skills, the dedication, the commitment and the drive to want to participate in sport and represent the ACT but who are not able to financially.

MR EMERSON: I imagine families who cannot afford for their kids to participate in sport do not first go and speak with the sporting club and say, “We are really keen to get involved,” and the club says, “Good news; we can refer you on to this program,” and they instead just say, “We are not going to be able to afford it.” Whereas, in other jurisdictions where they have these blanket active kids voucher schemes, everyone knows about them and everyone can access them. Do you see that as a barrier where families are not even connecting with the organisation that could refer them on because they are not aware of the possibility of getting a subsidy?

Ms Watts: Yes, I do. I am not necessarily thinking about the blanket schemes. We have to look at equitable access and what we can actually afford and really look at the ways people who genuinely do not have financial means can access the programs—to be able to access those first. Communication is one of the key issues that came from young people and certainly from our research in that we need to provide that sort of information.

One of our recommendations was around the government website about sports and that information could be regularly updated and accessible and have information available on that on all the different sponsorships, scholarships and things like Every Chance and the Youth Interact grants that young people who are at that elite level can access. At the moment, information about the financial supports is very scattered and relies on word of mouth. Having one place that people can go to would be really helpful.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: On getting the word out, what are the most effective ways of getting information out to the people who would want it, need it or benefit from it? There probably is one place and there would be one website where you could go and have a look at it. Do have advice to give to the minister or the government about—

MR EMERSON: It is normally young people on the act gov website.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: where they should be advertising it or where it is that the message will land the most effectively—not everyone is going to be able to see it, but you would get it by doing X, Y, Z?

Miss Yangden: Obviously for young people, social media would be a very big avenue

for promoting, but there is that concern about the future—

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Do you have to try and break into their algorithms.

Miss Yangden: Yes.

Ms Watts: Also, they have to be over 16 in a month or so.

Miss Yangden: Yes. Then there were other conversations around community services like schools and malls having a place where you can put posters and things like that; also through youth services and youth centres, because they are places that young people usually engage with; and probably through university clubs for young people over the age of 18 and things like that.

Ms Mhishi: I also think it is based on the target audience. I reckon that if you are doing football you would maybe have different places where you would access information or you would frequent often, and then that would determine where you would want to promote these resources.

Ms Watts: I think that our school communities are great ways of getting information and resources out to parents and then the community services and government services where people access—the walk-in clinics, for example. If you had a poster up in there, there are a lot of parents who go there and are sitting for a very long time in waiting rooms—or a short time, hopefully. If you are a parent and you are sitting in a waiting room with your child and there is information around you may have a look at it. So having that one centralised website and place of information and then promoting that where people are—in schools and services, for example, it can be really helpful.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Thank you.

MS LEE: It is interesting that, in the research that you provided on the many barriers, the cost factor was significantly higher than anything else. In relation to the cost, do you have more insight into the contributing factors to why that is the case? Is it the fees? Is it equipment? Is it the transport to and from? What are some of the factors that go into that?

Ms Mhishi: I would say it is all of the above. There are the equipment costs, the cost involved with signing up, and then, obviously, the cost involved with transportation in getting to places—and, the more you progress in sports, the cost that might be involved in travelling interstate or anywhere else to do serious competitions. I think it is just everything that is involved within sport. For example, if you were to get injured, the cost in rehabilitation for the injury would also be a part of that and you would have to consider that.

Miss Lanza: I would just add to what Tasha said. There is also the cost of injury in not being able to work. There were some concerns around young people not participating in sport because they were worried they might be injured and then might not be able to do a shift on the weekend or that it might impact their schooling or other activities.

MS LEE: I think, Ms Watts, you were talking about the restrictions in relation to the criteria for individual clubs being able to register for the Every Chance program. Do you have some recommendations on how that can be expanded and whether some of the restrictions that are currently in place could be lifted?

Ms Watts: I think it would really just involve a conversation with them about the demand and how that could work. I hesitate to say to just take away restrictions so any club can get it, because we know that the non-profit organisations and those community sports clubs are the ones who really need that sort of support. I know that Every Chance is looking at other funding opportunities that would sit alongside the funding that the government provides them. Whether that is corporate sponsorship or some of the sports organisations who do make a profit quite substantially, I think that there are other opportunities to contribute into that fund where you could quarantine portions, as it is now, but then also have a portion that was available. I do not want to open a can of worms, or maybe I do—

MS LEE: Go for it; you have got privilege.

THE ACTING CHAIR: We like a can of worms.

Ms Watts: We have a gambling fund. We know that the links between sports and gambling are pretty strong and very problematic. So perhaps diverting some of the funding that comes from gambling revenue into supporting more of these sorts of organisations and opportunity could bolster that fund and the availability and accessibility to it.

MS LEE: Thank you. The other thing that struck me from your submission was in relation to the many barriers that exist as a result of inclusivity issues—discrimination and the like. Could you perhaps expand on some of those concerns that you heard?

Miss Yangden: We could not go into depth during the consultation, because it is a very “iffy” topic to go with and to talk about it. Even in the survey, in general, we did not have a big enough representation to make a more generalised recommendation about it. However, in the *It really stabs me* report that was done that looked at racism in the ACT, or how young people deal with it and face it, there was a section about sports, where they said that young people often view sports as a place where they can actually connect with people and socialise but that it is usually a place where they actually experience racism and discrimination from people in the stands who are watching the games and maybe even their teammates.

In our survey, a young person mentioned that it would be nice to have people who looked like them who were coaches, mentors and in leadership positions in sporting clubs. It kind of ties in with the whole idea of having representation that actually gives young people that feeling of, “I think this is a place where I can actually play sports and participate without having the fear of being discriminated against.”

Ms Mhishi: Yes. We also based a lot of our understanding on inclusion and discrimination on the literature review we had done. We found that it would be really hard for people from gender-diverse backgrounds to feel included in some sports just

because of the gendered nature of sports oftentimes. We also found—sorry, give me a minute; I just blanked out.

MR RATTENBURY: We can come back to it in a minute; do not worry. If you remember it, we will come back to it. Let us know if you do. In the meantime, I want to sort of step back slightly and ask about general attitudes to sport amongst young people. Is there enthusiasm for participation? I feel like a lot of the conversation we have had so far has been very much about traditional team sports.

Ms Mhishi: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: I am interested to explore the general enthusiasm for sport, if you have any insights on that, and then traditional team sports. There are also recreational activities, which can also overcome some of those barriers around gendered sports and the like. Do you have any observations around young people's interest in sport in that broad sense?

Miss Yangden: The consultations mostly consisted of a lot of young people who do traditional sports, but we had a few who did sports like martial arts—about which they mentioned that there was not a lot of promotion. For example, they did not know until their dad mentioned it that there was a dojo around Gungahlin that he could participate in. I think that people do not realise that recreational sports could be a part of community sports. There is just no promotion of that to young people. Our survey highlighted a huge demographic of young people who do things like running, going to the gym and things like that, which could be classified as recreational sport and individual. But even that is associated with other barriers.

MR RATTENBURY: What were those other barriers?

Miss Yangden: That was mostly around the timing and the places they can go to safely—for example, parks and running trails not having enough lights and things like that.

Miss Lanza: We saw in our survey that young people were very aware of the positive benefits of sports. Often people cited that the reason that they played sports or were interested in playing sports was that they were trying to improve their physical health and mental health and that they did it for social connection and belonging and all these sorts of things. We also saw a pretty even split in our survey between people playing in purely organised settings, in both casual and organised settings, and just casually and informally with friends. That kind of highlights the importance of public spaces for young people to maybe go kick the footy around, go for a walk, go for a run with friends or go to a public gym facility.

Ms Watts: I think there is also an opportunity to look at social and recreational type sporting clubs and activities that are not competitive for young people. As an adult, there are a bunch of rec leagues that I can join where I get to try a different sport and it is okay that I am really bad at everything because I am just there to have fun. We have that for young children when they are starting out in sport. But, once you get into the older childhood teenage years, it really is about like competing as part of a team. For

many young people that is a positive thing, but there are a whole bunch of young people who do not want to compete, do not feel like they have the skills to compete or they are 13 or 14 and they would like to try a new sport but they have not grown up in it so they do not know the rules and they do not have the skills. It is very hard to break into those things. So rec leagues and social leagues that are not just for 18s plus could be a really great opportunity. I think there were a lot of young people who were enthusiastic about those sorts of ideas.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. That is great.

THE ACTING CHAIR: It is the opportunity to bring like-minded people together to find your tribe and to build your relationships.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Expanding the sports that were eligible under the Every Chance to Play program was a suggestion. Are there particular sports in mind? Is it more about sports organisations like the recreation play or are we talking sports?

Ms Watts: There are particular sports that I think they would like to see expand out to, but I do not know the details of which ones they have inquired into or particularly looked at. I am happy to take that on notice and have a conversation and pass that back, if you would like.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Yes, that would be useful. Thank you.

MR EMERSON: I want to ask about the connection between service providers and community sporting organisations. In your submission you touched on the cross-portfolio benefits of community sport participation—and we have been speaking about it today—but that often that does not seem to be reflected in government policy and in those interactions, whether or not they occur. Do you think that is an opportunity that could be fostered more clearly, both between service providers basically referring people to partner community sport organisations but then also the other way around?

Ms Watts: Yes, definitely. One of our recommendations was around support and access for sporting clubs and information about community services, particularly around mental health. We did a pilot program several years ago with the martial arts community where we had a bunch of coaches, sports and volunteers come in and do mental health first-aid training with us, because they recognised that a lot of their participants needed support with their mental health and, as coaches and volunteers, they did not have those skills.

Opportunities for people who are involved in the sports and volunteers to know about community services but also training and information on how to recognise the early signs that someone might need help would be really helpful. That can be around mental health, domestic and family violence, finances and all those sorts of things. That is where having clear information and resources for sports clubs that they can access from the government to increase their knowledge and understanding of that would be really helpful and something that the different sports clubs that we have spoken to believe would be of great benefit.

We are talking here about community sports. Often the conversation is about sports, and we would really love the conversation to also be about community. Community sports are a part of our community. How does a community support them? How do they support people in the community to access the resources that they need? We have great sports teams in the ACT who build a sense of community within their teams and they become sources of belonging, wellbeing and social capital for the young people and families that accept them. So I would love to see, out of this inquiry, more information and resources to build community in community sports.

MR EMERSON: I know they have mailing lists to distribute that sort of information about what kind of help is available. It would be an incredible asset if we were to make use of that.

Ms Watts: Yes.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I think that is a good one about building community, because clubs can be fragmented if there are not places to do it. Does anyone have any further questions? Would you like to add anything?

MS LEE: Did you remember, Tasha?

Ms Mhishi: I did remember.

MS LEE: Great.

Ms Mhishi: I was going to say that we also found, based on the literature review, that experiencing discrimination or feeling not as included to be the case for people from culturally diverse backgrounds—for example, uniforms not having modifications to respect different religious or cultural beliefs. We also found, both in the consultations and research, people with disabilities also not feeling included due to the nature of the sports, the facilities and the equipment not really being accommodating for different disabilities and also the fear of judgement of doing these sports because they just do not have that room, the availability or coaches do not really cater to different skill levels and different ability levels.

THE ACTING CHAIR: On behalf of the committee thank you all for your attendance today. If you have taken any questions on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. Thank you so much.

Short suspension.

LOMAS, MR HARRY, Senior Policy Officer, Advocacy for Inclusion
WALLACE, MR CRAIG, Head of Policy, Advocacy for Inclusion

THE CHAIR: We welcome Mr Harry Lomas and Mr Craig Wallace from Advocacy for Inclusion, via Webex. Thank you both for making yourselves available. Would either of you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Wallace: I will, thank you, Chair. Advocacy for Inclusion welcomes the opportunity to appear before the committee to speak to our submission this morning. We are invested in community sport and in this inquiry because we feel that this area of policy and support is underdone for people with disability. There is a lot of focus on elite sport and, say, the Paralympics for people with disabilities. Beyond that, the participation agenda tends to focus around employment. We do not tend to have as much focus on volunteering, youth development and community sport for people with disability as a social good that aids the maintenance of health and vital social connections.

There is some evidence that involvement in sport supports other outcomes, like health and even employment for people with disabilities. There is also a lot of evidence that being involved in sport builds social capital in people's lives. People with disabilities lack social capital, particularly in the ACT, which can be a lonely place. The data on social isolation for people with disability in the ACT is quite depressing. Twenty-six per cent of people with cognitive or mental health disability report feeling lonely, around three times the general population rate.

There is also a range of reporting in the SDAC survey that the ABS does that says that people do not feel included in local community. The result is that people often say they have fewer friends and less informal networks, and that becomes particularly important in situations of emergency. This is consequential for health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Beyond that, being involved in community sporting teams is just one of those things that builds quality of life, general wellbeing and happiness, which the ACT has adopted as one of its wellbeing indicators in the budget process. We think that this is important for those reasons as well.

There are multiple barriers. We have been listening to some of the evidence on and off over the last couple of days, and I think you are getting a picture of what they are. We would say that the physical infrastructure is a useful starting point—things like outdated changing rooms, inadequate accessible parking, pathways that do not provide realistic routes from car parks to playing fields, and facilities that are designed on the assumption that people with disability will be spectators, rather than participants.

Infrastructure is only part of it. There are also social and cultural issues within clubs. There is a lack of understanding about how they can include people with disabilities in community events. There is sometimes risk aversion and the feeling that they might be taking on people with additional needs that they are not equipped to manage within the clubs. There is training for coaches. The equipment can be quite expensive and prohibitive, with a lack of additional support for that.

Beyond that, we pick up, just from talking to people that have attempted to start adaptive sports programs here in the ACT, that a big issue is around maintaining a regular feed of players coming into teams, so that there are sufficient numbers to mount teams and to mount competitions. We think that there are some missing pieces of work, particularly in ensuring that there is a regular feed and availability of sports programs in rehabilitation settings that could address some of this and make sport available to more people.

We are calling for investment across multiple fronts, on the infrastructure barriers, ensuring that there are accessible options for sport outside gyms—which tends to be where a lot of fitness activity resides, or accessible spaces, but they are not community sports spaces—help with the cost of equipment, a focus on children and young people's access, and ensuring that there are accessible venues for people to play in. Lastly, it is about ensuring that there are people to play in the venues and that we do the work that needs to be done, particularly within rehabilitation settings, to ensure that they can sustain teams.

Sport is good for everyone. It enhances the health and social capital of people with disabilities. We are glad that the ACT Legislative Assembly is embarking on this area of inquiry, and we are happy to engage and take questions from here.

THE CHAIR: Excellent; thank you very much. I will kick off. I was particularly interested in your recommendation around the ACT government providing adaptive sports facilities at the University of Canberra Rehabilitation Hospital. The examples that were used were some very large hospitals in the US and the UK. Are there examples of this type of facility being provided in Australian public hospitals? How have they been received and used?

Mr Wallace: There is some more work being done over the border in New South Wales. I have noticed, from historical memory, that the Prince Henry Hospital in Sydney at one stage had an adaptive sports program and, I think, serviced a wheelchair basketball team from that hospital. I think it is limited, though, in Australia. What we have picked up is that there is a really concerted effort in the US, Canada and the UK. The UK has the Stoke Mandeville program that supports people out of the NHS, in rehabilitation settings there. There is a really active program in Canada. In the United States you have fairly small states that are fielding teams of people with disabilities. They see the rehabilitation remit that they have in their hospitals as extending to getting involved. When people leave hospital after having an injury, the expectation is that you are a bit connected, in community sport and with things to do, to maintain your health and wellbeing.

For a range of reasons, we have not seen evidence that the Australian health settings have taken that up as a remit. We are simply happy if we manage to get people out of the door and prevent bed block and going into a nursing home. It is under-ambitious, and we think it is time to pull it out.

THE CHAIR: As I understand it—and I am happy to be told that I am incorrect—at University of Canberra Rehabilitation Hospital, at the moment, with most patients, they are working on getting their basic level of functioning up to ability to leave the hospital—learning to walk again, using their hands again or getting their brain back up

to scratch, as it were. Is there a cohort of patients based at the hospital, or who could be based at the hospital or out of the hospital, as it were, coming in as inpatients, where sports would be effective therapy? Could there be enough, if the government decided to put in this funding?

Mr Wallace: Unfortunately, due to relatives and friends being in this space, I have spent probably most of the last three years doing daily and weekly visits to people in the hospital, and the hospital is full of bored people with nothing to do but watch television. The only recreational activity that seems to be offered in the hospital is some board games in a recreation room. There are no organised occupational therapy or rehabilitation programs that reach beyond the goals of getting people shifted out of the hospital and back home, into a nursing home setting or somewhere else. The hospital is full of people rolling around and using the cafe as a connection point.

Harry, my colleague, also spent some time out there in the last couple of months. From observation, there are certainly people that are younger people with long-term disabilities and mobility issues that would benefit from community connection and coming out of the hospital with a sustained community program of activity, so that they are not deteriorating and winding back in.

I have real issues about the way the rehabilitation hospital is supporting people with disabilities. I think it is verging on becoming a dysfunctional institution for people with disabilities. It is a beautiful building. They have invested a lot in the clinical side of it, but the rehabilitation, physio and social activity side of this is non-existent and ill catered for. I hope that answers your question; I am happy to expand.

MS LEE: Mr Wallace, thank you for that information. With the greatest challenges or barriers to improving this, you mentioned that we are being under-ambitious as a jurisdiction in this regard. Is it an attitude thing, is it a lack of funding, is it a lack of trained professionals? What are some of the key factors that are preventing us from being ambitious in this regard?

Mr Wallace: If we are talking about rehabilitation settings, I think it is an under-ambition, and not seeing this as a critical problem, because it is a secondary problem. It has been crowded out by the immediacy of dealing with bed block, and trying simply to shift people out of the hospital, focusing on core occupational therapy, which is about getting out and making sure somebody's home is fit for them to live in. That is partly understandable, because of where the NDIS is, because of the pressures that seem to be on our health system.

I would argue that there is some shift of acute into the rehabilitation setting, whereas that is meant to be about rehabilitation, not acute patients. Putting that bit aside, though, we are also not seeing from governments, including the federal government, a focus on grassroots community sport as a social good, as a worthwhile investment.

There used to be some quite active work in the disability space through something called the Active Australia program, which was all about getting people with disabilities involved in community sports. I would suggest some of that activity has gone off the boil. There is a focus on Paralympic performance and medals, but not as much on needing to open up sport for everyone. There is not the same sense of urgency around

this.

There is some good data collection going on. The ASC does some good work through its clearinghouse, but we do not have dedicated programs going out and supporting people to be involved in community sport, seeding those teams, giving them money, and ensuring grants are available. We had a bit of that work, maybe, happening; I think the employment services could do more. They could have a wider remit of saying, “We just need to get people with disability out and active, doing volunteering, doing sport, doing community involvement.”

There is a lot of money, and they tend to parachute people straight into employment, and the employers go, “But we really want somebody that’s a bit socially connected, who will survive in an office and has other things going on in their life.” Part of the picture, for everybody involved in the project of opening up social participation for people with disabilities in employment, is to say, “Community sport is one of the ways we can do this.” But it is underdone everywhere.

MS CARRICK: Mr Wallace, with respect to providing places where you can have programs at a scale, my question is about the availability of indoor sports facilities across Canberra in locations, so that it is not too fragmented, and so that it is at a district level, whereby you can build up the sports and programs in a facility, as opposed to scattering it across school halls. I am told that we can just use our school halls. From your perspective, is it a bit of economy of scale to have an indoor sports stadium in a district, so that you can build the scale of the sport, and people can come along and benefit from it, and have that pipeline of players? Would that be helpful?

Mr Wallace: I struggle to think of a venue outside the Institute of Sport that is set up with disability toilets, adequate parking, a seamless path of travel and sizeable facilities that would be available. Maybe bits of the new Kippax centre would be suitable. I do not know about the Weston playing fields. I do not know what is out at Belconnen. There might be something at Gungahlin. There is a lot of old infrastructure and, unfortunately, unless it meets all the requirements—it needs to have disability toilets—a club will just say, “It’s not appropriate and it’s not safe for somebody to play there.”

There simply are not enough places for people to go and play that have either the size or the level of facilities and accessibility. For people with transport barriers, particularly people who are using things like the accessible taxis or mass transit to get around, you do not want them all having to travel out to Bruce. There is the cost of going out to Bruce. In terms of booking the venues, I have not done it recently, but there used to be pretty sizeable fees for booking places in, say, the Institute of Sport.

I would prefer to see more local activity, and more of a range of local activities—sport, hydrotherapy and indoor and outdoor spaces that are accessible. Certainly, with the outdoor spaces and playing fields, often, with the change rooms and the gravel pathways, none of it works for us or for people with vision impairments. There is a whole stack of other barriers that people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities might find in accessing those spaces. And do not get me started on sensory and neurodiverse. Nobody is looking at this holistically.

MS CARRICK: Are we planning properly for all the different groups of people and

their needs? Are we thinking about people and how we bring them together to form relationships through sports? That is just a comment about whether we are planning appropriately.

Mr Wallace: No. I have said this in other spaces. I do not think we are. There needs to be a social planning approach to infrastructure that includes everything, from transport links to what happens when you get there, that is guided by the lived experience of people with disabilities who are in the room at the moment. To be fair to the government, most of our development uses the disability standards, the Standards Australia framework, to ensure that it is compliant. But the Standards Australia framework is like a spectrum: you can build to the bottom of it, or you can do something that is best practice. There are things you can do that only a person with disability in the room would know you can do, to ensure that something is really fit for purpose and accessible.

We would like to see organisations like ours, and potentially the community councils, resourced to do more of this work at a local level, so that they can get it right. You should probably be consulting with the teams that are already there, and ask, “What are your needs and how can we build them into local development?” Occasionally, consultants come to us and say, “What is it that people need?” We say, “We’re just one organisation. Go out and talk to local people through the municipal government to get it right.”

MR EMERSON: Along with accessible infrastructure, what role do you see for government in creating more connections for people with disability with existing community sport organisations? There is obviously a gap there. I am curious about the experience when those connections are created; also, how government could play a role in creating more connections.

Mr Wallace: We have been calling for a while for there to be more of a focus on community development, particularly regarding isolated people with disabilities. We do not talk about it much, but many people are still isolating due to COVID; they are not as active as they were, for a range of reasons. Some community development work in our community to keep people connected would be welcome.

We have talked about the need to resource the hospital. Keeping people connected, involved and engaged in community sport is a rehabilitation and a health outcome. Some specific funding to build programs, particularly inside the rehab hospital, to give those poor people something to do, would be one of my top priorities. There needs to be a refurbishment and infrastructure upgrade program, a rolling program, across community sports facilities, so that they all meet the requirements of players with disabilities. There needs to be more work on inclusive sport not only within schools but also out of schools. Stuff sometimes happens at school, but when you look at the informal opportunities that happen out of hours to kick a ball around, they are really hampered by the lack of infrastructure. Sometimes it is less accessible.

There needs to be money for critical equipment and upgrades. I am sure you have heard, or will hear, from the powerchair people and some other clubs about their needs. That, regardless, needs to be fostered as a public good, as one of the foundational sports that are meant to be offered. Outside the NDIS, funding for equipment, community

development and rehab would be my top asks.

MR EMERSON: I note, of course, that you have contributed extensively to the Disability Strategy released last year by the ACT government, which covers the next 10 years. There is no mention of community sport in that strategy at all. Obviously, it has action plans and so on, but would you support revisiting that or making sure that it is part of those action plans? One of the concerns that we are hearing through these hearings is about the lack of cross-portfolio consideration of the value of community sport. Are you concerned that it is not mentioned in the strategy?

Mr Wallace: Provided it is meaningful. I think what happened with the strategy is that it is like a triage response. You mention the things that are most critical, and that you can do something about. It is about committing to a meaningful set of programs and outputs. I resisted putting stuff in the strategy where there was not an action item or a scheme connected to it, because it is fake. It is BS. It is not a real strategy; it is just lip service. I think that, if it is going into the strategy, it needs to be about, “What are we going to do under the strategy?” We need to start funding and fostering some rehabilitation programs in the hospital, equipment upgrade programs for sporting clubs, or a focused set of work around community sporting facilities. Certainly, the absence is noted, but if it is going to be in there, we need substantial investment to back it up, so that the commitments are real.

MR RATTENBURY: In your submission you make a particular observation around the distinction regarding essentially integration into mainstream sports, and I go back to your earlier point around the lack of players in perhaps dedicated disability sports streams. Could you talk a bit more about the relative benefits of dedicated programs that people might find more approachable, versus participation in mainstream programs, and the skill set needed for the sports to run integrated mainstream programs.

Mr Wallace: Unlike other areas of disability policy, there is not this kind of plain striation between mainstream and specialist. We recognise the value of both. Adaptive sports are available to people with particular classifications, and they cater for particular impairment types. There is a real culture around things like wheelchair rugby, basketball, blind cricket and those other sports, and they are very much things that need to be fostered.

The challenge for them is around numbers and players. The challenge regarding involvement in mainstream sports, which is also a social good and worthwhile—it is about community connection, involvement and fun—is around adaptive equipment, cultural change, understanding of the access requirements, managing risk or perceived risk within mainstream clubs that think, “We don’t know what to do with this player and how to include them, and to do this really well,” and access to conducive, accessible environments in the spaces where they play.

The adaptive sports have got it right; they have the culture, and they know how to do it. Mainstream sports need a stack of support to include people, including training for coaches, support for other players and, most of all, equipment and the environment. But we strongly support both.

I would like to see more energy, probably, in the adaptive sports side. I do not think we

can field a wheelchair basketball team. We used to. The Canberra Chargers were quite active here. The powerchair football is looking like it is falling apart. I think they are worth saving and worth some investment in.

If I had to start somewhere, I would probably say that you would get a lot of impact just by ensuring that we have those options available. For our community, there are teams in other states; it is worth doing, and it is supportable. We need action on both.

MR RATTENBURY: Thanks for drawing out the nuance on that. I noted your observation about mainstream sports needing the skills. Anecdotally, from my discussions with people, lots of people would like to be more inclusive but they are unsure how to do so. Have you seen any sports that are doing it well that you might point the committee to, that we could learn from?

Mr Wallace: Yes. This is not a recent memory, as in the last two years. ACT cricket, under the leadership of the former CEO, Mark Vergano, was doing really good work on inclusion. They would use some of the disability confidence tools that the community had put together. They had a really active program. They were doing it within their mainstream offer. They also supported the blind cricket. Interestingly, I think they were doing both things within their club. They were including players within their mainstream cricket offering and they were also supporting the blind cricket, which is a specialist team, and they had a real zest and enthusiasm around it.

Soccer ACT was also starting to do some work there and were keen to do it. The other sports have been a bit more resistant and risk averse, but cricket and soccer seemed to be there.

THE CHAIR: We will have to wrap it up. On behalf of the committee, thank you both for your attendance today. There were no questions taken on notice. Thank you very much for appearing today.

KEYS, MR GRANT, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator and Life Member,
Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club

THE CHAIR: The committee welcomes Mr Grant Keys from the Weston Creek Woden Dodgers. For the Hansard record, please state your name and the capacity in which you appear.

Mr Keys: Grant Keys, on behalf of the Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Keys: Yes, I would. Thank you, chair and committee members, for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Grant Keys, a life member of both the Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club and Basketball ACT. I recently stepped down as president of the Dodgers after six years volunteering on the committee but remain active in the club as a junior coach, senior coordinator, facility subcommittee member and a life member.

We are Canberra's oldest continuing basketball club—established in 1958—and today one of the largest, with a record 693 registered players across 74 teams this year, and a big army of volunteer administrators, coaches, managers and coordinators that number well over 100—so quite a sizeable community.

Basketball is booming across Australia, and nowhere more so than in the ACT. Our club has doubled in size since 2019, with strong female participation and growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement. We subsidise fees for families doing it tough and we offer programs from under-eights through to senior premier league.

Our ability to keep growing and keep basketball affordable and inclusive is being held back by one main issue: a chronic lack of quality indoor sporting facilities in south Canberra. Since the demolition of Woden basketball stadium and the CIT courts, we have no home venue.

Our 74 teams train across seven different sites, most of them ageing school gyms with unsafe floors, non-compliant hoops, poor maintenance and frequent cancellations due to exams and other school events. These venues are below competition standard, and none allow us to host games.

Not having a home court significantly hampers our efforts to foster a sense of community. This also drives up costs. Training court hire is our latest largest expense, driving up fees and making community basketball significantly more expensive than private school programs that enjoy exclusive and free access to their own venues.

Families are being priced out, volunteer workload is unsustainable, and, despite strong demand, our infrastructure is failing us. We are bursting at the seams competing against a myriad of other sports and recreation clubs for every scrap of availability we can find, no matter how poor-quality the venue.

With teams training on top of each other, we can only offer half a court for one hour for our teams to train.

Meanwhile, a significant investment is rightly being directed to indoor facilities in Belconnen and Gungahlin. We are very supportive of the plans to expand courts at Belconnen basketball stadium, but there has been no equivalent investment on Woden, Weston Creek or Tuggeranong for well over 30 years, despite the government's own past commitments and the clear evidence of need.

The solutions, we believe, are clear. We need equitable investment in indoor courts in south Canberra including progressing a multi-court facility in Woden town centre to allow us to bring our club together under the one roof; upgrades to existing school and community venues so they meet safe competition standard requirements; and we would also like to see the activation of Woden through competition standard outdoor 3x3 courts. This is now an Olympic sport, but there is no 3x3 standard court in the south of Canberra.

Chair, basketball is one of the most accessible, gender-equal and multicultural sports in the ACT. Our club is strong, inclusive and ready to keep growing, but we cannot do that without the facilities to support our community. We are not asking for special treatment; simply fair and equitable access to quality facilities equal to most other sports and regions. We stand ready to work with government, schools, Basketball ACT and our community partners to deliver these outcomes.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.

THE CHAIR: You want to have a couple of questions?

MS CARRICK: That was a terrific opening statement. We have heard this morning from Parents ACT about the role of schools being primarily for schools, and that there is a broader community around that for sports.

So, what is your view about the fragmentation from being across six school halls—and a church hall, I understand—and the role of the schools to support a big club like yours with over 74 teams? As compared to having somewhere centralised where you can come together and have the public transport to enable access to get to a centralised place—as opposed to having to get to the schools that are out in the suburbs and public transport not being easy to access them?

Mr Keys: First of all I would say that we are very grateful for the access that we get, and the support from ACT government schools to enable access to their facilities. Without them we would not have any training facilities.

But it is a real challenge trying to manage seven different courts across our huge training grid. Our venues coordinator is probably the busiest volunteer in the ACT. He has got the job the of coordinating seven different lots of keys and alarms and contracts and different venue managers. Every start of each season trying to fit everyone into the jigsaw puzzle that is our training grid is a real challenge.

But in addition to that, for parents to know where they are going to be training this season. Are they going to be training Lake Tuggeranong College, or are they going to be training at Wesley Church in Forrest, or are they going to be training at Evelyn Scott

in Denman. How are you going to get your kids around?

And depending on whatever training slot you get allocated, it could be anything from 4.30 in the afternoon to 8.30 at night. It is just wherever we can fit you and you have got to, sort of, take it because we do not have any options.

It is also significantly hampering our ability to try to foster a sense of our community. This year for the first time we brought the whole club together for a presentation day, and just to see the whole community together, I think, opened a lot of eyes to just how big our community actually is, and how strong it is.

You certainly do not get a sense of that from week to week with everyone being very dispersed all over the place, training in different venues. And it is really hard to have a cohesive kind of program of development and so forth when you do not have everyone together, and training together. So yes, a lot of different challenges.

MS CARRICK: And so when you are fragmented and scattered around the place, how do you support the different smaller groups like the disability group or the mental health or gender diverse or the CALD community? How do you support them to have a critical mass of players—you know, where those like-minded people can come together and form their relationships through your community club?

Mr Keys: We have to delegate the responsibilities down to the coaching level; the coaches and the managers of each individual team. We have age group coordinators for each of the age groups but their ability to go out and keep an eye on what everyone is doing and all the different teams—

You know, some age groups will have 12-15 teams within an age group for a coordinator to manage. So, there is a lot of responsibility on our volunteer coaches. Therefore we rely very heavily on Basketball ACT's resources to try and help educate our coaches.

The business of running a basketball club is becoming ever more complex with all the different requirements. We are 100 per cent volunteer. The role of a president now, after doing it for many years, is almost a full-time job and it is only increasing. So, we need to look at solutions on how we can try and take some of that workload off our volunteers. We are seeing a high degree of burnout. I personally have felt that. I have just stepped down this year. I need a break after six years of pretty much full-time work on the committee in addition to a full-time job.

You travel around different parts of Australia and you see the sort of facilities that kids have the luxury of playing and training in, and the question I always get asked by parents is, "Why can we not have those facilities here in the ACT?"

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MR EMERSON: I wanted to ask about funding; cost barriers for participation. You mentioned this in your submission. Have you engaged at all with the Every Chance program?

Ms Keys: Yes, we have. We used to engage quite heavily. I was an approved endorser for that program before it left the ACT. I think it went to another charity for a while and has recently come back.

We budget each year for about 10 different registrations, to cover registrations on a needs basis—particularly with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. So that really helps complement that budget.

It had an important role, perhaps one that is not that well known across the basketball landscape. But I found it to be a little bit inconsistent in terms of it sitting in different organisations. We used to have a lot of engagement but then when it went to a different organisation in Sydney that took it for a while, we sort of lost contact. And so we sort of took things on our own. But, yes, we are keen to re-engage with them.

MR EMERSON: Okay. We have heard a little bit from other witnesses about the limitations of that particular approach compared with, say, the Active Kids voucher schemes that we have seen other jurisdictions. One issue being that it is limited to just the registration fees; it cannot be used for equipment and that sort of thing. Another is that it requires a referral relationship, which I suppose means that families need to already be engaged with a sporting club before they then seek assistance to manage the costs.

Would you see benefits in either in a broader voucher scheme or a reform to that, to address those restrictions?

Mr Keys: Yes. I think you have got to look at it case-by-case, depending on where that child actually sits within the development.

If they are just playing as a community member, fees are around \$400-\$450 a year in our club, as well as the cost of transport, clothes, uniforms, and all those sorts of things.

But if you are going up through that development pathway, playing representative basketball in ACT is about another \$3,500. If you make the ACT team, it can be upwards of another \$7,500 on top of that. So there is a real barrier, particularly for those more elite juniors. We are seeing a lot of multicultural families, particularly from the Sudanese community, that certainly have the ability to play at that elite level but do not have the resources to access.

I think it is great to have a more generalised system where we can cover the basic fees of different community members but I would also like to see some additional support for those more aspiring higher level athletes, and how they can access the elite programs without the burden falling onto the rest of our members. We have to budget to cover the fees of different kids, which I guess will push up the fees for everyone else.

It is a cost that we are wearing at the moment. We would certainly like to look at how the sport of basketball could be subsidised as equally as football and outdoor sports. I was interested to read in the ACT government's submission that about \$18 million per year is put towards football and outdoor sporting fields—which I think is fantastic—and only about 18 per cent of that is recovered through fees. Now in basketball—indoor sports—as far as I am aware, 100 per cent of fees are being recouped by Southern Cross

Club and Basketball ACT through court hire. So I do not see an equal level of subsidies being provided to indoor sports as outdoor sports enjoy in the ACT.

MR EMERSON: Okay. The ACT government offers a Youth InterACT Scholarship which is intended for young people who are already playing in a league at an elite level, and have got to travel interstate for sport. But it is capped at \$500 for individuals, which I do not think has increased since the program was introduced. And you are talking about \$7,500 for to represent the ACT—

Mr Keys: We have just received fees for under-18 cohort and it is over \$7,000 if you are to play, which includes travel to the national championships and those sorts of things. So, significant expenses. And then, you know, shoes and private training and everything else on top of that. It is an expensive sport, if you want to play at the elite level.

MR EMERSON: And so when you are cross-subsidising the fees of more vulnerable participants, is that just for their basic registration fees? I mean, that is going to be hard to do if someone has to go interstate.

Mr Keys: Exactly, yes. It is just the basic to compete in Basketball ACT competitions. Our fees range from around \$400 for under-eights through to about \$580 to top level seniors.

MR EMERSON: Okay. So would you say that the \$500 is insufficient to support kids from just—

Mr Keys: To support an elite player, yes. That is a drop in the ocean compared to what is required to support an elite player going through the development programs in Basketball ACT.

MS CARRICK: I just had a supp on the costs of the registration. How much of the registration fees are going to school hall hire?

Mr Keys: I guess there are different components. Training court hire is the majority of our cost that we outlay. But the registration fees that we charge, most of that is for the Basketball ACT game fees. I am not sure how much Basketball ACT include for their own court hire. Certainly the Southern Cross Club have recently put up their fees for their court hire; I think it was from about \$63 or something, to about \$80 or \$90.

THE CHAIR: \$82.

Mr Keys: \$82, yes.

MS CARRICK: And that is per hour?

Mr Keys: Yes, per hour, which then flows back to the participants through registration fees. So, we have had to put up our registration fees to compensate.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lee.

MS LEE: Following on from that theme, Mr Keys, in terms of the training court hire fee, which you mentioned is the largest expense that you have and has a direct impact on registration fees: Does that go up each year? Do you see increases happening every year?

Mr Keys: Yes. For the last few years, we have had to continually increase it. This year, we have been able to get a bit of corporate support. We are very lucky that we have got some great community ACT businesses who support our club, like Benmax, Two Before Ten cafés and Club Lime. And we had a little bit of surplus through managing our financial affairs pretty well, so we are returning some of that through a bit of a reduction this year in our fees. We were able to drop fees by about \$20 each. But that is certainly not a reflection of the game fees that we are getting charged, which are certainly increasing and have not been reduced at all.

We work really hard to try and bring down the cost as much as we can to our members but it is a really challenging environment to do that. And we know our members are doing it really tough, being a community club. We have programs such as boot exchanges, where families can drop off a not-so-old pair of basketball boots and swap one over, and uniform exchanges and things like that—just to trying to help families out where we can.

MS LEE: In terms of when you get an increase in the court hire costs; when do you get notified of that? Does it give you enough time to make adjustments that you need?

Mr Keys: Basketball ACT will flag their registration fees ahead of each season. We then have to then calculate how much we are going to charge per team for each age group, depending on how much training court hire they have and a myriad of other different factors. We have got a bit of a grid and algorithm on how we calculate all the fees. Our Treasurer does a great job of that.

It is just an annual thing that we have to go through. And each club is different, I guess. Each club has to go through their own process of interpreting the Basketball ACT fees and their own training court hire, and other expenses and uniform requirements and things like that, and coming up with a registration fee that suits their club.

MS CARRICK: What about from the ACT government? When do they notify you of their increase in fees for the school halls?

Mr Keys: That will probably come from the school itself. We manage relationships with six different schools. So, the communication with each of them changes often, with different managers and different levels of relationships there. We do our best to try and keep ahead of what that is. I think there is a standard cost for ACT government courts. I have not been aware of an increase recently but I may be mistaken. I am not sure.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you for your submission. My apologies for coming in a few minutes late. I was interested in your fee, but Ms Lee has drawn that out already. The other bit of data that jumped out of your submission for me was the decrease in the number of Working with Vulnerable People registered volunteers over the last 12 months. Is there a particular reason for that?

Mr Keys: No, not really. The volunteer registration system has been put online recently, and we are trying to formalise that through getting all the managers and coaches to register online now. Sometimes we get more managers and coaches register. But we know how many there are; we have got 72 teams and every team has a coach and every team has a manager, so that is 150 volunteers right there. Then we have got all the coordinators and the committee and stuff on top of that.

It is a little bit hard sometimes to nail exactly how many volunteers we have but I am confident it is well above 150.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. The particular issue was the registration under the Working with Vulnerable People scheme. Why is it that suddenly a whole lot fewer volunteers have it?

Mr Keys: Why do volunteers not have it?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, the numbers of people who have said they have got it seems to have dropped a lot. I am just interested to understand if there has been an issue with the system. Are people struggling to register?

Mr Keys: I am not too sure, actually. I would have to look into that a little bit more. At the start of the season, we have an open day where we get all the coaches and volunteers in and check their Working with Vulnerable People registration cards.

Having such a big cohort of coaches and managers, trying to get everyone there to visually check their cards, and making sure all those requirements that are put back onto the club, is really onerous. We try our best. And I am sure, you know, we do not do a good job in getting 100 per cent coverage there, but we certainly do try our best as volunteers to adhere to the regulations that are in place.

I think there could certainly be improvements made to that system—and perhaps there is a bigger role there for Basketball ACT—to make sure that all the coaches and managers on the sidelines have their cards. I have never seen anyone checking cards or anything at basketball stadiums.

MR RATTENBURY: It was not meant to be a grilling of your club. I am just interested in whether there was a background issue there that the committee should know about.

Mr Keys: I am not aware of any issue. I am pretty confident that our volunteer cohort has been growing, not reducing.

We work really hard to make sure that they do have their Working with Vulnerable People card in place. Having it online now certainly helps with having to check it and make sure that it is valid, and all those types of requirements. They cannot register without that card. But certainly I think we can improve that system a bit.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: You said you had some great sponsors. We have got the clubs'

community contribution scheme; do you get money from local clubs, like the Hellenic or the Southern Cross?

Mr Keys: No. We have made a conscious choice in our club—or at least when I was president—not to accept money from gaming venues. We want to try to encourage a certain environment for kids. In the past we had Canberra Labor Club give us some generous support. But we have certainly made a conscious effort to try and seek out community businesses that are not involved with gaming. It is just a stance that we would like to take, and we are pretty happy with that, I think, at the moment. As I mentioned, I have stepped off the committee this year to focus a bit more on the coaching. But there certainly has not been any financial support given by any clubs recently.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. Going back to when you are in the six school halls: can you tell me a bit more about the disruption to your playing when it is a school assembly or there is some school event? How does the club manage and let the parents know, who are supposed to come and take the kids?

Mr Keys: Sometimes, at very short notice, we will get an email—sometimes days before—saying, “Sorry, we have a parent teacher interview. You cannot access the court for two nights this week”. Sometimes we get it in advance. Sometimes it is in the contract. It is very differing levels.

We do not have access generally on holidays, so we cannot run holiday programs.

The courts are usually dirty after school use. They do not get cleaned before we use them. They only usually get cleaned after we use them; the cleaner usually comes at nine o’clock and cleans the courts. So, we usually get them dusty and pretty unsafe—on top of the general state being really pretty poor.

Stromlo High School is a standout. There, we will not schedule anyone other than maybe under-10s or under-12s—lower divisions—because it is just so unsafe and so slippery. Canberra College was another one, which I think has been recently upgraded a bit to fix some of the holes and stuff that were in the court surface. The old blue plastic that was used at a lot of different schools is pretty terrible, from a basketball perspective.

Hence why we are very, very keen in the planning for new facilities to have the club being engaged in the development of new facilities. We are aware that Garran Primary School has got a two-court development. We are really keen to work with the government on the development of that. To date, we have had no consultation.

We are pleased to see the ACT government submission that planning for the new Woden indoor courts is being progressed. We have not heard any consultation from that. Likewise, the proposal for the development of Woden town centre by Westfield, I think it was. I believe some courts are to be in there. That is news to us as well.

So we would love to be engaged and contribute to better outcomes for the basketball community in our region.

MS CARRICK: Given that the private sector is looking at some basketball courts, do

you have any views about the provision of indoor sports facilities by the public sector as opposed to redevelopers like Centre Group or Hellenic Club or Geocon? Do you have any views about public versus private ownership of these things, and what impact it has?

Mr Keys: Well, I think we saw the failing of the privately owned system with the courts that were put in The Dome.

MS CARRICK: Yes, in Fadden.

Mr Keys: Yes. I think they lasted about a year before the owner of that venue left. We had some trainings that were scheduled there and initially it looked like a great new facility: five courts, which was desperately in need. It was unfortunate. I think a water pipe burst, or something, and the owner's left town.

So, it does not really provide long term sustainability and assurance. I guess we are in a similar situation with Southern Cross basketball stadium. We cannot be assured of the long-term viability of that stadium. There are always rumours going around that there are plans for it to be redeveloped. We have certainly approached the club, including through Basketball ACT, for a response. They have said that they have no immediate plans to redevelop the site. But certainly the long-term viability of that stadium has a big question mark over it, from our perspective.

We are willing to look at any solution, if there is a serious solution being put forward by the private industry. We would certainly have to look at the management: how that is going forward; how we work with other clubs in sharing that space, making sure that we are not fighting against all the other sports, as we are at the moment for every scrap of space that we can get; and making sure that it is done with lots of consultation.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I have got one. We have spoken to other organisations as well. Quite a lot of new multi-sport indoor arenas are being built. That fight for space will continue. Regarding the current mechanism for communication between sports organisations—not just within basketball, but between basketball and badminton, or badminton and volleyball—is there a communication network for that sort of thing?

Mr Keys: No. There is nothing at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Would the organisations benefit?

Mr Keys: We do try to communicate with the people that we share with, but there is no formal mechanism for that in place. I have certainly seen it work very well. The new facility in Ballarat was shared by netball and basketball, and it seems to work very well. There is no reason why we cannot make it work here.

One of the recommendations from our audit that we developed a couple of years ago, of facilities in south Canberra, was to form a consultative group or a committee of different sports to look at the most viable sites and operating models for a new facility in Woden. We would love to see that recommendation progressed.

THE CHAIR: All right. We are going to have to wrap up. So, on behalf of the committee, Mr Keys, thank you very much for your attendance today. That was really interesting. There were no questions on notice. You are free to leave. Have a very good day.

Mr Keys: Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Short suspension.

SHANNON, MR CRAIG, Chief Executive Officer, Clubs ACT

THE CHAIR: We welcome Mr Craig Shannon from Clubs ACT. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Shannon: I do have a brief opening statement. I could get my position straight before I start. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear. Clubs ACT represents 43 non-for-profit community clubs that operate at 49 venues and serve over 500,000 members across the territory. Our clubs are the places people gather, volunteer and learn new skills, and they already currently invest in the facilities and programs that make participation possible. Over the past decade, club groups have invested more the \$100 million in community infrastructure, with a further \$50 million in the pipeline, alongside direct and in-kind support on the ground.

The inquiry asked how we lift participation and set sensible policy for facilities. The evidence is clear. The top barriers are cost and activity times, with women and people with disability facing the highest frictions, particularly around suitable facilities and convenient and safe session times. When households are under fire financially, and the strain is evident, satisfaction drops sharply, even though safety is rated highly. The practical takeaway is that participation grows when we reduce cost and time hurdles, and when venues are welcoming, accessible and available in the hours people can actually use them.

The good news is the ACT government's own grants architecture now makes a delivery-first approach possible. The four-category SRGP framework, the Industry Partnership Program, the Community Sport Facilities Program, the Club Enhancement Program and the time-limited state organisation support are ready vehicles to fund what works and to hold projects to clear and measurable outputs. Our submission shows how to use these programs to convert curiosity into participation at scale, from district pilots and a territory-wide booking data platform under IPP to fast and inclusive upgrades and beginner formats under facilities and club enhancement.

We are asking the committee to back a participation-first package built around five moves. First, target affordability, introduce means-tested activity vouchers redeemable through clubs and associations for registrations, uniforms and equipment, and pair them with transport support, so that cost and getting to the venue no longer stop people, especially women, seniors and people with disabilities, from joining in. Second, unlock "time on facility", prioritise lighting, have female-friendly and accessible amenities, and small footprint multi-use spaces so that more safe prime-time hours exist year-round in the places people already go. Also, tie capital to outputs so that new teams are formed, evening hours are added and inclusive sessions are scheduled. Public dollars will buy participation, not just assets.

Third, use Club Enhancement for quick wins that welcome newcomers. Fund beginner and social formats, come-and-try sessions and buddy systems, and require inclusion training so that staff and volunteers can confidently support all abilities. These are low-cost changes without a sized impact on conversion and retention. Fourth, stabilise capability where it directly supports delivery; keep SOS time-limited and conditional partnerships with clubs; and have volunteer development and inclusive practice resources that land in community venues, not in overheads.

Finally, fix the rules of use; standardise shared use of templates and long-term community leases with community-use guarantees; have transparent pricing and priority booking for juniors, women, disability and beginners; have clear maintenance roles and lifecycle funding; and require funded facilities to publish access and report outcomes by cohort. Certainty to invest and clarity of access will expand community hours and lift participation where it is currently thinnest.

Clubs ACT and our members stand ready to co-invest, open our venues wider and deliver programs that are welcoming, safe and affordable. With the committee's support, we can convert the SRGP framework into practical and measurable gains in participation, especially for those who have been left out by cost, convenience or design, and do it quickly, at scale and with accountability.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I will kick off. I am interested in your recommendation to introduce means-tested activity vouchers and transport support redeemable through clubs and associations. Would you be able to talk me through how this might work? Do you know of other jurisdictions within Australia that have tried the approach and whether it has been effective? What is the vision for that?

Mr Shannon: I am not personally aware. A highlight from a previous speaker was that there is a lack of coordination between groups that all have a shared interest in this marketplace. Part of the problem that has to be addressed by this committee is how you wedge some kind of more cohesive working relationship between all these groups, which, either through history, ego or whatever, have largely prevented a lot of that coordinated effort being developed. We have a lot of engagement with the disability sector as an industry. They play a significant role in this interest, yet I think they are largely excluded from a more cohesive and integrated working relationship with the sports sector. The sports can barely work amongst themselves without reaching out and working more cohesively with interest groups more broadly outside of that.

I do not know whether they are capable of delivering that outcome. There may be a role for government more specifically in creating either forums or structures that allow that kind of integration to develop. I was hoping to have a couple of our CEOs here today—unfortunately, they could not make it—who would have been able to answer that question more specifically for you.

THE CHAIR: I could ask you to take it on notice on their behalf.

Mr Shannon: I am more than happy to do so. Yes.

THE CHAIR: That would be really helpful. Thank you. I will pass to the deputy chair.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. Mr Shannon, it was interesting to hear about co-investment and infrastructure. I know that some clubs are very good at that. Vikings has a lot, and the Southern Cross Club has the stadium in Tuggeranong. But, given that the whole Murrumbidgee electorate does not have an indoor sports stadium outside of schools and there are a number of clubs in the electorate, is there any way of harnessing the community contribution or their funds to contribute towards infrastructure?

Mr Shannon: Part of the problem at the moment, in terms of investment in those sorts of areas, is that, as you would imagine, they are not insignificant requirements, in terms of cost. There is not a lot of fat on the lamb, in terms of clubs' capacity to fund community organisations or investment in the infrastructure. There is obviously a lot of direction from government at the moment to look at housing specifically.

There certainly would not be a lack of interest, but the reality is the scope of things that clubs are currently involved in, particularly with current policy diminishing available revenue options for clubs, and there is the cost of doing business in Canberra, which, as you would appreciate, is not making things particularly viable for significant outlays, in terms of funding or otherwise. All I can say is that there is not a lack of interest, but there is a lack of funding capacity. Vikings are a good example. Like a lot of other clubs at the moment, they are budgeting deficits, and yet they are still maintaining their support to over 50 different sporting groups within the Tuggeranong Valley. So they are trying to hold the line, in terms of what their current exposure is, in support of a lot of these areas. The capacity to go out and actually invest without government directly involved as some kind of way of incentivising those kinds of outcomes is probably not viable for a lot of the clubs.

MS CARRICK: Interesting. As you say, it is about incentives. I am not saying that the clubs would build a whole stadium. You need contributions from a range of parties. The more you can get the better. But, as you say, the incentive is to put in housing. Some clubs have land around them, so the incentive is to put housing on it, as opposed to community facilities, when we are in dire straits.

Mr Shannon: That is right.

MS CARRICK: We are desperate for community facilities, yet the government is saying, "Don't put good community facilities there; put in housing." Is that the way the policy is working?

Mr Shannon: We touch on some of this more broadly in the current inquiry into clubs being conducted by an independent panel. I will defer to some of that. It will come out in the next couple of months. We are coming to a clash of policy frameworks here. I think I have raised this with you in private meetings: we are having a significant issue in terms of LVC and rate reviews at the moment, particularly in terms of developments, whether they are for housing or otherwise. A classic example is the Kaleen club at the moment. The Eastlake Group has been dealing with a number of members of the Assembly over it. Before they can even turn a sod—they are putting an indoor sports facility into that development—they have been hit with an increase in rates from \$40,000-plus to \$660,000, and that is before they can even generate any extra revenue offsets to fund that. At the same time, they have their gaming revenue impacted in terms of other policies.

So we are having a conflict of different policy frameworks interacting with each other, making it unviable for a lot of development opportunities, whether it is for housing or infrastructure, in terms of sport or otherwise. It is a matter about which we have written to the government, to seek a review of the way the rates system is operating at the moment and the way it is impacting on broader investment outcomes across the ACT.

MS CARRICK: I have one more question about the clubs. There is the Labor Club. Potentially, we are going to lose another bowling club: the Weston Creek Bowling Club. We have lost quite a number of bowling clubs. Is that similar? Is that because of lack of incentive? Why is it that we are losing the Weston Creek Bowling Club?

Mr Shannon: I cannot speak on behalf of the individual club. I do not know whether it has been publicly confirmed as a matter. What I can say is that I am anticipating that potentially five clubs will close in the ACT in the next 18 months, and two of them are sports clubs. That is reflective of the broader concern I have just raised. It is a matter that we are dealing with through the industry inquiry that is going on at the moment. I think submissions close at the end of November for that.

The reality is that the cost of doing business in this town, particularly if you are a not-for-profit entity, is very difficult. It is a constraint on capacity. Clubs are making commercial decisions as far as their capacity to continue to deliver their outcomes more broadly is concerned, particularly club groups. They have to consolidate their exposure.

MS CARRICK: I have noticed that the bigger clubs get bigger and the smaller ones go backwards or close. You say that you see some clubs closing. Are they the smaller ones?

Mr Shannon: It is a combination of venues of a group and smaller clubs. You are highlighting one of the issues that we touch on in our submission to the clubs inquiry. The diversification agenda for clubs, in terms of their revenue capacity, was never a growth strategy. In fact, it has been a declining strategy. This jurisdiction has lost 30 per cent of its poker machines since 2015, and that obviously affects income capacity for a lot of organisations. There are the smaller clubs—more the cultural clubs than the sporting ones—and the demographic shifts across the Canberra community. We are seeing that, since the early 2000s, a large number of cultural clubs have closed. We are down to a much smaller number of those.

Sporting clubs have had a certain advantage because they tend to renew their base every year. New young people come through as players and otherwise. That is probably giving them a bit of insulation from this. In reality, substantially, the smaller clubs have no growth capacity, and that is affecting them as the cost base increases.

MS CARRICK: And then we lose the community space.

Mr Shannon: That is right.

MS LEE: Thank you for that evidence in relation to rates. I think everyone is aware of significant concerns in that space. I understand that some work is going on. I am going to turn my attention to your member clubs and their willingness to co-invest. One of the issues that you raised was about the physical infrastructure not being quite up to scratch, especially for disability access. What are some of the co-investment initiatives that your members would be willing to engage in, provided they had willingness from the government?

Mr Shannon: I understand the Vikings Group has been trying, for a number of years, to do some significant redevelopments at Viking Park. It has been a feature of public debate in recent years. Eastlake Group has been doing maintenance on one of the ovals

that required extra lighting and other things, particularly for safety reasons for female sporting participants. It is a very live issue, particularly as a number of our groups have had very active engagement in increasing female participation in their sports. A lot of the infrastructure has historically not had the best safety features, in terms of lighting and other opportunities.

There are general transport issues for people with disabilities, in terms of getting around a lot of sports facilities. There has obviously been public debate about the quality of paving and street access in areas. Anything that can bring more use to the facility obviously has incentive value for our members, but it is about whether the resources are available to allow that to happen, because they are sometimes not insignificant costs. Partnership with government is pretty important in that regard.

MS LEE: Absolutely. In relation to broader accessibility, we have heard evidence across this inquiry about clubs wanting some extended hours for the use of facilities, whether it is indoor or outdoor. Is that something that your members would be able to work on in order to expand that accessibility?

Mr Shannon: The general nature of our whole submission is partnership in achieving these outcomes. We would be very keen to do so. Again, there is a coordination issue that underpins some of these problems, to get all the relevant groups together to make sure there is a cohesive approach to these sorts of problems. I think there is an increasing role for government in that regard. We are increasingly going to a 24-hour city mode, and I do not know whether we are adapting in terms of facility use or public transport options to accommodate growth in that area. You have to have an integrated transport plan, particularly with regard to some of the issues with facilities.

MS LEE: Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: In your submission, I noticed that you talk about clubs having invested over \$100 million in community infrastructure in the past decade. Do you have a sense of whether that is capital or recurrent expenditure? What I am getting at is: have they been building new facilities or is that the cost of maintaining ovals and other things?

Mr Shannon: I think it is a combination of both. A good example you would be aware of is the Yowani golf club. It is obviously going through significant redevelopment of its facilities. Just maintenance costs in a lot of these areas are fairly significant ongoing requirements, particularly when updating to contemporary use needs or otherwise. Water is a significant issue because we have over 500 hectares of greenspace provided by our member clubs for community use. As you would be aware from your previous role as a minister, the cost of water for the facilities in this town is increasingly a difficult burden for our organisations. Part of the frustration I have had is dealing with Icon Water. The government is a significant shareholder of its interests. You get trapped in a grey zone of policy: Icon do not see themselves as dealing with the policy outcomes, but, as a shareholder, the government does not direct them to do anything.

Part of the issue that we have touched on in our submission is the not-for-profit tariff rate. We have been pleading for consideration for some time. To me personally, it seems bizarre that, as a club member, I will pay a fee to my club to provide a public facility

outcome in terms of greenspace, and then, as a taxpayer, I am taxed for delivering outcomes in terms of ovals or otherwise. It is like I am being hit twice as a member of the community to provide greenspace for use. There is no separate treatment of the water tariffs for those greenspaces. Club members are effectively providing liveability to the city and public amenities for use with these facilities and are getting slugged with significant water tariff costs, as though they were a commercial entity.

MR RATTENBURY: In terms of figures, I was interested that you also highlighted that, in 2023, clubs provided at least \$273,000 in direct sports support. Eastlake has a whole lot of AFL teams. There are those kinds of things and probably grants.

Mr Shannon: Yes—covering insurances, jersey costs and facility fees. There is quite a spectrum. A lot of clubs are engaged across a whole spectrum. Vikings are another good example of that. There is a special needs sports program at Vikings, for instance, and that is done at a reasonably significant cost. A lot of it is direct, but it is in-kind as well.

MR RATTENBURY: In their constitution, quite a few clubs have their *raison d'être*, if you like, as support of those organisations—Ainslie, Vikings—

Mr Shannon: Absolutely.

MR RATTENBURY: I was surprised at that figure. It shapes up at just over one-tenth of one per cent of net gaming machine revenue per annum. The net gaming machine revenue is now \$190-odd million a year.

Mr Shannon: Is that revenue or turnover?

MR RATTENBURY: That is NGR.

Mr Shannon: I thought I would just clarify that.

MR RATTENBURY: So net gaming machine revenue is that much, and the contribution is \$273,000 to sport. I was surprised at how low that is.

Mr Shannon: I cannot comment on the perception of whether it is low or otherwise. If you are talking about community contributions in excess of the minimum requirement, as you would be aware, that has significantly decreased over recent years as clubs have not had surpluses to operate within that framework. There have been a lot of investment costs for a number of clubs, particularly in trying to diversify their interests, as you know. An example would be the Ainslie Football Club. They spent a significant amount of money over a number of years to get to the stage they have just arrived at, in terms of their redevelopment of the oval. You have to look at the longer term cost base impacts that those clubs have had by trying to emerge into a diversified framework in accordance with government policy, and there is the impact that has had on direct funding of sporting or other groups. But, as you say, it is the *raison d'être* of our sporting club members to support those sorts of organisations. I am very confident that the record shows that they do that. Other than that, I cannot really highlight any particular view.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: Mr Shannon, how will the clubs maintain the infrastructure spend and the grants to clubs when they will have lower poker machine revenue in the future?

Mr Shannon: This is the feature of our submission to the current clubs inquiry. My personal view is that they cannot. We mention in our submission that we anticipate that government will have to consider, in the very near future, directly funding clubs to provide the services that they have been traditionally providing through revenue from poker machines. The diversification model, as it stands, is not producing offsets for the loss of revenue from poker machines, in terms of the capacity of clubs to fund activities. Our view is that, if clubs lose their capacity to fund community sports in the way they have, then the government will have to step into that breach and either directly provide that resource themselves or fund clubs to deliver those resources.

I do not think that, as it stands, it is sustainable. We see it as a conflict of the current policy framework. There is inherent tension between the objectives of the government, in terms of reducing gaming revenue, and intervening in a manner beyond market changes. A natural market evolution will take place. I often refer to poker machines as the Facebook of gambling product. You tend to see them more attractive to older patrons than younger people. There are transitions taking place in the market. Every club should have the capacity to manage that as a commercial process themselves, but, when you have direct intervention over the top of that, by government directing things that reduce or decline your revenue capacity, it will have a very direct impact on the capacity of the clubs to transition out of reliance on that revenue base and continue to provide the services and deliver the support they are doing now.

MS CARRICK: I appreciate that there is an inquiry into clubs. Is it looking at the issue about the role of the clubs and the future funding of sports?

Mr Shannon: That subject was meant to be within the envelope for its establishment. It is certainly a very significant feature of our submission into that process.

MS CARRICK: Is it in the terms of reference, though?

Mr Shannon: The terms of reference address the social role and the economic role of clubs. Obviously, those two issues feature pretty heavily. Three-quarters of our members are sporting clubs. Their capacity to continue to provide the service support that they do for the sporting sector is significantly under threat by the current policy direction. My personal concern is that there is a multiplier effect. It is not just what clubs provide now that might disappear; it is the fact that government may have the obligation to pick that up. The sporting groups will come to government and say, “We’re no longer getting the support from the clubs sector that we used to get, and we need it now from government,” and, therefore, the taxpayer more broadly.

MS CARRICK: In other jurisdictions, where do the local sporting groups get the support from?

Mr Shannon: In some states, it is not dissimilar to the ACT. Anecdotally, in some jurisdictions the schooling system plays a much bigger role in community sports

outcomes than, potentially, the government system does here in the ACT. Western Australia is constantly put up as the poster child, as a jurisdiction where clubs do not have poker machine revenue, but, in those circumstances, municipal government actually provides a lot of support to the sporting sector that would traditionally be provided by the club sector in this jurisdiction. They also run a state lottery scheme that I think also provides direct funding to clubs for those purposes. There are only two choices within the ACT: either clubs will continue to provide the support to sport that they do now or the government will have to come up with a model and the funding base to do so.

MS CARRICK: Or the parents will pay.

Mr Shannon: Unfortunately, the parents are already paying in many circumstances at a breach point, in terms of their capacity. I do not think anyone thinks that being involved in anything is cheap in this town anymore. I would hate to see the burden go back, particularly for high needs children and others to be involved in these activities. One of the things that we cover in our report is volunteers and providing a lot more support and capacity to them. They are the backbone of the sports sector in this town, in terms of the effort and the contribution they make. Anything that is going to disincentivise that will be a real problem.

MR RATTENBURY: It is an interesting analysis, Ms Carrick. On Mr Shannon's own figures, the clubs are providing about \$10 million a year, on average, and the government need to weigh up whether they want to cross themselves out and the saving they will make on the other side in harm reduction, as a direct response to gambling harm.

Mr Shannon: It is certainly one of the balance issues that we have dealt with. Mr Rattenbury and I have engaged on these issues a number of times over the years. The government's own reports indicate that 0.08 per cent of the ACT community sits within the definition of suffering gambling harm. That equates to approximately—and the last time I looked at this was maybe a year ago—3,000 individuals. Then there is a multiplier. I think that the gambling harm awareness people use the figure of about one in 10, so that is roughly 30,000 people. That is across all gambling types; that is not just from poker machines. So we are talking about 30,000-plus in that context, and then you look at what those poker machines and the business model provide for the broader Canberra community. In terms of wellness, community infrastructure and liveability of the city, there is a disproportionate over-emphasis on the issues to do with poker machines, compared to maybe online gambling and other areas of harm.

I think there are more heroin users in this town that identify needing assistance than there are people suffering from gambling harm. Poker machines are a serious issue and our members take it very seriously, but it affects a very small segment of the ACT community in comparison to all who benefit from the revenue base provided by poker machines, in a town with the highest disposable per capita income in the country.

MS LEE: I want to go back to the example that you gave earlier about Kaleen and their increase. Could you expand on that and the impact that it has on the club's ability to increase their footprint in relation to providing community sports facilities, or the disincentive, if you like?

Mr Shannon: They are a fairly good recent example. Another one would be the Yowani golf club. I believe they are directly engaging with members of the Assembly on their issues. What the clubs are finding is that any development they get involved in that increases the land value of a property has massively escalating up-front rate impacts for the clubs and their capacity to service the costs, particularly when they are providing community facilities. Yowani is a good example because they took over a piece of land that was asbestos-ridden. The ACT government had used it as an asbestos dump. They reconditioned all that land at some significant cost to themselves and then were slugged with a massive rates cost, because of the supposed increase in land value. It was land that, had they not done that, would never have been usable under any circumstance at all.

The problem with these costs, particularly when you add them to the time lag delays, in terms of getting approvals and other things for developments, is that it can take up to 10 years in cost outlays to get sporting facilities or any other development moving. You cannot generate an offset to those expenses. Meanwhile, you are losing revenue from your poker machine base, and then you are hit with a rate review when you are increasing the value of an outcome, in advance of actually being able to generate revenue from that site. I think it will be two years before they can turn any soil over at the Kaleen site, and the rate impact is \$660,000, which is very significant. Ainslie had an assessment of a 93 per cent increase on their rates over their development of Ainslie oval. Whether it is housing or sports infrastructure, the way the current rate and LVC model is determined is slugging particularly not-for-profit investment across the ACT.

MS LEE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time. Were questions taken on notice?

MS LEE: There was one.

Mr Shannon: Yes. And I would certainly encourage the committee to look at the experience of the Eastlake Group, the Ainslie Football Club and Yowani, in terms of the rates issues.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Shannon. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your attendance today.

Mr Shannon: Thanks for having me.

THE CHAIR: Have a good afternoon.

Hearing suspended from 11.43 am to 1.10 pm.

HIPKINS, MR MARCUS, Media Coordinator, North Canberra Community Council
HUNTER, MS SIMONE, Chair, Weston Creek Community Council
TANG, MR NELSON, President, Woden Valley Community Council
ZEIL, MR JOCHEN, Deputy Chairperson, North Canberra Community Council

THE CHAIR: I welcome representatives of North Canberra Community Council, Weston Creek Community Council and Woden Valley Community Council. Would anyone like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms Hunter: I would. My submission was quite brief. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an opening statement for the inquiry into barriers to participation in community sport.

As noted in my brief written submission, Weston Creek has a proud and longstanding history of sporting success and community participation. Located in the inner western fringe of Canberra, our district has produced generations of athletes, volunteers and community leaders across a range of codes and activities. Sport is in our fabric, and it is how our community connects, grows and supports one another.

I thank the ACT government for its submission highlighting the invaluable role that community sport plays in the health and wellbeing of local residents and the pathway it presents to elite and professional sport. Talent is supported and developed by community sport, and it should present equity of opportunity for all local residents to achieve success, support, enjoyment, and be accessible to all.

However, over the past three decades, since local government was formed, we have seen limited renewal and a gradual erosion of key community sporting assets within our district. This has created significant barriers to participation for people of all ages in Weston Creek.

One example of loss is the soon-to-be-lost Phillip pool. Once a viable community facility, it was allowed to deteriorate and ultimately sold off, leaving Weston Creek and Woden families without access to a community outdoor swimming pool. The replacement, potentially a privately owned indoor 25-metre pool, does not adequately meet the community needs for learning to swim, training, competition or recreation, and it sends us backwards.

Similarly, the plan to relocate Canberra's only ice-skating rink to a less central and less accessible location, without broader community consultation, represents another missed opportunity to support participation by people in Weston Creek. Do not get me wrong; we want the ice sports community to have an excellent facility; but, for young people in Weston Creek, this facility has provided a rare pathway into sports such as figure skating and ice hockey, alongside significant social and recreational opportunities that will now be harder to access. It would be better for all residents of Canberra to host this shared sporting jewel in a central location, such as Woden.

It is not only young people who are affected. Our seniors are also at risk of losing vital spaces. Weston Creek is on the verge of losing its lawn bowling green to redevelopment, and concerns have been raised about the future availability of table tennis and other indoor sport and recreation spaces. For older residents, these facilities

are more than just a place to play; they are places to stay active, connected and engaged.

Being thrust into three months of cold and darkness over winter, many working adults can become affected by seasonal affective disorder. Indoor sports, such as basketball, squash, volleyball, badminton and table tennis, are a great antidote to these afflictions. However, access to school halls and gyms for regular adult training and competition continues to be challenging, with rising costs and increased competition for booking these times.

There is a heavy demand for indoor facilities. We support the call by volleyball and basketball groups for a central indoor sporting hub to increase participation and enable further recruitment. We also support the Woden gymnastics community's call for the expansion of their facility at Holder. There is plenty of room for these facilities in Weston Creek, and we welcome investment in our district that will, in turn, support the new growth in nearby Molonglo, which is literally five minutes away.

Another barrier to participation is the diminishing pool of volunteers. Community sports organisations have a limited pool of parent and professional volunteers, and the asks are becoming too high. Besides the time commitment in coaching and fundraising, recruitment and competition administration, clubs are required to enter into competitive grant processes to get basic facilities upgrades. Most of the time these applications, that may take 20 to 30 hours to prepare, are unsuccessful.

With respect, the government has employees who are capable of putting together scopes of works, budget requests, doing the quotes, and all this work for the community. If the government had a properly resourced routine maintenance schedule, based on needs assessments, consulted early and often, and simply responded to the requests by clubs to provide facilities through a staged program, volunteers could get back to doing what they need to do and love, which is look after the participants and focus on recruitment and retention.

Something else to consider is that many volunteers are also carers. The lack of accessible facilities presents real challenges to people with varied needs and our ageing population. Participating in community sport is not just limited to playing or volunteering. Many people come to watch and support family members, and are fans, and the larger number of the facilities do not support a length of stay that might provide comfort and support to, say, young families that need shade and protection for kids and grandparents that need somewhere to sit.

Similarly, the accessibility of some sites has degraded and is now appalling, and people watch from a distance, within the safety of their cars. If you are a carer, it may be too challenging altogether and you simply do not come.

I want to acknowledge a positive experience. A forum was held about two years ago with local sporting groups and stakeholders. As a then junior club president, I found it both encouraging and disappointing—encouraging that conversations had finally begun around the distribution and investment in facilities, but also disappointing that many community sporting groups had never been asked what their needs were, despite major projects proceeding.

Consultation must come before investment decisions, not after. Communities should be equal partners in planning the facilities that shape the wellbeing and participation of local residents. I urge the ACT government to establish a roundtable, or sports planning forum, where local community leaders can talk together about the needs of their sporting groups, share resources and create a culture of inclusion, and create solutions together, so that all their voices can be heard and there are no decisions made about them, without them.

Weston Creek has the people, the passion and the potential to remain a thriving sporting community. What we need now is renewal and a commitment to meaningful consultation, equitable facility planning, more support for volunteers and investment in local community sport that supports equity, access and participation at every stage of life.

MS CARRICK: With respect to Weston Creek, Ms Hunter, we are asked to use our schools; we do not have one indoor sports stadium in our whole electorate. In Weston Creek, you have Stromlo High School, and you have a closed high school where the gymnastics are held. What sort of facility is there at Stromlo? What sort of access is there and how many groups try and use it?

Ms Hunter: Stromlo High School currently has their main gym space, which is at capacity, with respect to user groups accessing it. The indoor space there, the gym, supports volleyball, basketball and all sorts of groups, as well as drama and other arts-type activities.

External to Stromlo High School, the outdoor basketball courts are derelict. They are completely at the end of life. There is also a derelict tennis court and some futsal courts that are at end of life. There used to be an oval there. They do have a nice, little pump track for mountain biking, which is fantastic. Definitely, in that precinct, there is a lot of activity, due to nearby sportsgrounds et cetera, but there is an opportunity there, I believe, for significant renewal.

MR EMERSON: Do any of the witnesses have any understanding of how the ACT government plans over the long term for providing sufficient indoor and outdoor sporting facilities? You engage regularly with the government; are you aware of what their methodology is? What is their approach? If you have any views on that, I would be very happy to hear from everyone.

Mr Hipkins: There was something recently that the ACT government consulted on. I think it was a needs analysis, or something like that. That was a couple of months ago. I do not think we formally engaged in that, because we do not operate sporting facilities. I am not quite sure about the result of that process, either.

There is some indication, obviously, that the government is interested, and it does manage a lot of sporting facilities. Some of them are reasonable. I went to the Lyneham sportsgrounds recently to show my kids Ultimate frisbee, and there were dozens of games going on. It looked great. In terms of a coordinated approach, I am not so familiar with exactly what is going on.

Mr Zeil: There is a conspicuous absence of this analysis in the district strategies.

Ms Hunter: I completely agree with that. I am aware that they have the Next Move strategy, but with respect to drilling down on that and consulting with local groups, it does not seem to be coordinated. Perhaps there is an opportunity there to improve.

As I mentioned before, with the grants process, currently, once a year there is a round that comes out, and that seems to be the process or the avenue for presenting projects. I think that should be inverted a little bit. We would like to see some more strategic planning and development and less competitive processes, because having to go through those grant processes is exhausting.

We would love to see a more strategic and concrete planning forum or space to have these conversations, so that the consultation comes beforehand. There might be something happening, but we would like to think that we would know if there was. Most of the feedback from all the community groups is that that is exactly what is lacking. That is what I am trying to get to, by suggesting that sports planning forum—having a group that can come together and contribute to the development of future planning. That would be much appreciated by everybody in the sporting space.

Mr Tang: I would like to echo the sentiments that have been put forward by the other witnesses today. There is a lack of a coordinated approach, especially on an aquatic strategy, particularly for the Woden Valley. I know that our community members, because of our interest in the Phillip pool, have asked bigger questions about our aquatic strategy in the ACT.

They are looking at examples around the world of urban swimming pool usage and trying to make an analysis. That process is ongoing. That is a community thing; that is not an ACT government thing. More of a strategy from the ACT government would be appreciated. Particularly with popular sports like swimming, I think that is an important thing for the ACT government to consider.

MR EMERSON: None of the community councils represented here are aware of anything—for example, for every thousand people, we have X number of indoor facilities, Y number of playing fields, Z number of pools, or any formula like that?

Ms Hunter: Do you have a policy?

MR EMERSON: I am not the government.

MS LEE: That is why we are here.

Ms Hunter: Does anyone know whether we have that? That would be something—

MR EMERSON: We can ask. They are appearing as witnesses later today.

Ms Hunter: No, we are not aware of the driving forces behind decision-making.

MR EMERSON: Mr Tang, are you aware of any best practices with respect to those sorts of processes? Mr Zeil, you mentioned the district strategies. What could that look like, if such an approach does not exist?

Mr Tang: One of the starting points that our community members have pointed out, with the aquatic strategy, is identifying the location of where to put the swimming pool facilities. Identifying lanes, the distance of lanes, and what they call lap time—how many laps are available at each time of the day and in each area. That would give some basic information about where, swimming-wise, you can go and swim, and what sort of availability there is for the community at large.

Ms Hunter: I feel that there would be a great deal of concern if it was just a cookie-cutter type of thing: “Okay, there are this many people in this area. You may only have this amount of facilities.” Particularly in Weston Creek, we have a lot of open green spaces. We are very centrally located. Once those spaces go, you cannot get them back. We are very interested in conserving or preserving what we have for future generations, because we cannot get it back once it has gone.

We are quite protectionist of, for example, the Phillip pool. We have something, as it is, and there is no plan to replace it. We would like to hold on to that until there is like for like. We should not be going backwards; I think that is that we are saying. The sporting community are all out there; they go overseas, and they travel. I think that the community expectation is that we are moving forward with facilities, not ever going backwards and having a loss.

For example, with Stromlo High School, even though there is some good land around there to host facilities, it would be perfect for an indoor or an outdoor sporting hub. How do we get attention being paid to that space and get the renewal in place without having to sacrifice it for something else? I do not know.

THE CHAIR: It would have to be outdoor stuff, for it to stay green space—new sporting infrastructure. There are the Waramanga oval installations.

Ms Hunter: That is right.

THE CHAIR: To keep the green space, you would have to have upgraded or renewed outdoor sporting infrastructure.

MR RATTENBURY: As opposed to indoor, he means.

Ms Hunter: Yes. That is the thing. There is plenty of green space there. Uniquely, at Stromlo High School, there is an outdoor basketball space. One of the problems we have is that a lot of the basketball training facilities are basic courts. They are in primary schools. A few years ago, gates were put up around all the primary schools. In Weston Creek, we do not have very many outdoor basketball training facilities.

They do have one at Stromlo High, but it is derelict. It is right at end of life. With that space, we would not have to compromise. You would not lose green space in order to put a new facility in there. The Waramanga fields are alongside. It is a four-court platform and you could literally come in and drop a shed over it or just renew it. It would not be at the expense of other facilities in the area. There is plenty of parking. There are opportunities there for renewal. We are just curious as to how we get the conversation started.

Mr Hipkins: On the point of funding and quotas for facilities, one idea in our submission was that funding could be provided to sporting facilities based on the number of people they can get involved in sport and recreation activities. This may change over time. You might have a football oval or a bowling green at one time, but times change. I am hearing that pickleball is one of the new, emerging sports at the moment. These facilities could be repurposed, in order to attract more people. You could perhaps work it out in a funding model by providing funding or grants based on the amount of participation that people get.

MS CARRICK: If all the south siders go to the north side, we could give all the money to the north side!

THE CHAIR: It is not good for powerchair.

MS LEE: I want to move from the broader plan to more specific questions in relation to planning proposals and decisions. Each of you are very active and, in a lot of cases, proactive participants in the planning and decision process. Do you feel that, when you are consulted on certain developments that require community facilities, you are consulted early enough? Is the timing right? Do you feel that when you do provide feedback that it is listened to? I am seeing Ms Hunter shaking her head.

Ms Hunter: I could reference the most recent consultation on the Stromlo playing fields. It came quite late in the piece. The site had already been picked. The site is actually at the base of Mount Stromlo. It has a training space for beginners and young people on bikes. So we are sort of sacrificing one great thing that we have for this playing field, when, if a bit more of an investigation was done, there are a couple of sites nearby that might be just as suitable.

Do we feel like we are being listened to? Not really. One of the fields is artificial grass. Most other councils are getting rid of artificial grass, despite the benefits of the all-weather capacity. I think it comes a bit late in the piece and sometimes we feel like it falls on deaf ears or that it is not to community expectation. We are getting a base level facility and some really key points are missed. It does not seem like there is a negotiation in that space per se.

Mr Tang: In the Woden Valley, there is currently a development that is going on that is quite controversial. It is led by Scentre Group. It is going to change half the Woden Valley. I am currently going through a development process and participating in the consultation phase, and I feel that there is no space for community facility input. That is a development that is led by a residential development and there is no focus on community space. That is the nature of developments we are seeing here in the ACT—that they are led by private proponents. At what point, does the community ask, “Where is the basketball court in here? Can we fit a swimming pool?”. If you ask a private developer that, the private developer’s answer would be, “That is the ACT government’s fault; that is what they should be leading.” But, if you ask the ACT government to develop that land, they will say, “There is no proposal; we cannot answer to that.” So at what point is it coordinated?

Mr Hipkins: From our perspective, there is a consultation going on at the moment in

Ainslie about how to use a site at the back of the Ainslie Shops. It is good that they are seeking community views about that. But there are also other sides, such as the Ainslie Football Oval, where large areas around the northern end of that site were rezoned from sport and recreation to high-density residential. It largely felt like that decision had already been made by the time it went out for public consultation. So there are two sides to the same coin: there is some consultation but, in other cases, it seems as if decisions have already been made by the time it gets to consultation with the community.

Mr Zeil: Another example is the development in Dickson, the Tradies Club. The old squash courts are not being accommodated in the new development. But, quite generally, the problem is that, with large developments like that, the community is confronted with one solution and then is asked to fiddle at the edges. Developments like these should have a design competition and community consultation where all these things could be input. For instance, if you bring in 500 or 1,000 new people into a centre, then you need to take care of social infrastructure. That is not happening in Woden and in the example of the Tradies Club.

MS LEE: Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: A lot of the discussion so far has been about provision of facilities. I want to talk about the quality of facilities. This committee has had quite a few representations now about particularly sports ovals being in poor condition. Is that feedback that any of the councils have received—divots, uneven surfaces and those kinds of problems?

Ms Hunter: More often, again, it is the squeaky wheel that gets the oil in this space. It is very reactionary. There does not seem to be a program of renewal. More recently, we had the Rivett oval resodded and redone, but that was only after complaints. We had threats of people not playing, cricket injuries from balls bouncing up. There is a really big increase in risk of injury across all these ovals at the moment—whether it is for spectators or players—because the maintenance is not quite getting there. So, yes, we do field complaints about the quality of the grounds.

Mr Hipkins: We have not had anyone approach us directly about the quality of ovals. I do not know if it has not been an issue or if people have stopped complaining about poor-quality ovals. I am not too sure, but there has been no direct feedback about that.

Mr Tang: I would like to make a comment on Phillip Pool. Phillip Pool is currently, from what we have been told, in a state of disrepair. That is probably part of the plan, because it is going to be rebuilt. But we also have concerns about the quality. This goes to the point around ownership, funding and operating arrangements of the sporting facilities. The community council is concerned when a public facility, like a swimming pool, is going to be operated by a privately run operator, what that means for access and what that means for repairs? Is there going to be a rule to allow everyone to go in? Those are some of the concerns that the community council share and would hope to get some clarity around from the ACT government going forward.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to briefly explore another question. There is a lot of discussion around organised sports and traditional, competitive sports, but we are getting some evidence that there is an increased desire to be in non-traditional sports or

recreational activities. Again, it is a bit of an open question, but I would like any feedback from the councils on that sense of less formalised but important recreational activities?

Ms Hunter: Weston Creek is the gateway to the Brindabellas. So we have a lot of recreation happening from our back door out to that area. Some of it is organised—and we have not even talked about motorsport in this sort of capacity. There is this nature recreation sport—for example, canyon running and kayaking. We very much enjoy the freedom of access to great quality nature spaces in Weston Creek and are very interested in seeing that expanded and continuing the accessibility for people to enjoy those spaces—supporting it, basically.

Mr Hipkins: We have had someone recently who is trying to set up a basketball area at the end of a cul-de-sac street. They have been approaching Roads ACT trying to get this approved so that they are not breaking any rules and things and they have had a bit of trouble. Some people were supportive of it but other people have been a bit concerned about it. I am not quite sure where that is going to end up, but that has happened just recently, in the last couple of weeks.

Mr Tang: From the Woden Valley community's perspective, I think the issue is around accessibility to sporting facilities. If you are going to look at organised sports, you probably have to have multiple courts and multiple fields in the same area. In terms of whether there is a community participation in that, I suppose that, generally speaking, community participation in support is just another level of organised sport. The fundamentals are that there are available playing fields and facilities.

MS CARRICK: Mr Tang, we were talking before about how the district strategies do not identify sites in them for community facilities. At the moment, we are under serious pressure for housing. Of course, there is a housing shortage and we need housing. We are seeing 35 towers already and another 17 with the Scentre Group proposal you were talking about, up to 55 storeys—and big pressure on additional housing supply. Do you see the government in their planning identifying any sites for community facilities? It is forecast that there will be over 19,000 people in Phillip, in one suburb; and 150,000 in the catchment, because it is Weston Creek's town centre too. Do you see them planning to identify sites for community facilities?

Mr Tang: I would premise this by saying that we are having a lot of building up of the town centre, particularly, Ms Carrick. I am not aware that there are new sites, particularly, dedicated to what exists in the Woden Valley. At the moment, we have access to a swimming pool, an ice-skating rink, squash courts and an athletics grounds and lots of park spaces. But, with the increase in population, there does not seem to be any indication that new land has been allocated to recreational activities. The only thing I can think of is the redevelopment of the Phillip Swimming Pool, which is turning from 50 metres to 25 metres under the current plan. It is something that we would like to see the ACT government do more of—identifying available land for recreational activities and to build those recreational facilities.

MS CARRICK: And for the big catchment that it serves, I would say, for everyone.

Ms Hunter: This is it. We are dying to see the preservation of our current green spaces.

We are in a very central area, between Molonglo and Woden. Essentially, we already have the sporting infrastructure there; it simply needs renewal. We do not—and I do not believe we should have to—prescribe to that being community zoned and that community housing should come in and trump sport and wellbeing and these assets that we have to support community housing. We have the same problem: once you lose that land, you cannot get it back. We are happy to share it—and would love to share it.

Mr Tang: Housing is a major problem and more housing is necessary in a growing population. But, at the same time, I think that recreational facilities, as we discussed, are also very important and part of what a well-planned city should be.

THE CHAIR: There were no questions taken on notice, but feel free to share that information that you were talking about.

Ms Hunter: Sure.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your attendance today. Have a good afternoon.

Short suspension.

BEAUCHAMP, MS GLENYS AO PSM, Independent Advocates for Community Sport

BOWLES, MS NICOLE, Member, Community Sport Alliance ACT

BRADY, MR MICK, Executive Officer, Community Sport Alliance ACT

CARTER, MR GRAHAM, Member, Member, Independent Advocates for Community Sport

FERGUSON, MR JAMES ALEXANDER, Member, Independent Advocates for Community Sport

ROBERTS, MR JIM, Member, Independent Advocates for Community Sport

VERGANO, MR MARK, Member, Community Sport Alliance ACT

THE CHAIR: We now welcome representatives from Community Sport Alliance ACT and Independent Advocates for Community Sport. We will go straight to questions unless you would really like to make a brief opening statement. Would you prefer to make brief statements or are you happy to take questions?

Mr Roberts: We can go with the flow, I think.

THE CHAIR: Let us go to questions. Then, if there is time at the end, you could make statements.

Mr Roberts: Sure.

MS CARRICK: You can submit your statements.

Mr Roberts: Table?

MS CARRICK: Yes.

THE CHAIR: It will have the same impact. Are you comfortable to do that?

Ms Bowles: Yes, we are happy to submit a statement.

THE CHAIR: Ms Carrick?

MS CARRICK: My first question is to Mick. Your submission talks about implementing a long-term and detailed sport facilities plan, having a representative body for community sport and valuing community sport. Can you tell me what sorts of things you would like to see in a detailed sport facilities plan and how the governance of a representative body would work?

Mr Brady: As far as a facilities plan is concerned, we think at least a 10-year plan would be valuable. All of the sporting organisations contributed priorities as part of a survey back in 2023. So there is a sort of foundational work there in terms of that. It would be good to have an articulated position in relation to the role of neighbourhood or suburban settings and the same for district settings; what the role is of school facilities in relation to community sport; and what the role is of licensed clubs in the provision of community sport facilities. It would be good to have articulated principles for those sorts of stakeholders. It would be valuable for us to know the recurrent funding model for the provision of facilities. Certainly from our perspective, we would love to

see that the government's way of budgeting rather than maintenance that is not used for operational use goes into a sinking fund rather than necessarily consolidated revenue.

I guess the whole purpose of having a facilities plan would be to give stakeholders some level of certainty about how we go about things. The other dimension to it is how much joint facility participation you want or whether they going to be isolated sporting facilities; how indoor sports fit within all of that; and what the co-location is with other services, given that oftentimes sporting facilities find themselves on the periphery rather than perhaps core to a community setting. The final thing is ensuring that the sector has the opportunity to have initial input into the planning of greenfield developments and making sure that facilities are considered as part of that development and not done in a retrofitting style. That is how we broadly see it operating.

MS CARRICK: Thank you, Mick. Ms Bowles, I understand that in the ACT government submission they say they have progressed planning for an indoor stadium in Woden. There are a lot of different sports that would like to access that. How do you see the governance could work for a multipurpose indoor stadium that everybody gets access to?

Ms Bowles: I think it can work really work. You see in other jurisdictions how multisport facilities operate and function quite well. You would need someone to have sole management rights over that and then you would go out to community consultation and work with different stakeholders as to community use and demand, and you would balance that out. I think it can work really well across the jurisdictions. It is obviously just what kind of infrastructure you put into that multicourt facility to make sure that it meets the needs of every sport that you want to house there and see how that can work.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

Mr Brady: Ms Carrick, I should just add that all of our members have strategic facilities plans in place. So that could also feed into having a facilities plan as well.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. I was interested in what you said about it being core to a community setting as opposed to it being out on the fringes. If they are located around bus interchanges where all the people can catch the bus down and then walk to it, so it is accessible to everyone, it sort of dives into that social capital, in that when things are developed the community and their social needs should be considered. Can you talk about that consideration of social needs when planning and developing?

Mr Ferguson: There are two parts to our submission, really. The first is that we believe there is a need for a strategic plan for the development of sports overall in the ACT—not just facilities but programs as well. The second element in our proposal is that there needs to be a change in the way that sports can be funded so that there is a contribution by commercial organisations into the funding of sport and recreational activities. This can be effected through requiring tenderers for government contracts to make a contribution towards social community development. It might be through sport, through the arts or through the environment sector, or even some other way. But there should be a link between what the businesses are providing in terms of getting the contracts that they need for their development and making a contribution towards community activities.

MS CARRICK: You mentioned that, with ACT government contracts and procurement, there is consideration. What about private developments? Do you think that the government could legislate something like that, where the private developers contribute?

Mr Brady: I think that would require special legislation, and that might be difficult. We have not really given that a great deal of consideration, but it is a possibility and it could be looked at.

Ms Beauchamp: It could also be through developer contributions. It is just like another levy, I guess. It used to happen. I think that is an important element as well. Regarding developer contributions to the economics of the infrastructure surrounding the development, little is done in terms of the input into community development. What we are saying is that they should be looking at investing in the community as well, not just reaping benefit.

Mr Ferguson: Many organisations do this, of course. The mechanisms are available in two ways: in terms of sport, through the Sports Foundation, or by making a contribution in the sense of a promotion contribution.

Mr Carter: Just to add a bit more to that, those are the sorts of questions this committee should also be asking the planners to respond to. If you go to the new estate just near Jerrabomberra—

Mr Ferguson: South Jerrabomberra.

Mr Carter: and look where there are no houses being built yet, you can see they already have a synthetic-surface field, they have an oval and they have a grandstand—the whole shooting match is in place—done through the development in the first instance. Part of that comes back to the developer's contributions. It used to happen here once upon a time. We need to go back in time to the NCDC and what have you. The grounds were allocated and the facilities were either being provided or in the pipeline to be constructed within a very short period of time, but now we seem to have abandoned that whole approach. Now it is about playing catch-up all the time.

There was one of the earlier sessions this morning and the group before us in another instance—on population in the inner areas increasing. There are 20,000 people coming to North Canberra and yet we are selling off the Braddon Bowling Club land. No-one is making more land. There is no plan. That is the bottom line.

MR EMERSON: There was the government's survey in 2023, seeking input from sports about what they needed from a facilities perspective. What was the framing for that survey? Was a product promised at the other side of it—"You have provided your input, and this is what we will do with it"?

Mr Brady: It was loosely based along those lines. It was actually about getting a feel for the priorities for each of the sports. I think there were about five, if I remember correctly—the top five—

Ms Bowles: Fifteen.

Mr Brady: Down to 15, but there were kind of the top five. It was a way of trying to set up a mechanism to try to break the election cycle, if I could put it that way. Basically, programs were being pushed to the top or were being announced, by the way, in an election cycle. Therefore, they were taking priority, and other longer term planning that we wanted to do—going back to our part about having a longer term facilitated plan—was probably being left behind. It was probably the first attempt to ask, “What are the priorities of each of the sports?” Within that, we have a unique opportunity. With Canberra being Canberra, there is great crossover by the sports and great cooperation. The sports are very keenly aware of each other’s needs here. As an example, we recognise, in my sport and other sports, that basketball has gone through a growth spurt and that basketball needs facilities delivered sooner than others. We are doing the pre-planning within that context. This was giving us a chance to start looking at some of the priorities.

MR EMERSON: That has not gone into a long-term planning document. Do you know what got in the way of that over the last couple of years? Was it an election?

Mr Brady: To an extent, yes, the election does elevate some and push others down, even potentially within our own—

MR EMERSON: Good intentions—right?

Mr Brady: planning for individual sports. Just being realistic about what it is, certain areas look at favourable voting patterns and so on. Something that we had would be elevated above a need. In that sense, sports would be somewhat opportunistic or derelict in their duties. They would say, “I agree. I will take that,” ahead of what was maybe a higher order priority.

MS CARRICK: But there was never any product from that survey. I never heard anything more about it, after I put in my input.

Ms Bowles: It has been posted on the website. That is where it is. It has been utilised in reviewing things like grant funding applications—those types of things. I have had feedback as to why something has not moved forward. It is definitely there as a list that is referred to, but not in terms of a “build Canberra” kind of project, where we could look forward to delivering that 10-year strategy that we were talking about.

Ms Beauchamp: We mentioned in our submission that it shows how disparate it is. Sports Australia or the Sports Commission currently have a survey in the field. They call it co-designing, with the sport sector, community sports infrastructure. So they are also undertaking a survey to get a needs analysis. The education department is probably doing the same with their schools and the like. I just thought I would mention that. It is imperative to have a coordinated approach, as was pointed out, and then there is the call to action. Mick has already mentioned a 10-year strategic plan, which we absolutely support. In our submission, we mentioned that it needs to be done on the basis of evidence, a needs analysis, and whole-of-life costings—when do you have to replace the turf at the tennis courts and replace all the infrastructure—rather than just building it. Then who is responsible? It all links together. We did not collude either.

MR EMERSON: You have kept yourselves quite separate! We can tell you are not—

Mr Brady: There has been an assumption in the group that it has been fed into planning processes more broadly and the overall look of land use within the city.

Mr Carter: I cannot help myself—sorry—from showing you this.

MS CARRICK: What year was that?

Mr Carter: It was 1985. The NCDC days have not been replicated since. That is a 2001 facilities plan. It raises the same issues that you are dealing with: swimming pools, indoor courts, and all the rest of it. An exercise was done, problems were highlighted and a plan came out. Nothing has happened. There is no structure; there are no frameworks.

Mr Ferguson: The problem with that is that it is up to each individual organisation to make an application for funding, and that means that people who are good at lobbying are successful and the ones who are not so good at lobbying are not so successful. That does not necessarily reflect the value of their applications, and it puts enormous pressure on government funding. One of the ideas that we have behind the development of a contribution by tenderers is to reduce the pressure on government funding, because a lot of that funding would then come from the commercial sector.

MR EMERSON: This will be my follow-up question and it is in relation to the impact on individual sporting organisations. They are mostly volunteer-run organisations and they have to spend a lot of time doing grant applications. Everyone does them every year and a subset succeed, and the government has to consider all those grant applications every year. The lack of a plan—now I am making a statement—seems to create huge inefficiencies on both sides of the equation. Is that an accurate assessment of the core problem? You could say that people are planning, but why do we really need one? What is the cost of continuing to do it the way we have been?

Mr Vergano: Along those lines is the idea of the 10-year plan. As I said a bit earlier, there is cognisance of cooperation amongst the sports—certainly an understanding of cooperation in the development of specifics, as Nicole mentioned earlier. There is a great cooperation. We have all shown that over the years, and we understand perfectly that it is a prerequisite. I think we can take that to the next level and say, “This is how the rollout would look.” When we have that, it gives us certainty. We, as sports, would be more than happy with that premise.

MR EMERSON: And it saves a lot of energy on both sides.

Mr Ferguson: Most community sports organisations are very small. They are run off a kitchen table. They do not have a lot of expertise. A lot of them do not even know how to start to develop a corporate approach or develop a corporate plan or develop any forward-thinking. They need assistance with that.

Mr Roberts: Let’s get this in the context of the size of the industry. We talk about sports having cooperation, and I agree. When the previous representative group finally

ceased, and it existed for 30 years, they were representing 80-plus sporting organisations, sport related organisations and kindred organisations. You are talking about 80, and a very small percentage of them have the ability and the resources to present strong cases in one-off surveys which do not go anywhere. I just wanted to paint that picture. When you talk about sport and the sector, you talk about 80-plus members—and there have to be others out there—so it is very big. So it has to be coordinated and it has to work to a 10-year plan, and that 10-year plan has to be a working document, like strategic plans in business, which are working documents. That is what has to happen here. One-off events do not work. I totally support what Jim was saying.

Mr Ferguson: The idea of a 10-year plan would be that it would be reviewed every three years, so it would be a rolling plan.

MR EMERSON: Just before we move on, this is for the *Hansard* to note: when I was asking about the huge inefficiencies, everyone was nodding. Otherwise, we will just have a transcript that says Mr Emerson made a point.

Mr Brady: If I could just explain my nodding head, it comes back to how government wants to interact with stakeholders and how it balances the accountability for the spend of public money, compared with facilitating the dynamic activities of the operations of sporting organisations. It is probably a moment for reflection on that.

MS LEE: That is a good segue point, because my question is about your reference to the labyrinth of administrative processes having increased. So that is actually a good point. If you want to expand further, please feel free, but, after that, I would love to hear about some practical measures that can be taken fairly quickly, from the government's perspective, that will lift that—where you have been able to say, “Do you know what, if they just did this, it would relieve it somehow.” I know that it is hard to have a magic bullet, but are there any practical measures that can be taken?

Mr Brady: It probably comes back to Ms Carrick's question, in some ways. We are not necessarily suggesting a quick win here or a quick solution, but we think that having an established representative entity for the sector would probably help facilitate better conversations between the sector and the government more broadly around a range of strategic issues. It also touches on Jim's point about how you develop the capability of the workforce in responding to the demands and expectations of government. Perhaps that could be the first measure of consideration by government—that perhaps the sector would be better placed by having a representative entity.

The other thing, going to the point around grant applications and such, is that there is always a balancing act between what government wants to achieve and what the community needs—trying to find a reasonable balance amongst all of that. But these are small organisations, and the more time you have to spend on relations with government the less time you have to deliver services to the community. The staffing profile of these organisations is getting tight because there is the flipside of pressure on volunteers to maintain the requirements. Sometimes staffing profiles have to get bigger within sporting organisations rather than community clubs, as a way of mitigating those demands. There are many aspects to it, but we would say that fewer bureaucratic processes would help with operational efficiency.

MR EMERSON: Now Elizabeth Lee is nodding.

MS LEE: I am nodding, only because we have heard this. Ms Bowles, at the last hearing you were talking about practical complexities, with one of the basketball teams having to deal with so many of the schools, and all that kind of stuff.

Mr Brady: When you hear the conversations that go on—that government has a limited amount of money—you can understand that sometimes there is a greater need to perhaps control things, because you want to contain things in a way that you think is most efficient from the government’s perspective. It is about trying to marry that up with what the sector really needs.

Ms Beauchamp: You asked for some practical ideas. We are very supportive of a representative group for the sector which enables infrastructure for very small organisations. For example, pooled insurance could be managed through such a body. Learning and development for volunteers could be managed through such a body. Our submission is about reducing costs for government, but there are some things, like enabling infrastructure and governance, that are real value-adds that the government could invest in and not duplicate at the commonwealth level. I know Volunteering Australia, who are supported by the commonwealth government, provide grant funding to small organisations. The small organisations that are manned by volunteers—and I mean women when I say “volunteers”—have to put in grant applications. It defeats the purpose. A representative body for the sector could assist with learning and development, and having partnerships with TAFEs, around getting credit for what they do.

It has become very professionalised now. It is not like managing the treasury in a school, as I used to, out of a shoebox. You have compliance obligations, charities and not-for-profit sector obligations and accountability obligations. Sometimes that is a deterrent to volunteers. So volunteers need to be supported, not so much in a monetary sense, although we support that, but in helping them gain capacity. That is where a representative body for the sector could be a real enabler and provide the economies of scale to the 84-plus small organisations that Jim was talking about. Our model is not just about sport; it is about sport and recreation, and it can be replicated across other community arrangements, like the arts and whatever.

Mr Brady: To follow on from Glenys’s point and going back to my comment about a possible lack of funding, we wonder whether government is pursuing enough opportunities through commonwealth funding to help with infrastructure for the jurisdiction. We do not know. We do not have the resources to pursue that, but we think it probably would not be a bad thing to pursue. Also, touching on what Jim and Glenys have said, there is a great example that Mark can probably talk better about: the development of the facility at the old Northbourne Oval, where Raiders’ headquarters are. There was a tripartite arrangement between the New South Wales government, the ACT government and the NRL. There are those possibilities to perhaps mitigate government’s reliance upon its own moneys to fund some of these activities.

Mr Vergano: The other part is an audit of, dare I say, all our facilities—not only an overlay audit of the facilities over the sporting population, because, as the city grows

and as there are demographic movements, some areas become a little more redundant or are not being used, but historically we have held on to them and then duplicated elsewhere. So there is a case to actually have an audit, understand where our population is, what the facilities are, which facilities can be repurposed, and what growth looks like going forward. Graham's point about Northbourne Oval is a really good example.

As a sport, we do not have representation from, in a sense, Watson to what we can call the Raiders' centre at Braddon. The population is moving in, and, in the area outside of the Watson grounds, the Dickson grounds, Southwell Park—which has been an ongoing under-developed area—and Downer, there is no more green space. There is recreational green space to an extent, broadly seen through Haig Park, but, for the amount of population going there, what is the plan? Nothing is there. There is that as part of planning, but, of course, there are the new development areas. As Mick said earlier, we have been retroactive. We have to be on the front foot. We, as sports, will hold on to what we have in case something else does not come along. We have to untangle that and have a realistic look at population, facilities and sporting participation.

MR RATTENBURY: In that discussion, you touched on having easy fixes or practical things. In the Alliance submission, you talk about a sports concierge in government. I wonder what you exactly meant by that. It says it is “to help facilitate smoother dealings with government services”. Have you seen a model like that somewhere else? Can you tell us more about what you had in mind?

Mr Brady: It is probably just on the back of conversations with some of the other jurisdictions about the best way to have intersection with government. Small entities, such as state sporting organisations, have multiple intersections with government services, but is there a way of trying to facilitate that so that it makes it easier for people, or could an established sector representative entity undertake to help volunteer based organisations place their inquiry? That is what it was about. Is that enough?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes. That will do us, thanks. I have quite a few questions, so I had better take the short answers! I want to ask about volunteerism in sports. There is a lot of discussion about the capacity of people who contribute and the necessity of volunteers. I welcome your perspective on where you think volunteering is at, and, as part of our report, recommendations we might make to make it easier to volunteer?

Mr Brady: I am looking to these guys. They probably have more practical examples. I can talk more broadly.

Ms Bowles: As we all know, volunteerism is on an interesting slide, in terms of people's time and energy, and, as we have spoken about before, capability to deliver different sports and functions, as well as the governance requirements. So volunteerism is definitely in an interesting space. Basketball, at a club level, is very much run by a volunteer committee. There is lots of talk around getting in a paid workforce to help with the administration load of parent inquiries, registrations and those types of things, because they do not have the breadth and depth of volunteers to do those different types of things. The sector itself is now looking at how to address some of these things. I know we are not the only sport in that case. As well, a lot of other sports are looking at leaning on each other or their national body, locally, in order to deliver a much better product and service. That has implications right across the sector.

MR RATTENBURY: And presumably cost consequences.

Ms Bowles: I was about to say that the biggest one is the cost consequence. When you move to a paid workforce, you have to meet employment requirements and all those types of things.

MR RATTENBURY: So the cost to registration goes up, because of the—

Ms Bowles: Exactly, because you have to pay someone to help out.

Mr Brady: There can sometimes be a slightly jaundiced view of people volunteering. We could probably better recognise the skills that volunteers require in their roles. We tend to look at it through the prism of them contributing to their community club or their sporting organisation, but the reality is that those skills translate to other aspects of life and probably add to the economic productivity of a city and a country as well, which we perhaps should better recognise. If you go down the path of formalising recognition of those skills and knowledge, you are potentially changing the dynamic of people's intent to undertake volunteering roles. To touch on what Glenys said, if there were a way of formalising some training or providing better training to volunteers undertaking these roles, perhaps that is something that could be funded through government. It would be an interesting conversation to have with Volunteering ACT and Volunteering Australia, but we certainly think that there is greater scope to reflect on the work that they do. You also have to think about how to bring the next generations along to understand that the world is bigger than themselves and how they can contribute to the way of life in Canberra.

Mr Ferguson: Many people who become volunteers do not know what they have to do, what is required of a volunteer, and some of it is quite important. It does not all have to be done separately, by each individual sport; the government could foster programs to help educate new volunteers and show them what needs to be done and could help them with some of the processes.

Ms Bowles: Sport is a very interesting sector because, whilst we have volunteering and volunteering is the same across all sectors, we are very much fluid in how we actually deliver sport and the expectations of our volunteers. That is different to other industries and sectors. So, having a specific body that is able to lead and foster that would be a great step towards making sure we have a more capable and qualified volunteer workforce.

Mr Brady: There is potential for it to be an impediment to participation, because, if volunteers realise that they only have capacity for a certain number of teams within a club, organisations will start capping the level of activity that they have. That is something that you probably need to think about.

Mr Carter: This is a whole subject in itself, and we do not have time, unfortunately, to get into the level of detail that is needed. There are two parts to the volunteer situation. One is recruitment. The second part is retention. We have to look at how we can attract people. We have this problem with changing attitudes and younger people not wanting to get involved; they just want shrink-wrapped sport. They do not want to do anything

towards making a contribution themselves; they just want it all on a plate.

That is something which needs to be addressed somehow. We need to find better ways to attract younger people. At the same time we need to look at the people that we currently have in the system who have had enough, because of red tape or for whatever reason—it stopped being fun. They are dropping out and we cannot replace them. We need to have some strategies in place, but it needs to be two pronged. It needs to be about recruitment, and it needs to be about retention.

One thing that we suggest this committee could play a big part in is that we have this whole other thing out there called loneliness. We have talk now of a four-day week. Why don't we have some approach in mind to say to people, "Okay, through employment, through the private sector contributions that you make, part of that could be towards volunteer recruitment and retention"? Some agencies already do it; you are allowed to spend so many hours a month or a week involved in volunteer activities.

We need to focus on those sorts of things and the opportunities that can be created. If we get more people involved in volunteering, it not only helps them individually, but it raises the quality of life across the board. The four-day week thing is a real opportunity for this committee to start making some sort of noise on volunteerism.

THE CHAIR: I have a quick question about volunteering. In your submission there were several ideas listed for improving the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Can you be more specific about reducing red tape or the red tape involvement, and how this is going to improve the volunteer rate or volunteering experience, perhaps?

Ms Beauchamp: I think that comes back to the sector representative body taking on more of the administrative burden for small sports, particularly the smaller sports, around learning and development opportunities, having economies of scale and purchasing power, and the relationship with the TAFEs, as I mentioned earlier. It will be hard for each individual sporting organisation to do that, but you could do that through a representative body.

There is the pooling of insurance that I spoke about. In terms of volunteers, Mick and others have already raised the connections with Volunteering ACT and Volunteering Australia, and coordinating a much better approach to volunteering for the ACT. It is hard to leave it up to small sports groups. If there was some mechanism to do that through a sector representative body, that would be the way to go.

THE CHAIR: There was a line in the submission about "jurisdictional and national audits"—national audits with a one in, one out, with reference to red tape. Can you explain to me what that means?

Mr Carter: Working with vulnerable people is an example where that has come in. It is all very well and good from that side of things to say that it is needed, but how do you actually manage that? Someone within the association or the club needs to make sure that everyone has all the paperwork in place and submits the forms. That takes up a fair amount of someone's time and it was not there before.

When you add other requirements for other areas of government, where you have to fill Economics—5-11-25

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in the forms or provide the information, there has to be a way to have your information, your details about who you are as an organisation, who your office bearers are and what have you, done with one agency, rather than having to fill in the same information on every form that has to be submitted.

As far as retention is concerned, there is something that we have mentioned which needs to be put on the table. In 2000, the federal government had the Australian sports medals issued, as recognition of people's contribution to sport. Why don't we do that every year? It is a little bit of an incentive for someone to say, "If I stay on board for another four or five years, I might be able to be recognised through that sort of award." It is those little things that really make a difference.

MS CARRICK: On that theme of how to attract volunteers, Ms Bowles, when we are planning for sports infrastructure, we are planning to try and create a facility that attracts people and attracts participation, so that there is fun, and fun breeds fun. It is the same with volunteers; it is because it has a vibe, and it is a place to be. My question is: how does a club like the Dodgers, who are scattered across seven facilities, build the community, the vibe and the volunteers? Are they better off having a facility where there are multiple sports and there are kids walking past who might think, "That's attractive. That looks like fun," or being scattered out in the suburbs?

Ms Bowles: Definitely, a centralised venue helps with those types of things. In terms of volunteers supporting each other, you have more supervision and eyes across people and, as you said, that social interaction and connection that sport brings. Yes, centralised locations for sport to be able to deliver from are key—being community hubs. Some sports around town have a great opportunity to do that and have their own clubs, where they are based, and they can create those social connections and cultures.

You pointed out that the Dodgers, being spread across seven venues, definitely struggle with creating that. They have had to look at other ways and mechanisms to be able to do that across their network. How do they establish that across their different age groups? They have had to work really hard and think really strategically about how they go about implementing that for their club. They have been able to take some really great steps towards doing that. Is it easier when they are at a central venue? 100 per cent.

MS CARRICK: It takes planning as to where those facilities would be. When it comes to trying to attract federal funding, if you have a plan about where you have your facilities, the ACT government can say to the federal government, "There's funding; the feds have a funding round. We've got a plan; we've got these three different things. Which one could we fund?"

Without a plan, how does the ACT government go to the feds for money, in order to share it? It is incredibly important that they have the plan, and it is in the bottom drawer, ready to go, when funds become available. Do Sport Australia have a view on that?

Ms Beauchamp: I am waiting to see the outcome of the Sport Australia survey, because it is really based on wants, rather than a needs analysis across the community. One of the things that we were talking about is that, rather than taking all the responsibility away from the government, the government sets the priorities and the sector has to deliver on it, through the representative body that we are talking about.

Governments love opening sports facilities and the like. We are not talking about reducing that obligation; we are saying that developing a statement of expectations of the sports community would be good. Engaging the community in understanding what those priorities are will make it a lot easier going forward. Mick mentioned certainty right up-front, and I think the sports sector does want some certainty. Just like businesses, they want certainty around where to invest and what to invest in.

Mr Brady: There is one uncertainty around facilities, and it is probably an issue that has fallen off the table. We have not really talked about climate mitigation strategies for sporting facilities. That would be fantastic for the committee to consider as well.

MS CARRICK: When it comes to developer contributions, in our area, in Woden, we have Geocon providing a new 25-metre pool. We have the Hellenic Club—a massive developer now. They have to have community facilities, but we do not know what they are, who they are targeting or how they will fit with anybody else. We now have Scentre Group, with 17 new towers and up to 55 storeys, and they have to provide some community facilities. Without coordination, we are really just abandoning it to the private sector and getting boxes ticked. Whether it meets the needs of the community or not is another story.

Mr Vergano: That was seen previously, when so many grounds were abandoned, way back when. They actually had no facilities—no toilets, a concrete pitch. My former life was about cricket, and Nicole and I have spoken about that in other areas. That is the reality of what has been done in Canberra. There are abandoned facilities there that could either be developed or repurposed, and that money could be put into newer and other facilities, within that aspect. That is already, much to our regret, sitting there. What are we going to do about repurposing those facilities and improving them?

Our clubs are virtual clubs, in many ways. We are talking about social cohesion, and if we can aggregate clubs around areas, to give them an identity—and that goes for all our sports in that way—that would be an advantage. That is where the strategy comes in—the overall strategy. As we said, clubs are happy to cooperate. But they want their piece of land, buildings and autonomy within that concept. I think we have a big opportunity to build on that.

You can see it in your area, with Royals, Woden—Phillip district oval; that gives them a home. Of course, Weston Creek cricket is in there as well. There are three that actually have a home, instead of being so disparate.

Mr Carter: But it should not necessarily be sport specific. Individual sports can come together and cooperate through the use of facilities.

Mr Roberts: There are no standard tools for any of this stuff. There is no design guide. There is no business case. There are no needs analysis guides—anything like that. Those tools need to be put in place. What you are talking about, Ms Carrick, is public-private partnerships for sports. You have it there in the commercial sector. You need a similar model for sport, with public-private partnerships. We have to start thinking about that space. We need a long-term plan and we need to get away from this 12-monthly budget cycle.

Mr Carter: I wanted to pick up quickly on Shane's comment about volunteerism. Volunteerism is directly related to participation. The cost of playing sport and getting involved in sport in Canberra is just prohibitive. You are paying \$1,500 for a registration and \$5,000 for a six-month elite training camp. Do not forget the new investment model that we are talking about, using government procurement, which is working very effectively in England. That is a wonderful example, and we should be copying that.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank you all for your attendance today. Were there any questions taken on notice? Not that I recall. You are welcome to table your statements. We would appreciate those. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time and efforts.

GRIFFITHS-COOK, MS JODIE, Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission

TOOHEY, MS KAREN, Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, ACT

THE CHAIR: We welcome Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook, ACT Children and Young People Commissioner, and Ms Karen Toohey, ACT Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner. Thank you for coming along. Would you like to make brief opening statements, or are you happy if we go to questions?

Ms Toohey: I am fine to go straight to questions.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: Yes.

THE CHAIR: One of the many thoughtful suggestions in your submission was to develop an initiative that would establish an agreement to non-discrimination and non-vilification by all new fans or club members, and make clear statements about a club's zero tolerance for racial, disability or gender-based vilification. It sounds tremendous. Do you have a template or best-practice model of such an agreement that could be used and distributed—model rules—to ACT sports clubs?

Ms Toohey: Certainly, some of the larger clubs already do, and the federations. Part of the reason we raise that is to encourage clubs to embrace the positive duty in the ACT Discrimination Act, which now obliges them to provide reasonable adjustments to anybody. From 2027 it will oblige them to take positive and active steps to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and vilification from their service delivery and from their employment, if they are employed, or from their volunteering arrangements.

We would be very happy to work with the clubs. We are also aware, through our sponsorship of Play by the Rules, which the commission has been involved in for many years now, that there are some templates on that website for those sorts of agreements. I would certainly be happy to circulate some of those back to the committee, if that would assist.

THE CHAIR: That would be brilliant; thank you.

Ms Toohey: Yes, happy to.

MS LEE: In the submission, Commissioner, you talked about how the commission has conciliated a number of complaints. Are they increasing? Are you seeing a trend in any way in relation to complaints of discrimination, when it comes to ACT sports?

Ms Toohey: We are not seeing an increase. It has always been a reasonably low number. Part of the reason for that, from what we see in engaging with the sports, is that they do work very hard to try and be inclusive. As you can see from some of the case studies, sometimes that does not work that well. We have seen some matters, and I have indicated it in the submission, particularly in the race discrimination space, unfortunately. Again, the clubs and their committees will work very hard to look at what are systemic outcomes from that.

A number of those matters have gone on to ACAT, and there has been agreement reached about what are the policies or procedures that will be put in place to ensure that those instances are responded to in a more positive manner. Again, that is part of the reason why we draw attention to the positive duty coming in. We are aware that, for small organisations, there will be a longer lead time for them. We are very happy to support the clubs in that work and, again, draw their attention back to Play by the Rules, because it is an incredibly useful resource, and it is a national resource, so it has a lot more resources than we do.

We are not seeing an increase in numbers, but sometimes what we see is inexperience in how to deal with some of those issues, particularly in volunteer situations.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: Another obligation that now exists for clubs, particularly if they are also servicing children and young people, is an obligation to start implementing the ACT Child Safe Standards Scheme. That is another one which speaks to the importance of equity and fairness, alongside a number of other factors that go towards ensuring that those organisations safely support children and young people's rights and wellbeing, alongside their safety within the service delivery space.

MR RATTENBURY: Following on from that, we have heard quite a bit of feedback from a range of sporting groups about the complexity they increasingly have to deal with. They all acknowledge that these points are incredibly important, but they are also finding them quite burdensome. Do you have any advice for the committee on how we enable them to meet these requirements and standards in the context of largely having a volunteer workforce, in many cases?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: At least in terms of the way that we have been progressing the implementation of Child Safe Standards, we have been talking about fitting the enactment or implementation of this within existing continuous improvement or business improvement cycles. Yes, for some, it would be seen as new; others have already been engaging in this for quite some time. You may be aware that the national principles were signed off in 2019. They are a standard that we have been applying here in the ACT, from a complaints perspective and a general contemporary expectation perspective, to organisations since that time.

While they are now legislated, there is no end date or die-in-the-ditch date by which the Child Safe Standards have to be fully implemented. It is very much the case that we are articulating this as a process of implementation. Getting started is what we are asking for. It could be something as simple as, "Let's have a review of our existing policies and procedures," for example.

It might be about thinking, "How do we publicly declare ourselves as being a child safe organisation?" Some of those early steps do not have to be complicated ones. Behind that then comes: how do we actually move this into that cycle of general improvement?

We are working very closely with existing regulators—and I appreciate that there is not necessarily one single regulator in the sporting space—in looking at that broader organisational level, and lifting that up to the sector level, and speaking about what are some of the broader resources that could be of value.

We are certainly very open to working with sectors, working with clubs, working with organisations to look at how we can mobilise or do some of our work differently, to target particular sectors, if that is what is useful for them, and even to co-brand and co-badge, again, if that is useful for organisations. We are very happy to work alongside them.

Ms Toohey: As you know, discrimination law has been around for a long time. It is not new. A lot of the clubs and a lot of the cohorts within the sector already have policies that reflect good discrimination law, in terms of what they are going to do to be fair and inclusive, and what they are going to do to eliminate discrimination from how they go about their business, for both sport, the administration, and their employment.

As we have talked about before, the positive duty is incremental; it is not revolutionary. It is putting the onus back onto the organisations to take those steps. Within the ecosystems in which they work, a lot of those policies are already in place. As I said, in some cases, with the implementation of that, I agree it is sometimes because there is a churn in volunteers. Again, that is why we would say to people to look back to the resources that are already there, like Play by the Rules, which we have been funding for over 20 years.

Again, part of the reason we fund that is so that people are not looking to individual organisations; they are looking to these national settings to get that input. PBTR has some very good online training. It is very well known in the sector. We would encourage organisations to look at that because it covers not just discrimination law, in my space, but also child protection, working with vulnerable people, and Child Safe Standards.

There are some comprehensive resources out there that the clubs can look to, at a community level and at a professional level.

MS LEE: Following on from Mr Rattenbury's question, would it be fair to say that, with the existing policies and resources, people, especially from very small organisations, need to know they exist before they can ask for a resource; that is a factor as well. You do not know what you do not know; there is that type of issue.

With respect to cost, Commissioner Griffiths-Cook, you talked about one of the barriers to participation being the regular rise in costs for participation, and that it is one of the most, if not the most, expensive jurisdictions for sport in the country. Can you expand on that part of your submission?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: Certainly. A couple of surveys have indicated that the costs here are some of the greatest in the country. Certainly, I can speak from experience, having children myself. The term costs of some of the different sports that my kids play, for others, would be potentially prohibitive.

The cost issue obviously disproportionately impacts households that have a lower median income, and quite often some of those cohorts who are also generally more vulnerable than others. I think that is the risk that we have. With sport becoming unaffordable for some kids, there is also the fact that many public schools no longer have regular competitive sport as part of their curriculum. Certainly, when I was at

school, every Wednesday afternoon we would go and compete against the other schools, across a range of different sporting options. That does not seem to be part of the curriculum here in the public school system anymore, although I believe it still exists in some of the private and independent schools.

We are potentially limiting opportunities, therefore, for children and young people to be engaged in sports. In doing so, some of the downstream impacts of that become even more significant. We know that engagement in sport goes a long way towards improving mental health. We know that it goes a long way towards improving physical health. Also, it is one of the strongest deterrents against engagement in antisocial behaviours, because when you are engaged pro-socially and you feel that you are part of something, that is more likely to be your driver.

We put examples in there of grants programs. New South Wales—I do not know whether they still have it—a while ago had a \$50 voucher system that they were applying. It was across the board; anyone could access it if they lived within the jurisdiction. It is about looking creatively at how we can make sport more affordable.

Some of that would be in the organised sporting realm, of course, but some of the stuff we have heard from children and young people is about, “Wouldn’t it be great if there was an equipment library down at the local oval?” They could access it to go and kick a footy around, if they could not afford to buy a football, or to be able to set up the wickets, the bat and the ball and have a game of cricket. Again, it might be something that they cannot afford. We need to look at some of the social and casual options that we have available for our young people, as well as how we make organised sport more affordable.

MS LEE: What are some of the specific contributing factors that make ACT more expensive than other jurisdictions?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: That is a very good question. I do not necessarily know the answer to that. I do not know whether it is the overheads that exist for clubs. I do not know whether there is an established minimum that we would work up from. I think there are a variety of things that it would be worth looking into, to look at what are the driving factors that are leading to us having a greater cost here in the ACT. At first glance, I cannot see that, as a jurisdiction, the general overheads for a sporting organisation should be any greater than those in other jurisdictions. I do not know whether that is at the organisational level or whether they are struggling to maintain their foothold. Only recently, the Gungahlin—

MS LEE: United.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: football league, soccer league, had to be shut down. That is such a shame for the kids involved, some of whom thought that they had opportunities there potentially to go further, after the grading period. Now, potentially, those are cut off, and they are looking to see if they can get into other clubs. That would be worth looking into, perhaps, as a case example, to find out what happened there and whether there were any financial reasons that we can perhaps look at differently, regarding how organisations are supported.

MR EMERSON: Ms Griffiths-Cook, you touched on the upstream or downstream benefits of investing in community sport. What would you like to see in relation to things like the ACT Wellbeing Framework? How can we push for more investment in things like community sports to prevent things like health costs downstream?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: I think we would be looking at the framework itself. It is probably around looking at whether we have the indicators right. This is something that we value as a society, as a community, if we can see the value in it for our children and young people—also ourselves, as adults. Adults are more likely to be in the casual sporting arena than the competitive sporting arena. For kids, when they are starting out, some of them may have a career in this space. Alongside those social, emotional and physical benefits, there are other avenues, too.

I do not know that we necessarily have indicators that enable us to use this as one of the arms from which we hang our investment. We may need to relook at the indicators and think, “Okay, if we’re saying that community sport is something that we value for our community, that we need to see more of in our community, and we need to invest in our community, how do we make sure that our approach to investment at a government level looks to this as one of its investment lines?”

MR EMERSON: Related to that, what would you like to see when it comes to engaging with children and young people in decision-making processes? Yesterday we had a year 11 student here, talking about the Lyneham High School gym decision. He has been advocating on that front, which is quite impressive, but it struck me that the students had not really been involved in decisions about the future of their school in that case. It is a sporting facility, so we can just make it relevant for this inquiry as well.

What would you like to see, on the part of the Assembly and on the part of the ACT government, to better consult with children and young people in this area?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: For me, that is multilayered. We need to be looking at the ground-level stuff, too—how we encourage schools and organisations who provide sporting opportunities for kids to engage with children and young people directly, to find out what they are looking for. As I said, we have already heard from kids that they do not feel they are getting enough sport within their school curriculum. That is something we can work with.

I think it was this committee, in fact, who met with a group of young people who were with my office for work experience a month or so ago, and I appreciate that you were open to meeting with them and to exploring that issue directly with young people themselves.

As I am sure the committee is aware—I have spoken about it with this committee as well as others—we have put a proposal forward. It was one of our recommendations here as well. We would welcome the opportunity for a funded position within my team to be able specifically to support committee inquiries like this one to be able to both assist in reframing terms of reference into child and youth-friendly language and to be able to run targeted consultations to help bring the voice of children and young people—their views, their perspectives—into these proceedings, to enable them to be bolstered and to have a place. Kids know better than we do about the challenges of being a kid in

the here and now. The only way that we will find out what those challenges are is to be able to ask them, and the only way we will be able to ask them is if we do things differently.

Unfortunately, often, the terms of reference for inquiries like these are written in language that is inaccessible for the average child or young person. If we do hear from them, we may hear from those who are advantaged, who perhaps have literacy levels that enable them to work through the terms of reference and respond, but we are missing out on those who are perhaps more vulnerable, and we really need to be able to hear from them as well.

MS CARRICK: We are having the social media ban for under 16s, and we have heard from young people that they are interested in getting out and engaging in community sport, and the social networks that that brings to them. It is not all about competition; they want to get out there and socialise. Can you tell me about the importance of public transport? Having regard to all the different types of people we have—people with disability, with mental health issues, those who are gender diverse or CALD; there is a whole range of people—it is important for them to be able to get public transport to a facility where they can feel a sense of belonging. Stromlo pool, as magnificent a facility as it is, and the views are terrific, is on the side of a hill that is very hard to get to by public transport. Can you talk about the importance of public transport for young people?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: Many young people increasingly rely on public transport. Particularly now, when we have rising costs of living, more often than not, both parents in a family will work, or you might have single parent families, who have to work to be able to support their children. Often children have to get themselves to sporting events, either because they are at times that are not convenient for parents or they may be competing, for want of a better word, with their siblings. If you are a single parent with three kids, and all of them have sporting activities on Saturday, you are going to be rushed to try and get around to them all. Often the older kids have to rely on public transport.

Making sure that we have accessible and available public transport, and a network that gets kids to where they need to be, is not only beneficial from a sporting perspective but it has a broader benefit to them as well.

MS CARRICK: With respect to being fair and inclusive, and the child protection side of things, this might be a strange question, but is it safer to have smaller, fragmented, separated groups or is it safer when there are more people around in a bigger facility?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: I do not think it is one or the other; I think it is more nuanced than that. It does come down to the culture of organisations, services, groups that come together for sport, in these instances. I think you can have small sporting organisations that have a fabulous culture and that create fabulous connection and belonging outcomes for children and young people, and you can have big ones that perhaps lose sight of the individual children and do not have those connection points that make a child feel like they belong.

I do not think it is a simple matter of big versus small. I know that children and young

people speak about having things that are local to them—not necessarily having to travel big distances. I know we are ACT; I know it is small, when you have a vehicle. But that is not necessarily the case if you have to use public transport. Being able to operate within community hubs and having options within community hubs are certainly things that kids themselves speak of.

MS CARRICK: My understanding is that it is about having the local connections, and building those relationships locally, as opposed to on the other side of town.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: It goes beyond just the sporting field. You build that connection on the sporting field, but it means you might have a social group that you can then hang out with. Again, that belonging aspect, if it is formed in a pro-social space, means that you are more likely to end up with pro-social benefits coming from that, in terms of the broader behaviour, activities and attitudes of our children and young people.

THE CHAIR: Ms Griffiths-Cook, your submission recommended that we recognise, value and support non-competitive and casual participation formats for children and young people, which aligns very closely with a comment from the Youth Coalition about supporting and structuring—certainly, making casual sports like the rec sports organisations and opportunities a larger part of the youth experience.

Can you talk me through what practical ideas you might have to make this informal but organised sport participation more achievable?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: It goes to some of what I was saying earlier, and it is what we have heard from young people themselves. It is about having that option of a sports equipment library, for want of a better word, at fields or other sporting venues, where they can grab a ball or grab a bat and kick off a game. Again, I reflect back and look at where we are.

THE CHAIR: The sport store at Weston primary? Year 6s had to run it.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: Yes. When kids are trusted, generally speaking, they are trustworthy with things like that, if they are given the respect. If kids hear that we have heard them and respond to that with solutions, more often than not, kids will use that in all the right ways, and they will work to look after it because they feel a sense of pride and ownership over that. I think it is as simple as that.

It will not always be about sport. While we are talking about community sport here, obviously, some of what we have heard extends beyond that space. We need to find ways to engage children and young people in opportunities where they have things to do that keep their minds occupied, keep them in that pro-social engagement space, and those are the things that make the difference. As parents, we need to be able to let go of the reins and know that our children are safely engaging in activities and that they are going to come home afterwards.

When I was a kid, it was about hollering when it was lunchtime or hollering when it was dinnertime. We were able to be out and about, and our parents knew we were safe. It is around how we safely look after kids in this space. I think it goes beyond just the library; it is also around how we make sure that we have effective lighting in those

spaces, and how we make sure that the facilities, toilets et cetera are up to scratch.

Both Commissioner Toohey and I spoke to the issues of disrepair that we have each heard in our respective areas as being an issue that is being raised in the community. If adults do not feel safe with their kids being in these locations because the facilities are not up to scratch, that is still an issue. It is not just about the availability of equipment; it is also about the areas in which they are engaging and making sure that they are fit for purpose.

MR EMERSON: I have a question about cost barriers, and perhaps it is relevant to both of you: how much are you aware of this being an issue, especially for children and young people who are looking to play sport? Cost comes up as a barrier, not just at the community sport level, but we have also heard through the day about that at the elite sport level. With perhaps the more disadvantaged families, as their children get better and better at sport, they are less and less able to participate. The first question is: is it an issue that you are aware of and/or concerned about?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: I think it is an issue. I cannot put a figure on it. I do not have data to say, “This is what I know,” or “This is what I’ve heard,” but it is a bit of a no-brainer in terms of that gap widening. We know that it is not just the cost of participation but the cost of equipment, the cost of uniforms—all those things—and the amount of uniforms you might need when you are playing competitively. There is the number of times you need to train in a week, and the cost of transport to get you there. For example, if you are in competitive swimming, you are probably training every day. All those costs compound because of the amount of activity and engagement that are involved for you to be able to be competitive.

MR EMERSON: We heard earlier today from one sporting club who cross-subsidise membership fees, if needed, for participants who cannot afford it. What responsibility do you see for government in addressing those cost disparities? Obviously, clubs can set their own fees. Maybe a child is selected to represent the ACT. I spoke with a family, and their child was. It was the only child in a public school; every other child was in a private school, and it was a huge family effort, and they had to go into debt to get them to the tournament. Do you see a role for government here?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: Whenever there is inequity, I think there is always a potential role for government to look at how they can attend to that inequity. There are different ways that you can do that. There are ways that government can work with organisations, to perhaps provide incentives that might encourage organisations like you were just talking about to cross-subsidise, for example. Some places will already do this; if you have multiple children playing sport, it gets a bit cheaper for each additional sibling who is playing. There are those kinds of avenues that can be encouraged by government.

Alongside that, there are ways that government can assist in those circumstances through grants programs and the like. There are probably lots more ways that that could happen. I am probably picking some of the more familiar ones. That is where we need to talk more about what would make the difference—getting the stories like the ones you have been able to have the opportunity to hear, and to be able to think about what would make the difference there. Some of it might be monetary. Some of it could be organising more efficient transport options. Some of it is also what we usually refer to

as in-kind versus monetary support that clubs could perhaps provide to help support families, whether the sport is elite, competitive or otherwise.

MS CARRICK: My last question is around planning—when the ACT government does its planning for the districts, thinking about young people in their planning and what their needs are. Do you have any views about how they might consider young people when they are planning for sporting facilities?

Ms Griffiths-Cook: I think it is already an obligation. The extent to which it is done in practice is probably the differing point. All our laws, for example, are supposed to uphold and have consideration for human rights. We have an explicit right that talks about the right of children and young people to additional protection, simply by virtue of being a child. There are multiple different areas. There would be virtually no law, or any program or service, that in some way, shape, or form would not touch a child's life, whether directly or indirectly, through their families, caregivers or parents. It is more about the “how”, as opposed to the “if”. The obligation already exists.

MS CARRICK: It is about the implementation of the actual planning.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: If we think about children and young people as a broad cohort, they make up a quarter to a third of our population, depending on whether we are thinking about zero to 18 or zero to 24. If we take the zero to 24 cohort, they are a third of the entire ACT population. That is a significant cohort that we absolutely should be thinking about when we are undertaking any form of planning, any form of reform, any form of new amendment changes or shifts in practice. We rarely think about children and young people and their significance as a stakeholder group in their own right, yet they are, when you think about how great a proportion of our population they represent.

MS CARRICK: I find in my area that the housing pressures are so high that housing is the priority, so there is not really much thought about anything else, frankly. Community facilities get knocked down and are replaced by towers. There is a figure of 5,000, with another 4,000 coming, if not more, so we will have 20,000 people in a very small area, and very little in the way of thinking about what all the different demographics, not only young people, need, and what they might do to entertain themselves, as opposed to smashing up bus stops.

Ms Toohey: One of the conversations that we have had recently within government around the right to a healthy environment is looking at the rights of children in the planning processes and what priority is being given in that space. How do we recognise children's rights through the right to a healthy environment? Some of those conversations and awareness of some of those issues are certainly permeating government at this point, coming out of some of these human rights conversations that we are having.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: I had a young person earlier this year who said they were faced with the dilemma coming into winter of whether to heat or to eat. To bring that back to the community sports space, I doubt whether it even entered that young person's mind that sport could be something they would be able to engage in.

MR EMERSON: That is tragic.

MS CARRICK: Yes.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you both very much. I do not recall either of you taking a question on notice. We appreciate your effort and what you have given us.

Ms Toohey: Thank you.

Ms Griffiths-Cook: Thank you.

Hearing suspended from 3.09 to 3.20 pm.

BERRY, MS YVETTE, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, and Minister for Sport and Recreation

BAILEY, MR DANIEL, Executive Group Manager Operations, Economic Development, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

FITZGERALD, MR BRUCE, Deputy Director General, City and Environment Directorate

GREEN, MR BEN, Executive Group Manager, Planning and Urban Policy, City and Environment Directorate

KELLEY, MS REBECCA, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

THE CHAIR: We welcome Ms Berry, the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and officials from CMTEDD and the City and Environment Directorate.

Ms Kelley: I acknowledge the privilege statement.

Mr Bailey: I acknowledge the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Would anyone like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms Berry: I do not think so. I think we are happy to go straight to questions. I would note that, if the committee refers to previous witnesses and things they have said, I have not been watching you all day—you might be surprised—

MR RATTENBURY: We are devastated, Minister!

THE CHAIR: I sent you a text saying, “Watch me all day”!

Ms Berry: Perhaps you could explain what people have said. Do not assume that we have been watching you, as delightful as that would have been, I am sure.

THE CHAIR: That is not unreasonable. The ACT government submission provided evidence that the ACT has a higher rate of participation in sport by children aged zero to 14 years—we will perhaps say three to 14 years rather than zero to 14 years—than the average for Australia and that this becomes more pronounced with high frequency participation, such as once, twice or three times a week. What are the factors, as you understand it, that contribute to this higher participation rate in the ACT compared to the average in Australia?

Ms Berry: I might ask Ms Kelley to give a bit more detail if she has it available. Some of it could be fairly obvious to us, but our geography makes a difference, as well as the availability of a diverse range of sport participation and facilities. Today is to talk about barriers, and I know people have talked about the lack of facilities within various sports, but we are very uniquely placed for people to play multiple sports rather than just one sport, as you will find in bigger states and territories because of the travel time for people to get to a sport. There is not often the opportunity to play more than one sport. When you talk to a lot of people in the ACT, you will find that they play more than one sport as juniors because they can get to them fairly easily.

Ms Kelley: You have hit most of the key points, Minister. I would add that, noting our participation statistics, we do not lead the country in just the junior ranks but also the adult segments. There is certainly a lot of research that supports the fact that, if you are an active parent and your child sees that and has that role model in life, it increases the likelihood that they will also be an active participant. So we have a double win in that regard, but that is off the basis that we have huge diversity in the number of participation opportunities, the types of participation opportunities and access to facilities, compared to some of our larger metropolitan counterparts.

THE CHAIR: Is that the general comparison—comparing Canberra with Sydney and Melbourne—or is it comparing Canberra with Newcastle? What sort of jurisdiction do you look at comparing us against?

Ms Kelley: Probably from a national perspective, it is the Northern Territory and Tasmania when we talk about state comparisons. When we sit around the table with our national colleagues, it is us three against the larger states. Beyond that, quite often, as a capital city, there are comparisons drawn with other capital cities. That is where we have to put caveats around it—that we are quite different to Sydney and Melbourne, by virtue of our jurisdiction but also the border around our jurisdiction.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

MS CARRICK: My question is about planning. We heard today that the district strategies do not really have—

Ms Berry: Sorry, I—

THE CHAIR: She is not the minister for planning, so it might be difficult for her and her officials to answer—

MS CARRICK: Well, it is in the context of sports facilities.

Mr Fitzgerald: We will have one of our planning colleagues joining from 4.20, as I understand it.

Ms Berry: That is what I thought. That is the advice we were provided for this committee. You can save it until then.

MS CARRICK: Maybe policy, then, for sports facilities. What would be the policy around location of or spread of facilities to ensure that there is coverage, so that people can catch a bus within reasonable time? You said there are good travel times, but I have children who were playing basketball in Belconnen on a Sunday night and the travel time on a bus from the south to the Belconnen basketball stadium at 8 pm on a Sunday night is not good. How do you plan, from a policy perspective, to have coverage of the range of facilities that you were talking about across Canberra?

Ms Berry: It might sit better with Planning to talk about the analysis that they do in the district planning work, for example. I am not sure—

MS CARRICK: So you do not, as the Minister for Sport and Recreation, consider the

needs of different groups around Canberra, geographically—whether they have disability or are CALD, like the migrant community? You do not consider the needs of different groups to access sport and rec?

Ms Kelley: Yes, we do; certainly. The work that is done in that space is from the basis that we have historical provision of sporting facilities in the territory. Future planning work is done around that. Where there is new growth—we can talk about Molonglo or even Gungahlin prior to that—allocation of district playing fields, as an example, is a standard provision that we would see in new districts. Those types of things are a fairly core planning element. The nature of indoor facilities, as you are well aware, is another key aspect. We are now looking at the same sorts of things in terms of where the gaps are in indoor facilities, noting that is primarily Gungahlin and Woden. Whilst there are the standardised approaches of looking at gap analysis across the city, we also recognise that these facilities need to cater for a range of participants. We do not necessarily have the luxury of looking down specific lines of inquiry, whether it be athletes with a disability or participant needs, particularly around transport; it will be about the best location for the majority and then looking at strategies to ensure that they are inclusive, in the way that people can access them. That is challenging.

MS CARRICK: Yes. Is your needs analysis or gap analysis public?

Ms Kelley: A lot of that work is done by Planning around the community needs assessments that are done. That is perhaps where our Planning colleague can assist. Beyond the community-wide or territory-wide planning, the gap analysis that I refer to is from what we are hearing from the sports. It is what we are feeding back to planning inquiries or land release. Where we are asked for the sport and recreation perspective on things, that is the type of feedback that we are giving. It is not a set report, if you like, that says, “This is the nature of where we have deficiencies.” I will say, though, that we have certainly had indoor sports study reports done that identified Gungahlin and Woden as the areas to be next prioritised to address the need in supply. That goes to the nature of our focus on priorities over the last five years and moving towards provision in those areas.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. Your submission says that planning for the provision of a multipurpose indoor sports facility in Woden has also commenced. Can you tell me how that has commenced? Where are we up to with that planning?

Ms Kelley: It is very early planning. It is looking at co-location with a school. It builds on a reliance on opportunities for our growth at school facilities at this point, but we also look at the fact that our school facilities that require significant investment to meet our curriculum needs are also our community hubs. So how do we build on that to make sure there is more community focus within those models? Rather than a two-court facility, what does a four-court facility look like that has two courts available and has community access that sits alongside school access? At the moment, it is about site identification. There has been some high-level master planning done over what co-location with the new planned school in Woden could look like. Obviously, furthering the business case and consultation around that is yet to happen.

MS CARRICK: It is a shame that you were not watching today, because there has been a lot of conversation about the benefits of using schools and the benefits of having a

multipurpose sports stadium in, say, a town centre so that people can use public transport to get there. And: what is the primary purpose of a school compared to the needs of the broader community? And: what are the benefits of having a multipurpose sports stadium or community facility centrally located, where you can get a bit of a vibe, attract participants and attract coaches, who become mentors, refs and the whole works? And the view that sticking it out with a school continues the fragmentation. Is there any hope that the needs of the people could be looked at and we could have a multipurpose sports stadium that is not a school facility?

Ms Kelley: We see that the option—which, as I said, is at an early stage of work at this point—meets all those needs. Placement and land availability, as we all know, is difficult. The type of model we are talking about puts the four-court arena component of this development more in the face of the community, so that it would be viewed as a community sports facility that the school accesses during the day, which is typically the hours that we have downtime within these types of facilities. In terms of your commentary around becoming a vibe, in a way you have the school environment around that as it is, and the community comes in during the day, so hopefully some of those synergies start to evolve. The Woden Dodgers, as an example, would have a four-court facility to access after school hours to build that community. They are an example that strongly want that to happen.

MS CARRICK: How do they get there?

THE CHAIR: You can come back to that. Mr Emerson.

MR EMERSON: Thank you. I want to ask about the survey of community sports facility needs that was undertaken in 2023. We discussed this with previous witnesses. I am wondering what that has been used for since then.

Ms Kelley: As mentioned, the proposal register that came about as a result of that survey is a regularly referenced document in our office. It really started the conversation, or increased the understanding the government has, around the individual priorities that each sport has. When we had subsequent discussions with them and I referenced some grant applications and the like, one of the questions went back to: “Where is this sitting in the priorities that you identified within the last 24 months?” Interestingly, many of those conversations go to: “That has changed now. We have had our time again.” So, at the moment, we are looking at what a renewal of that proposal register looks like, as a check-in but also to provide an update of achievements against it. I note that the proposal register includes—and I will say this respectfully—some pie-in-the-sky type projects through to smaller wins that sports could apply for under the grant scheme, having good evidence and possible co-contribution to put towards that.

In terms of how that has contributed to our longer term planning, some of the priorities within this term of government have stemmed from that proposal register. And we are still looking at what a longer term infrastructure plan looks like, noting that there are other things in play at the moment that have slowed our development of that and consideration of that. That is that there is a current audit being undertaken by the ACT Audit Office into planning and infrastructure for sport and recreation facilities, which I am sure you are all aware of, and there is also the national sport and recreation

infrastructure process that the Australian Sports Commission is leading, which we have been actively engaged with. We have facilitated the ACT based workshops with the Sports Commission, noting that we certainly would not want principles coming out of that to be at odds with anything that we might have here locally. So we are looking at the various inputs to make sure that, when we get to the point of looking at what the longer term looks like, beyond a four-year roadmap, we are well-placed to do so.

MR EMERSON: Is the proposal register you mentioned made public or is that an internal document?

Ms Kelley: It is on our Sport and Recreation website.

MR EMERSON: Thank you. In terms of that long-term plan, is there a policy position? Something we heard a lot about today is that a 10-year community infrastructure plan with a clear pipeline would be helpful. Is that something that is likely to come out of those audits and other pieces of work that are underway?

Ms Kelley: We would certainly like that to be the outcome. The difficulty that we have with that is long-term certainty of funding provision in order to support a longer term horizon, if you like. I think sports would find it frustrating not to have a bit of clear vision, but also not to have their expectations met, if it is not something that future governments can commit to. As I said, there are certain projects at the moment that will fall outside this term of government for delivery—possibly new indoor facilities—but they are things that we know will definitely be happening. They could be shored up within a pipeline along with other key upgrades and things that we know we are responsible for and our colleagues at CED have in their maintenance and upgrade works, in terms of renewal of existing assets. There needs to be certainty around that as well. That is where asset management planning comes into play.

Ms Berry: The absolute challenge with a longer term plan like that, even though it would be nice to have something like that, is decisions of future governments to funding and managing the expectations of the community. That is one of the challenges of being in government. Of course, all of us would love to build all these things if we had an endless supply of funds, land and opportunity, but governments make decisions on a variety of priorities. The work that Sport and Rec have done over a number of years has led to a pipeline of facilities, including at Casey, for Basketball ACT, and new sports fields around the place, in Taylor and Throsby, and, fortunately, ice sport. All of those things are there, but, when a future government says, “Actually, we’re not going to fund that,” the community gets upset because you have put that in a forward plan.

The higher level strategy that we have developed—it does not go to actions, details or particular projects—is about understanding sport across the ACT. Some other strategies that will come off that. The skate park user strategy and the aquatic user group strategy will come out of the general strategy, but it will not have: “A pool will be built in Woden in 2028.”

MS CARRICK: Will it?

Ms Berry: No, I am sorry. I know that is what you want, Fiona. That is on Fiona Carrick’s forward plan but unfortunately not on the government’s at this point in time.

THE CHAIR: Ms Carrick, you had a supplementary?

MS CARRICK: You mentioned Casey and Basketball ACT, and I am wondering, when we are talking about outcomes-based framework, why are they not in schools?

Ms Berry: Why aren't they? Well, schools are not a replacement for facilities. They are an addition to sports facilities in the ACT. But in Woden we have an opportunity to build, potentially, a four-court centre because there is a school planned for that.

MS CARRICK: Yes, but why is it better to have it in the school when these guys are getting standalone facilities?

Ms Berry: Well, it is an opportunity. It is not saying that it is either/or. It is in Woden. There is an opportunity to add a four-court facility that could be used for outside community use in addition to being part of a school facility—rather than, for example, building a school with two courts and then another facility outside of that, if that were possible.

So, that is just an option that is being considered, right? That is not, “This is going to happen”. That is an option that is being considered. And I know that you know that there are other interested parties in building privately-owned indoor facilities within the Woden area—and that could be the case across the whole of the city. In fact, I understand that there is a paddleball court facility that has been built in Fyshwick by a private operator. It is not ACT government-funded at all. I think it is paddleball.

THE CHAIR: Padel.

Ms Berry: Sorry, padel. Every sport wants us to build them something, which is absolutely fine. We just have to try and make it work for everybody. But this particular facility is built by a private operator in Fyshwick, which is great because then we do not have to build it.

MS CARRICK: Presumably that is a profit-driven facility.

Ms Berry: I believe so. But it is available for community use, to my understanding. It is a competition for them out there. That does not mean that is not an opportunity that could happen in Woden. Other states and territories have much more of that investment from private providers than we do in the ACT, because of our size. So, it tends to be the government that picks up all of these facilities—apart from golf courses, although we had in the past owned and operated golf courses, I think, at Gold Creek.

THE CHAIR: Going back to Mr Emerson.

MR EMERSON: I was just hoping we could go back to the 10-year plan, or the potential 10-year plan. Would there be a change, then, to how funding is allocated in the grants process? We heard earlier about the inefficiency of, you know: everyone submitting business cases every budget; you having to review them; then comparing them to the proposal register— Would you then say, “Okay, do not all make your budget bids, because we have got a pipeline already organised”? Would that be part of

the change?

Ms Kelley: Possibly. I think we also have different levels of consideration there, because I think the types of projects that Sports will be hoping to be on a longer-term pipeline would probably be beyond the scope of a grants program. There would need to be separate business cases considered as part of budget processes. The elements that sit within the grants program are probably far easier to achieve because Sports can progress them far more quickly.

Certainly government's injection of the additional \$1 million this year into the community sport facilities program, on top of a million previously, has really increased the scope for us to be able to fund projects that might have otherwise been sitting on strategic plan lists that each of the sports have for long periods of time. So, for some of these smaller projects, two million dollars goes a long way—and we do have the capacity to fund them over multi-years as well. So, it is giving us far greater scope. I know that does not answer your question directly, but I think it would be a mix, potentially.

THE CHAIR: Mr Rattenbury had a supplementary.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, on the 10-year plan: minister, I heard your explanation, but I am just interested in your concern about public perception because almost every person who has come before this committee has supported the idea of a 10-year plan. All the peak bodies support it. Most of the sports centres support it. The Assembly has passed various motions supporting a long-term plan. So, I guess I am interested in your hesitation that it would be not well-received by the community.

Ms Berry: I do not think I said those words.

MR RATTENBURY: I am not meaning to unfairly paraphrase you, but that is what I am taking from it.

Ms Berry: Thank you. A lot of that work would be about managing expectations of timeframes and available funding. That is fine. Governments manage that all the time. I mean, we do it every other week with the land release program, for example, which is indicative. We could very easily use the information that we have—although we were talking about the survey, and people have changed their minds or changed their priorities, and that happens, and so we can do that.

We think we need to go back out on the survey and just check in with everybody about their priorities. Then perhaps move from there on an indication of those bigger projects, which would not be part of the grants program.

Some of the smaller projects like, hypothetically, a park bench or a shade sail, those kinds of things, could be part of a grants program process.

But bigger things like stadiums, new turf grounds, new pavilions, those kinds of things, would not be able to come out of the grants program. It is not big enough. They, then, would be subject to future government budget consideration. That is just the fact of the matter.

MR RATTENBURY: We have a 10-year infrastructure plan for the ACT.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Of course, that is also subject to future government decisions. Why can we not have something similar for sport?

Ms Berry: In fact, the infrastructure plan does have some of those larger sports facilities in it.

MR RATTENBURY: It does.

Ms Berry: Some of them have not been funded, and people have been disappointed about that. That is fine; if that is what people want, if that is what you are hearing and if that is the recommendation that the committee makes, we could look at what is the best way that that could occur, given the different levels of funding required for different projects. There might have to be a split, based on cost or size—stadiums, pavilions, or whatever. The shade sails are down here somewhere; maybe they are not so much a part of a 10-year program but more of a grants program level of work.

We can certainly work on what that would look like. I need to say that there will be times when things will not get funded. That might not be a decision that I make. It could be made by you, or someone else. That is just the reality of putting projects into a 10-year plan when a budget funding cycle is not a 10-year funding cycle.

MS LEE: There seems to be quite a bit of focus on sporting infrastructure in terms of plans. More broadly, on strategy for participation, not just on infrastructure, for example, there was a reference earlier to a disability strategy, which is an ACT government strategy that is not necessarily based on infrastructure projects per se that need funding, but that is a 10-year strategy. I understood all the answers as to why, but how do you as a government make that differentiation that some policy areas are fine for 10 years and, for some policy areas, there is a reluctance regarding the 10 years?

Ms Berry: There is a strategy and then there is an action plan, if I can describe the differences in that way. A strategy is generally a higher level document, whereas an infrastructure plan is talking about an actual thing that people can see.

Ms Kelley: I think the high-level strategy is the piece that we anticipate. Again, we have heard from the sports in detail around the need for the guiding principles for decision-making and all those things, which are in play and are part of the business cases that are put to government.

Going to your point, I think that is the bit that can definitely be put out there, but that is also the part where we are waiting for the national guidance that comes through the sport and recreation infrastructure plan process, noting that we have had ACT input into that process. It is also about what the feedback through the audit process looks like, noting that it will no doubt have recommendations around what the planning structure would be, and what is the best approach for that to look like, noting the considerations and inputs into that.

The guiding principles part is something that we have thought about for some time, and there has always been an outlying planning process that has gone along with that, and in this case it is the national plan. With respect to whether it is a facility prospectus, if you like, if I am Netball ACT and I want to extend an ACT netball centre, which I know is one of their long-term aspirations, what are the steps that we have to go through to have that as a valid consideration within an action plan that is tangible and may actually have some legs at some point in time and not just sit in an aspirational space?

That is around the participation growth, and the location in respect of our other district facilities. How are they optimising their current facilities? These are the types of things on which we would always question the sports and say, “This is the thinking that you need to do in order to encourage government consideration or investment,” whether that is ACT government or a co-contribution from a national body. Recently, a couple of our sports have been successful in obtaining commonwealth contributions, which is fantastic, because we have not seen many of those. Certainly, hockey will soon be a beneficiary of that, along with the Tuggeranong Valley Cricket Club. I hope that answers your question.

MS LEE: I do not want to labour the point, because I do not know that it will be very helpful for the committee. I wanted, for the record, to say that I understand the difference between a strategy and a plan; that is not the issue. But the Sport and Recreation Strategy 2023-28 is called a strategy, so that is a strategy; then you have, as an example, the Disability Strategy, which is called a strategy, and it is from 2024 to 2033. I do not know that there has been a clear explanation as to why there is a differentiation. As I said, I will not labour the point.

MR EMERSON: We have talked about some strategies and plans, and we have heard about a prospectus, which is nice. I want to ask about a study, the 2015 ACT Government Indoor Sports Facilities Study, which came up in an earlier hearing with the squash representatives.

One of the recommendations in there was to encourage provision of squash facilities at the current level, and it also mentioned strategies if any facilities were lost, as we will see in Dickson, by the look of it. How much has that study informed behaviour over the last 10 years? Are you tracking recommendations—delivery of those recommendations?

Ms Berry: Yes, they definitely have. We just talked about the work going into identifying the growth areas, Woden and Gungahlin. There is the Casey future proposal and the—

MR EMERSON: I was not sure whether you were referring to the same study when you mentioned that.

Ms Berry: Yes, it is the same study. There is the Belconnen basketball stadium, and Throsby, which was going to have an indoor facility, but that has changed, because of circumstances with partnerships around that. Of course, the rest of the world has changed, in between the time that that review was done, in 2015. Dickson have made their decision. Things happened at Woden as well that were not understood in 2015, but now they are.

MS CARRICK: What was that? What happened?

Ms Berry: I think you know what happened, with the Phillip pool, the ice rink—

MS CARRICK: The change of zoning. I did not know you were talking about that particular thing. There are plenty of things—

Ms Berry: I am trying to be helpful. Snide comments are probably not helpful, Ms Carrick.

MS CARRICK: No, you mentioned things in Woden, and I was wondering what particular thing—

THE CHAIR: We will let the minister speak.

Ms Berry: There was another thing as well that I had forgotten, because of that interruption. But things change over the years, so we need to adapt to that, which is what we did.

MR EMERSON: Is there somewhere that the recommendations are acquitted or published? I am genuinely curious. Is there something that we can look at, to understand how studies influence decisions or change things over time.

Ms Kelley: From the 2015 report, no. The key action that came out of that was the drill-down that then produced the 2021 report, which zeroed in on basketball and gymnastics at the time. We do internally track it; but, to answer your question, there is not a follow-up report that says, “Here’s the status quo on each of those recommendations.”

Ms Berry: There was a lot of discussion, though, after 2015 and the review. The commitments that were made were based on that review, and there was an understanding, I think, in those sports and in that community that that was where those decisions came from. With everything post COVID, there was a gap in it, and—

MR EMERSON: Could you take on notice and see whether there is anything internal that is in an easy format to share with the committee? If there is not, fair enough, but if it is being tracked, could you provide that to the committee?

Ms Berry: I do not think it is being tracked in a—

Ms Kelley: Yes, not in a—

Ms Berry: We will take it on notice.

Ms Kelley: Yes, we can go back and have a look.

MR EMERSON: I am envisioning a spreadsheet.

Ms Kelley: Yes, there is not a—

THE CHAIR: Ms Lee?

MS LEE: Minister, a number of witnesses have talked about cost being a very prohibitive factor, creating a barrier for participation in sport. Acknowledging that there are variables, and not everything is within ACT government control, one of the factors that has been raised as a significant cost factor has been the fees in relation to hiring of courts. As an example, the North Canberra Community Council included, as part of their submission, the increase in the cost of school gymnasiums. That has gone up significantly, from \$26 per hour to \$86 per hour. Can you explain why that decision was made? It is such a huge increase.

Ms Berry: I do know that, but I cannot remember. I think it had something to do with the size of the court. Can I take that on notice?

MS LEE: Sure.

Ms Berry: I do know that there is an explanation for that. On sportsground fees, however, that is not a revenue-raising exercise by the government. The government subsidise 86 per cent of the cost of maintenance and upgrades to sports facilities at sportsgrounds—mowing, fertilising, maintaining, line marking, and all the other things that happen on sports fields. The cost that is paid by clubs for sports fields is a small amount of money, in the scheme of things. I understand that it is something that sports will raise from time to time, but it is a small part of the cost of managing those facilities.

MS LEE: I do not think there was a denial of that. There was an acknowledgement that there was a difference between sporting ovals, for example, that, as you say, are subsidised by the government, to an extent, and indoor facilities that seem to not have quite the same level of expenditure when it comes to maintenance. There were questions raised about the high cost of the hiring, especially when you look at that significant increase, from \$26 to \$86, which I understand that you have taken on notice.

Ms Berry: Yes. For school facilities, it is the same. The higher costs are not a revenue-raising exercise. They are purely for the maintenance and cleaning of that facility outside school hours. With schools, Sport and Rec and the government do not make any money from hiring those facilities out to community groups. It is cost neutral, and it is purely for minor maintenance and cleaning.

MS LEE: Yes, but you can see why they—

Ms Berry: There is the cost of turning on lights, getting equipment out, wear and tear, and things like that.

MS LEE: Sure, but you can understand why the clubs may be concerned, given it goes from \$26 to \$86.

Ms Berry: I have taken that on notice. There is an explanation for that one; I just cannot remember it right now.

MS LEE: Thank you. Also, in relation to costs being prohibitive, you have previously

talked about—probably wearing your hat as education minister—the Future of Education Equity Fund that allows families to get access to some funds. Do you have a breakdown in relation to what those people who receive the funds use it for? Obviously, sporting activities are included as part of that. Does the government keep any data in relation to what it is used for?

Ms Berry: Not in a lot of detail because it is basically voluntary. We do not want to interfere too much with what people are using the funds for.

Ms Kelley: The only breakdown we have—because we had the same question; that is valuable intel to have, with the level of detail, and it is included in the government submission—is that 32 per cent of the applications that were granted through that scheme were for sport and recreation purposes.

MS LEE: Do you have data that you can share with the committee in relation to the number of applications you received compared to the number of applications that were successful?

Ms Berry: We probably have data on that; it is just not with this team, so I will have to take it on notice and see if I can get it.

MS LEE: No worries. Thank you.

Ms Berry: I think it is published, but I will—

MS LEE: Maybe it is in the education report.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS LEE: When was the last time the criteria for who is eligible to access that fund reviewed?

Ms Berry: The equity fund? It has been in place for only a little while. It is reviewed every year. But, regarding a more formal review, it has existed for only a few years.

MS LEE: Obviously, there has been a change of circumstance in terms of the cost of living rising. Perhaps the government has taken into consideration that more families did not need it before—they were not doing it so tough—but now things are getting tougher.

Ms Berry: We added around a million dollars to the fund to make sure that no-one missed out. I am not sure whether it was in this budget or the last budget—I can confirm that—but additional funding was put into the fund. Since the fund first started, it has increased as awareness has grown and probably need has grown across the board. That is the case. It is open to all schools, public and private, but it has an eligibility requirement and it is means tested. For example, in New South Wales, there is some focus on sports vouchers. I think New South Wales used to have an everyone-gets-one model and they have gone to a needs based model. My understanding of their voucher system was that it had only a 50 per cent uptake in any case, and they have now gone to a means based model of the voucher system for sports. I cannot remember what the

amount is. It is a hundred bucks or so.

Ms Kelley: It is \$150—

MS LEE: In relation to Every Chance—

Ms Berry: Every Chance to Play?

MS LEE: Yes. Was that \$500-plus? I think we talked about it earlier.

THE CHAIR: \$300?

MS LEE: Does the ACT government have any responsibility in relation to the criteria and eligibility for individual clubs?

Ms Kelley: No. A grant is provided to Every Chance. Essentially no, because it is not a partnered program, in terms of partnered delivery. It is a grant that is conducted by—

MS LEE: Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about a peak sports organisation. Again, we have received a number of representations. Minister, I am interested in understanding what your thinking is on that issue at this point.

Ms Berry: I have not personally had any advocacy for a long time. I understand there is still aspiration for that, and I understand that is something that the Greens were interested in having as well. I do not think anything has happened for a long time. Sport and Rec were asking for some information from the group that had not been provided.

Ms Kelley: Yes. We are aware that the Community Sport Alliance is an active network and they meet regularly, but we have not heard directly on that matter for a while.

MR RATTENBURY: They have certainly made it clear to the committee, both when they appeared today and in their submission, which why I assumed there was perhaps an active conversation about it.

Ms Berry: I think they are still working it out. Well, I do not know. I do not want to speak for them and I did not hear them today.

MR RATTENBURY: Fair enough.

Ms Berry: We can certainly follow up with them.

MR RATTENBURY: How do you, as the minister, get your information on what the issues are facing sports?

Ms Berry: From individual sports. The group used to meet with me, but I have not met with them for some time. That is not because I have not wanted to. They have not reached out to me and I have not reached out to them. But I can do that if they are still interested. It is usually through individual sports. The Sport and Rec team work really

closely with individual sports to understand where things are at. We also have the CEO forum and that is an opportunity for sports to speak to me or with the Sport and Rec team if they have not had a chance to previously. I am pretty accessible and the team is pretty accessible as well, both in the sportsground space and policy space. We are still small enough that we all know what is going on, most of the time, and we are all still pretty accessible.

MR EMERSON: Is there strong resistance, other than that point, Minister, which I understand, about supporting a big body if there is a cost? But, if they had a meeting and said, “This is really what we want and we are good to go. We have our governance arranged,” is there a strong reason not to back the idea?

Ms Berry: I do not really have a particular view, other than I am not sure that it is required. I have not been convinced yet, and, of course, it would come with a cost. Whatever the funding would be is better spent on community sport than a peak body.

Ms Kelley: There is nothing stopping the group from formalising themselves as a peak body for sport right now.

Ms Berry: They kind of have, informally.

Ms Kelley: Yes. Ultimately, it is not the government’s role to establish an advocacy group. They may wish to establish themselves more formally. What does a true representative peak body look like? We use the Community Sport Alliance at the moment. There is a fantastic group of sports. We have great engagement with all CEOs and with their executive officer. But we have said to them, “If you are thinking along these lines, what does it look like for table tennis, badminton and all the other small ones? They arguably need more assistance in their advocacy because they have fewer resources than the bigger sports that have full-time paid staff. In some cases, they have more staff than the Sport and Rec team in government. There is great capacity for them to take that in that direction.

The other questions go to: if they are reliant on government for establishment, they need to be clear on what they are asking of government and what their rules would look like, or is it a member based model? If the sports think it is important enough, would they fund it themselves? The former peak body had a member based model, going back nearly 10 years ago. It received program based grants from government and were quite successful for some time.

MS CARRICK: COMPS was around for a while and it is now Community Sport Alliance, so they are, I guess, the pseudo peak. Have you picked up any recommendations from them? What have you listened to and implemented from them?

Ms Kelley: To be fair, we have not had any formal recommendations from them. We have lots of conversations. Regarding the value of COMPS—and, again, I do not want to speak on their behalf—through the meetings that I have attended and through feedback, they value the network themselves. Particularly through COVID, it was their support network. I do not want to say they would lean on each other’s shoulders and have a cry, but many of them did. That has been the value of that group. I do not think they have moved to the point of putting proposals to the government or the minister on

what they would like to see. I think that is a good opportunity.

MS CARRICK: They have put in submissions, so do you read their submissions and all the other submissions that came in for this inquiry?

Ms Berry: I have not, but we will.

Ms Kelley: Absolutely—

MS CARRICK: Did you read the Sport Alliance ones to see what they say?

Ms Kelley: Yes. Certainly, their submissions through the budget processes are taken into consideration as well, particularly around the long-term infrastructure plan. We have heard that loud and clear from COMPS. I think we have spoken about that already.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about the demise of the Gungahlin United Football Club. There were various public comments by government spokespeople, and I think you, Minister, made similar comments about working constructively with the club to try to help them survive. What exactly was involved in that work?

Ms Berry: Which work? Do you mean previously?

MR RATTENBURY: I am trying to pick up on the public comments that have come from the government: “We worked constructively with them.” I am keen to understand what that work was.

Mr Fitzgerald: That refers largely to their outstanding debt, to make sure that there was a way to work through payment of their debt, to make sure we could understand the pressures the club was experiencing and to make sure that the payment plan reflected what we hoped would be a sustainable pathway to removing that debt.

MR RATTENBURY: It appears that the debt—and I am not across all the detail, but hopefully you can help me—continued to grow, or certainly was not being paid back. So what steps are you taking, given they seemed to fail to make progress under the payment plan?

Mr Fitzgerald: That also included engagement with Capital Football to make sure that they understood where the club was in terms of their financial position. That necessitated a number of conversations over a number of years and, depending on the individuals involved, we worked through exactly how they would continue to pay. At each opportunity, we again reached out. We are always reluctant. The biggest tool at our disposal is to stop booking—to effectively stop the ability to accrue additional debt. For us, that is a pretty dramatic decision to take. Considering how many individuals are involved in the club, that is something that we looked on a number of occasions, but our preference was to continue to work with the club to hopefully get to a point where they could trade out of it and be sustainable into the long term. If we took the approach of cancelling their ability to book sportsgrounds, that would have brought it to a head quicker, but it would have displaced 2,000 athletes.

MR RATTENBURY: Are there many other sporting clubs or associations that have

an outstanding debt to the ACT government? I do not mean normal monthly billing or whatever but an actual debt.

Mr Fitzgerald: Nothing of this significance—no. There are times when clubs may fall behind and we will work closely with those clubs to put in place payment plans and work through them. What we see for the vast majority is that an individual circumstance has caused their non-payment and they are able to work through it, so we do not carry large outstanding debts.

MR RATTENBURY: I have seen public reports, in the *Canberra Times* predominantly, that speak to the previous president stepping down in mid-September, and there now appears to be a new committee running the club, but there are reports there was no town hall and no special general meeting or club announcements about a new management committee. This would appear to be a problem under the Associations Incorporation Act. Does the ACT government have any knowledge of this or investigated whether there has been a breach of the Associations Incorporation Act? How did this new committee come about?

Ms Kelley: We certainly have picked up on that. We queried Capital Football on whether that had been looked at. We have been advised that it is within their constitution. They had a vacancy and someone was appointed to the vice-president position. The existing members then stepped down, so the gentleman was effectively the sole person on the committee. The other members who have been helping have been there just in a helping capacity. They were comfortable that it was in accordance with their constitution, but we understand it will also be looked at at their upcoming special general meeting, and it is also possibly a question that the administrator, should that be the decision, may look at confirming.

MR RATTENBURY: It is a tricky question. The people who have stepped in clearly have some significant problems to help with. On another level, we now have someone who has just come in and, with 2,000 members in the club, has taken the decision to fold the club. I am interested, from a governance point of view and a government oversight point of view, where that lands us.

Ms Kelley: It raises a significant issue—we could not agree more—in terms of the vulnerabilities of club land, where you have a very small volunteer base. In this particular case, one or two people act on behalf of them. That is why we were pleased to see that a special general meeting has been scheduled, because that is the due process that needs to occur to formally make the decision that administration is their path forward. So I think it is fair to say at this point that it is not formal until that has occurred, on 25 November. The members, of course, are open to be part of the discussion at that time.

MR RATTENBURY: The ACT government funds Capital Football to manage the sport in the territory to some extent. Are you confident that Capital Football has fulfilled its role as the oversight body for the sport in the ACT? This appears to be a problem that has been around for some time, and there is a range of rumours. There is talk of ultimatums and all sorts of less than ideal back and forth between the club and the association. It begs the question of the governance of the sport.

Ms Kelley: Absolutely, it does. Capital Football is our largest state sporting organisation. They have 42 clubs. It is no small task. We certainly appreciate that. We have had numerous conversations with them over the last two weeks, noting that their CEO has been away during that period, so it has primarily been with others in the organisation. We have been assured that health checks are being put in place for other clubs, to ensure that there is not this level of situation in other clubs—situations they are not aware of—and that they are not acting, as a peak body should, to ensure the protection of the members, who are effectively their participation base. They are ultimately responsible for the reputation of their sport as a whole.

It is also something that we have reflected on: what more could we, as government, do in the educational space? That is the club health check—that is to ask, “What do your financials look like? How is your committee structured?” I note that it is not our role to work at club land, because that is not something feasible for us to do with the many hundreds or thousands of clubs that we have, but we can work with our 60 peak bodies and, ultimately, the 20 that we fund more closely, and have expectations around this.

We have spoken previously at hearings about the categorisation process that we put in place around the Sport and Recreation Investment Scheme. The pillars of assessment that sports were asked to provide evidence against were: governance, community reach, financial, policy and planning. Within that, we had to have assurance around Capital Football, as an example, that they have all the policies in place. We then need to drill down a bit into how they are implementing those policies. Is it just a bit of paper to say, “Yes, we have it,” or is it something that they are actively putting in place and can, hand on heart, say, “We have health check-ins. We are aware of where every club is up to.” I think that, at this point, it is something that they have not been able to do.

MS LEE: The debt that the club owes the ACT government is quite sizable. That does not happen overnight. When did the ACT government first become aware that the debt was growing and they were not paying? Presumably, you send notices—a number of them. When did that start to—I do not want to say unravel, but, basically—

Mr Fitzgerald: I need to be cautious here. There are commercial-in-confidence activities. Certainly, while the club is still searching for a way to continue, I do not want to undermine the club in terms of their previous financial activities. It is fair to say, though, that it has been an issue that we have been working on for a number of years. It has not been a recent occurrence. It is something that we have actively engaged with for a number of years.

MS LEE: I will not push any further, then.

Ms Kelley: There is probably just one other point that we would add in terms of Capital Football’s reflections on the situation—that this is not just a governance issue for a club; it also relates to competition structures, salary caps and things that are in play that have perhaps led Gungahlin United down a path, where they have spent more than they could afford, essentially. Again, not wanting to pre-empt the outcomes of the process, but that is probably something else that we would encourage Capital Football to reflect on moving forward. I know that they have effectively put some decision-making into—

MR RATTENBURY: Is the absence of the CEO why Capital Football has not

answered any public questioning? Is that your understanding?

Ms Kelley: I cannot speak for Capital Football. Capital Football made a statement and then they did not have much more to add to that statement.

THE CHAIR: This is a change in tack. The ACT government submission stated that research shows that one-third of girls aged 13 to 17 years discontinue sports participation because the activity is no longer perceived as fun, often due to an increased emphasis on competition and less focus on social interaction. Is that age 13 to 17 years in the ACT? Is that what that number refers to, or is that an Australian thing?

Ms Kelley: It is more Australian.

THE CHAIR: More broadly.

Ms Kelley: Yes.

THE CHAIR: In which case, what are the tactics of the government, sports clubs and parents, and what have you heard that has been discussed or are you thinking about within the directorate to mitigate that issue? I have a daughter who discusses whether or not sport is fun. At the moment we are telling her it is fun. Is there room for government assistance, intervention or working with sports clubs and parents?

Ms Berry: Potentially, and we can do that through some of the grants that are provided with different programs that different sports might want to run around inclusion and participation. We can talk to some of those. I would say it is probably at about that age, maybe lower in some team sports, where it does start to become competitive. You see that mostly with women and girls, but with boys as well, and others, in those pre-teen years who will often be playing junior sports, and it is for fun, but then it starts to become a pathway, less into a social sport and more into a competitive professional space, in a lot of cases.

THE CHAIR: That is the age where you find out how not very good you are at sports, in my experience. That is boys as well; is it particularly girls?

Ms Berry: That is the experience that people will say.

Ms Kelley: We also need to acknowledge, with the research, that whilst they say they move away from sport because they do not like the competition, strict uniform rules and things, which sports are getting better at, they are also recognising that they do not need to have 18-week competitions for which you need to wear a Lycra dress, or whatever the scenario might be. Maybe that is appropriate for a high-performance pathway because that is what is expected, as you move up through the sports and into national and international realms.

Probably some of the trends, particularly through AusPlay, tell us that we still have very high participation rates in non-sport types—more of the recreational activities or physical activity based. That could be going to the gym or doing dance. If we look at AusPlay, going to the gym and walking are the high participation activities. We would hope that that is the case—that, whilst they are still being active, it is just not in those

sporting environments.

We do, however, as per our CBR Next Move, want to continue to encourage them to be active through sport because sport offers, as we know, so much more than just the physical activity component. There is social connection, health and wellbeing, and all those things on which we do not need to elaborate.

Our efforts within government, in recognising that, look at things like funding the Capitals and United to help elevate them. Also, as part of those agreements, it is about having community engagement requirements where they are out and about, as positive role models for girls, and they can see that it is actually cool to be active and running around in a sporting competition. You do not have to do that as a high-performance thing; you can play social grade basketball for the rest of your life, if you want to, if that is your choice.

It is a work in progress. Also, the expansion of sport offerings for women and girls over the last 10 years means that some of this research probably needs updating, to see whether there is any change in that. Ultimately, sports like AFL, Rugby League and Rugby Union are still in their infancy, in terms of women's participation. We have seen great growth at our junior levels across those sports, even in female cricket. It would be interesting to see, in five to 10 years, whether those same dropout rates are still there, particularly locally.

Our funding programs are also looking at this. We have a targeted partnership program with AFL at the moment that is looking at participation of women and girls. We also have our most recent women's coaching and officiating support program, which is looking at that deficiency of representation for women within those types of roles within sport. We know that there is so much to be gained by having women in those roles, because that might be more of an attractive thing for a 15-year-old girl to want to play, if they have a female coach, for example. All of these things add up.

THE CHAIR: You are talking about coaching, refereeing and managing, perhaps.

Ms Kelley: Yes.

THE CHAIR: That is interesting. We heard from the Youth Coalition this morning. They were talking about the idea of normalising urban sport or recreational sports organisations or sports groups that do things like AFL Nines and things that are more of a kick and giggle—you go with your friends, you are just going to play some netball, but it is team sport and it is organised, but no-one wins anything, apart from a banana or something at the end of the game. It was backed up by the youth commissioner as well that that is a real possibility for growth and support. I think it is Urban Rec; is that—

Ms Kelley: Yes, we would not disagree.

Ms Berry: We see an increase now in women's running and exercise groups, to continue that participation. That is increasing. Running is one of those sports—triathlon and that kind of thing—where you are starting to see increasing numbers of women and girls. Periods are one of the other barriers for women and girls in that age group; and,

for multicultural women and girls, with different coverings and different requirements, their needs are not being met by some sports.

We are doing the women's pavilions—making them female friendly, or more inclusive for everybody to use, which means they are more accessible, have lighting and they are nicer, and more inclusive for everyone. One of the challenges that I have heard about for women in different kinds of sports is that, unlike soccer, or football, where the game starts and finishes, and you know when it is going to begin and end, sports like swimming and athletics do not necessarily have a start and a finish time. There will be times when girls will need to go to the toilet just before their event and they might not have access, because there is not an understanding that girls actually need to do that—go to the toilet, change a tampon, fix their headscarves or whatever, immediately before their event.

Beyond the challenges for girls and women in accessing sport at those ages, there also needs to be an understanding from the sport that these things are natural and need to happen at particular times, or accidents will happen. As much as girls may not be finding it fun, it can also be really hard if there is not an understanding across the sports community that girls of that age need to do things before they play sport, and they are worried that something will happen while they are playing sport if they do not manage it in the time that they need to. I think that a broader understanding is required when it comes to what is needed for girls which is different from what is needed for boys.

Ms Kelley: The understanding of that, we think, will be bolstered by further movement in terms of requiring governance thresholds for organisations. Going back a number of years now, we brought in, as part of our funding, that sports organisations need to have 40 per cent representation of women on their boards. Nationally, there has been a decision, endorsed by all ministers for sport and recreation, that that should shift to 50 per cent in 2027. That is, again, another significant expectation within the sporting sector that there is strong consideration of the needs of female participants, and that needs to be reflected in their leadership as well.

MS CARRICK: Is Mr Green able to come to the table now?

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS CARRICK: In March, there was a motion passed in the Assembly for a cross-directorate working group to look at Woden. It talked about the holistic planning for physical, business and social aspects of the town centre, including identifying sites for an aquatic centre, an indoor sports stadium and an arts centre, to meet the needs of the growing community and its large catchment. Phillip will be the biggest, maybe outside Kambah, with over 19,000 forecast to live in Phillip, the one suburb, and the catchment is densifying significantly. How are we going with that cross-directorate working group? Is Sports and Rec on it, and how often do you meet?

Mr Green: I have read and understood the privilege statement. Thank you for the question. The committee has met on two occasions. Yes, Sport and Rec and several other government entities are involved in those discussions.

In previous committee hearings—probably not this one but other standing

committees—I have made comment around some work that we are doing as a directorate, particularly around social infrastructure. That work is continuing, and it is scheduled to be completed at the end of this calendar year. That is really important in order to understand what is existing on the ground, in terms of social infrastructure, not just sporting facilities but things such as places of worship, aged-care facilities, and a variety of other social infrastructure needs across the community.

I would say that the work that is occurring, in part, relates to the work on the southern gateway planning and design frameworks. There are many elements that we are considering as part of that work. I cannot pre-empt any decisions of government, nor can I make any announcements of government. Certainly, we are acutely aware of what those needs are, and we do rely upon agencies such as, within CMTEEDD, Sport and Rec to help inform that policy work as we move forward.

MS CARRICK: The motion says that you will provide a progress report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2025. Is that on track to happen?

Mr Green: Yes, it is on track.

MS CARRICK: Given that you are looking at it—and that is terrific—how will you liaise with the big developers that are required to do community facilities? We have, obviously, Geocon with the pool; we have the Hellenic Club with community facilities; we have Scentre Group and their big proposal of 17 new towers, 55 storeys and some community facilities. How is all this joined up? What advice do you give to Planning to say, “This is a massive catchment now. This is what they need for sports and rec”? How do you identify the sites and ensure that the community is put first, and the developer does not think, “Just tick the box; we’re giving you something”?

Ms Kelley: The community needs assessment work that CED has undertaken—and we have been involved in that process—has looked at a range of positions, in some cases where either population ratios or statistics have been relied upon, for some sports, and some sports are more sophisticated than others. Things like that have been put into the process.

Also, we look at the reality check of what is provided elsewhere and, again, what the participation demand is looking like within that. Those needs assessments are, rightly, based on population growth, so it is based on the trends of the sport currently and what might be projected into the future. That is broken down by a select group of sports that have the highest participation rates that we might expect to see continue their trend in growth.

Within that, there are lines of aquatic provision and outdoor sportsground provision, so they are bulked up into those lines. That is where we have had commentary and then feedback on the process.

Mr Green: The work that we are doing through the social infrastructure takes in some of that detailed locational and population specific aspects, but we also want to establish benchmarks. There are benchmarks established for facilities that are used right across the country, in terms of town planning, which I am sure, Ms Carrick, you are aware of. That is the starting point. As our starting point, we understand what those ratios may

look like for any particular facility, whether that is a sporting facility or other facility. We utilise that. We utilise the local knowledge and the industry engagement, in particular, that Sport and Rec have, right across that continuum of sport offering within the territory.

When it comes to development, we are pretty clear with the Territory Plan in terms of the zoning. That is effectively the starting point post the strategic planning work, and we have established a town centre. There are a variety of different commercial zones, community facility zones and public recreation zones within the Territory Plan, and that sets that strategic context.

Clearly, there is the expectation that, when proposals come from the private sector, there are many uses there, and we have moved to an outcome-focused Territory Plan, as you would be aware. What we want to see is that it is not just about development and housing; it is also about employment; it is also about that social infrastructure and need.

It is a balance, and we aim to work to try and deliver, where we can, those assets on territory land and, where we can, where it is possible and where it may well be commercially viable for a particular proponent, within sites that they own.

MS CARRICK: As far as this outcomes-based planning system goes, the community has made it pretty clear that they are not that rapt about the 25-metre pool being in the Geocon tower. I am keen to know what is good about that little splash area, the baby splash area. How is that a good outcome?

Mr Green: I will not necessarily talk to the outcome; what I will say is that there was a pretty stringent process undertaken with respect to the change to the Territory Plan in the last term of government. The Territory Plan was amended. It went through a consultation process. It also went to the Assembly for a decision. They are the policy settings that exist.

In terms of the broader outcome with respect to the sporting facilities, we have seen that 50-metre pools in some circumstances have not been viable. We have also seen, in the territory context, that indoor splash areas and other offerings, such as swim school and other pool facilities, can drive that. The decision was made by government in the last term, and in fact by the Assembly in the last term, to do that.

The position that you put around the 25-metre pool being within a Geocon development—and I think I have made this comment in previous committee hearings—is that it is a pool that will still be required to be provided for public use. It is not Geocon, as the developer—again, should that development be approved; we are speculating about that at this point—there is still a requirement that that pool is made publicly available.

MS CARRICK: That is true. The kiddies' splash is between a building and a fence to Melrose Drive. It is not visible to anybody. It is located in a very poor position, squeezed between a building and a fence by a road. I do not know how anyone could think that that is a good outcome for the people, for the community, and to be fun. Have you talked to Geocon about doing a land swap with them or taking back a lease?

Mr Green: I have had no discussions with Geocon.

MS CARRICK: Why not? Why wouldn't the ACT government try and work out a better outcome for the community?

Mr Green: I do not think that a land swap is a thing that government does. There are provisions within the Planning Act with respect to direct sale and how that applies to contiguous land. That is not a matter that is in my area of responsibility. I probably cannot comment any further on it. At this point, given that there is an active development application being assessed by the Territory Planning Authority, I will not be able to provide comment on the development proposal.

MS CARRICK: There have been land swaps before. The West Basin and the Curtin horse paddocks were swapped. I think there was one in Dickson. It can be done, where there is a will, and the community is asking for it. You say that there will be another high school in Woden. What analysis have you done on that, given that, in Melrose High School, half of the students are out-of-area students?

Ms Berry: Can you ask the question again?

MS CARRICK: You said that there would be another high school in Woden. With Melrose, half of the students come from out of area. When will there be the demand for another high school in Woden?

Ms Berry: Again, you are asking a question in the Education space, so I will not have the detail to be able to provide a fulsome response to you. Previously, there had been population growth in the area that suggested that a high school would be required within the Woden town centre, probably by 2028-29. That has changed. It will not be required until probably into the next decade. I do not have any more detail than that, but I can point you to the Treasurer's population forecasts, and that is—

MS CARRICK: Do not worry; I have seen those.

Ms Berry: That is all I could probably provide on that answer today.

MR EMERSON: I want to ask about pools—specifically, the 2013 ACT Aquatic Facilities Planning Framework. The Friends of Manuka Pool were here on the other day of hearings, and they indicated during their testimony that, in a meeting with you, Minister, in August this year, they were told they could not have access to that planning framework, as it was no longer informing government decision-making. This is what they said in the hearing. An FOI request from late last year—related to Phillip pool, I think—showed that, in an email, Ms Kelley, you had said:

The ACT Government Aquatic Facilities Framework continues to provide guidance in relation to relevant ACT aquatic facility matters. Renewal of this document sits within the future work plan for Sport and Recreation. However, this is now dependent on the priorities within the new term of government.

I have found the framework, so it is now publicly available, but for a period of time it was not. I am curious about why there has been conflicting advice provided, publicly

and privately, in relation to that framework.

Ms Berry: I do not recall at all saying that it was not available.

Ms Kelley: It was definitely always—they were welcome to have it. In the last refresh of our website, where there were deemed to be outdated strategies, it was removed. That is why it has been re-added, because it is the current framework, noting that it is well out of date, and it is a key piece of work that is currently being scoped up, in terms of a new aquatic strategy.

Ms Berry: I did say that, when Manuka Pool and—I cannot remember who the other groups were.

MS CARRICK: It might have been Save Phillip Pool—those people.

Ms Berry: It could have been. We did talk about that, but I did not say it was not available. It must have been available when I met with them; I cannot remember. There was no hiding of the document, but I did say to them that we were going to be developing a new aquatic strategy. They seemed happy with that.

MR EMERSON: I am just reporting what they said in the hearing. They said they were told they could not have access to it, or something to that effect.

MS LEE: At the very least, there was a miscommunication, because they were adamant about that.

MR EMERSON: Yes, there must have been. We went back and forth about it.

Ms Berry: Okay. The thing is that it was always public. It just got missed. It was probably floating around the internet.

Ms Kelley: It is still sitting there, as part of our suite of documents, noting the timeframe that sits around it. Certainly, we are the first to say that it is out of date.

MR EMERSON: When was it put back up—listed specifically?

Ms Kelley: I can take that on notice for you.

MR EMERSON: Okay; thank you.

Ms Kelley: It was probably prompted by that meeting—that it was not there.

MR EMERSON: By that meeting, so it might have been—

Ms Kelley: That was when it was realised.

MR EMERSON: I think I looked for it earlier this year, and I could not find it; now it is right there.

Ms Berry: I think you are right.

MR EMERSON: Okay. It has a range of different things in it. This was from 2013. A couple of the items include a city aquatic facility in the CBD having been established as a high priority at that time—that is obviously proceeding now, but this was also in 2013—and the master plan integration for Manuka Pool within its wider precinct, which I understand maybe has not proceeded. Is there any tracking of the items in there that have been discontinued? Obviously, you are developing a new strategy or a new framework but will there be a final acquittal of this framework?

Ms Kelley: There will be. The first line item of the scope being developed for the new strategy is to ask where did the last one get to and to make sure that that is definitely accounted for. Noting the dates in and around the current framework, this one will be superseding it. So, as you rightly say, we need to close that one out formally. So, yes, that will be done.

MR EMERSON: Will that be tabled in the Assembly or published in an annual report or something to that effect?

Ms Berry: Sure.

MR EMERSON: Great. Thank you.

Ms Berry: It is not a secret.

MR EMERSON: No; it is just that I would love to read it.

Ms Berry: No worries; we will make sure you get the first copy.

MR EMERSON: Thanks for that.

MS LEE: Signed.

MR EMERSON: Yes, that would be nice; with a little inscription. The framework says that the “Phillip Swimming and Ice Skating Centre is a privately-owned and operated seasonal aquatic facility located in the Woden town centre,” and “Any future redevelopment of this facility will be subject to leasing provisions and must comply with the specific requirements of the Territory Plan.” So that was signalled in 2013. It is pretty clear that the government was aware that something was going to happen with the pool, or probably might happen with the pool. Do you know when this first emerged?

Ms Berry: I do not think there was. In 2013, it was still privately owned and not for sale.

Ms Kelley: Again, this is probably going back into some archives, but the inclusion, I would suspect—without going back to the detail—was around acknowledging that it was a privately-owned pool, and all pools have their renewal timeframes, not unlike Canberra Olympic Pool which was an old facility. I think it has always been a pool with fond following, and so back in 2013 that was probably included just for clarity around that fact.

MR EMERSON: Okay. Big Splash is also in here and there is no line that it could be redeveloped in the future. I get that it is not necessarily under the government's control, but it was just curious to me.

The next line in that framework says that “residents in Molonglo, Weston Creek and Woden Valley will directly benefit from the construction of the future the Stromlo Leisure Centre”—great—“and also the City Aquatic Facility in central Canberra,” which Ms Carrick might disagree with. Is that your assessment at this time as well: that the proposed new pool for Commonwealth Park will benefit residents of Molonglo, Weston Creek and Woden Valley? Or are they kind of considered outside the scope of the benefit of that facility?

Ms Berry: Everybody will benefit from that facility in certain ways, just like every pool in Canberra. As I said, we are lucky we can get to pools around the place. The reason that we are doing a new aquatic strategy is that things have changed. The world has moved on.

MR EMERSON: Thank you.

MS LEE: A lot of witnesses have talked about their frustrations or challenges with booking facilities for training—for example, at schools—where they have had to go to individual schools to make bookings. Does the government have any plans about a centralised booking system? I can see little smiles. Maybe you have already looked at it and dismissed it. Could you give us a little update?

Ms Berry: We are doing it. I am not sure, but maybe they do not know that it is centralised now.

Ms Kelley: I cannot speak to it but there is an Education process. Again, our colleagues at CED might be best to—

MS LEE: I think this is more about schools, because they talked about having to deal with individual schools. There are certain clubs that train in different schools—I think it was up to seven different schools that they train out of—and they have had to deal individually. So you have a volunteer basically having to deal individually with seven different business managers at schools—and seven different keys and all of those things. That is obviously—

Ms Berry: That will be the case for different facilities having different access points and whatever. There is a centralised process now where we have a schedule of fees across the board. So that is consistent now. That was not the case previously. We have also put some school facilities onto the Sport and Rec booking system. So we are sort of moving to a centralised process, I guess, in all sport and rec facilities that might be used outside of school hours—for example, Canberra High School and Kingsford Smith School. I cannot remember all of them, but there are a couple that have been moved over and are bookable now on the Sport and Rec system. The internal Education facilities like gymnasiums and things still remain with Education. But there is certainly an aspiration that somehow we could make that easier, although I do not think Sports will be going to individual schools. I am interested, and I will have a look at the

submissions.

MS LEE: We heard that multiple times.

MR EMERSON: Basketball ACT said it about the City Stallions Basketball Club—so that was second-hand. That was in the hearing.

MS LEE: And the Dodgers said it this morning.

MR EMERSON: That is right, yes.

Ms Berry: Dodgers?

MS LEE: Yes, the Dodgers said it this morning and Basketball ACT also said it at the last hearing.

Ms Berry: Well, they will have a consistency in fees now. That has certainly been the case for the last couple of years. But we can follow up the centralisation.

MS LEE: Minister, you mentioned the word “aspiration”. Is that the extent of it at the moment and there are no plans or anything to migrate any other schools to that centralised system?

Ms Berry: They are schools primarily; so that needs to be the priority. If it can be unpicked, then it is something we could consider. We have done some facilities—outdoor fields. That has already started, and we can look at that as a bit of a pilot and see how it is working. It seems to be working smoothly. Sports seem to like it. It is a very small part of quite a big amount of work.

MS LEE: The other sorts of challenges that they raised were in relation to where they have a booking and sometimes they will have a last-minute cancellation because of some reason or another. As you said yourself, they are schools first and foremost. Is there anything that gives them assurance in terms of guidelines like, “If we have to cancel, we are going to give you this much notice,” or whatever it might be?

Ms Berry: I do not have any of that information with me; I am sorry. I can take it on notice and see if I can provide it for the committee. I just do not have school stuff with me today.

MS LEE: I know but this is a bit of a crossover, because they obviously use a lot of it.

Ms Berry: I know, yes.

MS LEE: Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, I want to ask about hire fees for sports ovals. As you say, this is problematic and is a source of fees, but I note that the ACT government submission talks about covering only 18.4 per cent of the cost. There seems to be a disconnect between that figure and the community’s understanding of the fees. I also noted in your submission that the 18 per cent figure was up from 11.2 per cent in

2022-23. That is quite an increase. Can you give us the background on why that increase has occurred?

Mr Fitzgerald: Costs fluctuate in terms of subsidy, and that will depend on the season. In periods of high rain, we obviously use less water. So the actual comparative cost year to year will change in terms of maintenance. That also impacts on the number of times we have to mow the length that we actually mow to. There is a range of variables that will impact that change from 11 per cent to 18 per cent.

Generally speaking, our fees are only increased through wage price index. What we have seen of late is that, generally, the costs of the inputs that are required—for example, diesel and labour—are actually higher. So the costs for us to maintain sportsgrounds has increased; whereas, the cost to book the facilities generally has not kept up with that. It is not a fixed rate. What we are subsidising is not capped at a certain percentage. The actual costs, as I said, will differ from year to year.

MR RATTENBURY: We have also had quite significant feedback about people being concerned about the state of grounds—uneven surfaces, risk of injury, divots that they end up filling in themselves and the like. Is there a clear process for clubs to identify those risk points and is there a performance standard in Sport and Rec as to a repair timeframe? I am not sure I am asking the right question, but perhaps you can—

Mr Fitzgerald: It is partly a failure of the fact that there is too much participation and our sportsgrounds are at peak usage for a lot of the year. We do not have the ability to take fields off line like we once had to actually do the restoration works. We have very short periods of time at the end of each summer and winter season to be able to do some of that work. But, generally, we can only get to a certain percentage, and the climatic conditions will have a huge impact on the uplift in the surface.

We have events like the Kanga Cup. The Kanga Cup has a massive impact on our sports fields because there is a high concentration over a particularly short period of time and, unfortunately, the weather conditions are not always great. We have had significant periods of wet weather during those events, and you will see, particularly in those times, that is where we will have that detrimental impact to the surfaces.

We work closely with the clubs. We have recently implemented some additional appliances on the sportsgrounds, like corers, to try and improve the conditions. We are also using other means in which to improve fertilisation and things like coconut fibres to retain moisture and provide additional nitrogen into the surface. But there is no one quick fix. When clubs come to us to say that there are particular areas of concern and, throughout the competition timeframes, you may see quick fixes. For instance, in goalmouths, we will go back and returf particular areas. But as to whether there is a performance standard that we are working to, not as such, no.

Ms Berry: Another couple of things that the sportsgrounds team have implemented more recently are the moisture detection things—I do not know what they are called—and the Ph level identifier devices.

Mr Fitzgerald: We now have across all of our sports fields moisture meters, which are a Waterbird product, that sits in there. So we have a level of intelligence that we have

never had before about what the surface temperature is and what the moisture levels are and then our irrigation systems can respond to that. It provides us a means by which to maintain a surface moisture level that we know is that right balance between allowing the grass to continue to grow but also being firm enough that it does not break underfoot and cause unnecessary damage. It has been a huge improvement for us to have that technology. We are still working through unlocking all of the potential of what that means, but so far we are seeing great results.

Ms Berry: Mr Rattenbury, the other thing—like it or not—is that synthetic fields or artificial turf fields are becoming a more regular request from different sports because they do not require the same level of maintenance. They have an upfront cost and they have other challenges. There is innovation in that space happening all the time. The Sport and Rec team reuse turf, for example—let’s call it the old Watson field—at Hockey ACT, which has been pulled up for replacement, funded by the federal government. That is being stored and reused on cricket pitches and the like around ACT gov facilities.

We are trying to work on how in our space we can work better with the environment and with those synthetic fields but also making sure that, when we are putting in synthetic or astro turf fields—or whatever the correct term is right now—they do not have the impact that people are worried about with chemical flows, microplastics and things like that and are using more natural fill like cork instead of rubber.

MR RATTENBURY: Early in your answer, Mr Fitzgerald, you talked about the demand on ovals. Is this a signal we need to bring ovals back on line that have previously been taken off line.

Mr Fitzgerald: There was analysis done of dryland ovals. We have 32 dryland ovals across our city. The analysis showed that 14 of those were potentially able to be brought on line. We are constantly looking at opportunities to use those better—whether that is bringing them back on line as a sporting field or actually taking some of the load off our main fields and putting training on those fields. Often that does not mean the same level of intervention, irrigation or other things. It can be as simple as over-sowing with a more acceptable seed grass type that makes the surface flatter for things like junior training. We are actively looking at options there and at every opportunity we explore with the minister opportunities to bring those back on line.

Ms Berry: One that the sport and rec team are piloting is at Melba Copeland, where on one of the fields, previously a dryland oval, we are piloting not to completely reactivate it but to reactivate it in the way that Mr Fitzgerald’s talked about with some over-seeding. The irrigation system is still on line there and working, it appears, and it has the right amount of sun and not as much weed growth, and we can put some line markings on it suitable for junior training. It frees up some space on the other sports fields.

MS LEE: I have a follow-on but also a side question to what Mr Rattenbury asked. Does sport and rec have a proactive schedule of maintenance of fields? Have you had feedback about how well that is working?

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes, we do have a proactive schedule. We are working towards

publishing that information, available on our website, so that community sporting groups can actually see when we will be doing particularly things like coring, which can be disruptive to sportsground maintenance. Clubs are very keen for us to actually undertake that activity; so they want to see when it is going to come their way. So, yes, we do have that level of detail. Again, weather does have a huge impact on when and how we can get to some of those activities.

Ms Berry: On the City Services website, there is a schedule, but we want to pull that out separately so that it and the other kinds of works that are happening can be seen a bit more clearly.

MS CARRICK: I am interested in sports and rec outcomes. The Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Gungahlin town centres will have a 50-metre pool, aquatic centre and an indoor sports stadium, but Woden will not have that. These are out of the school context. We will not have that. Why is it a good outcome that Woden does not have the same as the other town centres? Is it a good outcome or is it a political decision? That is what I want to know.

Ms Berry: We did not make this decision with regards to the sale of the site, but I understand that there is some significant unhappiness that there is a decision now that a 50-metre outdoor pool in Woden will not exist in the future.

MS CARRICK: But this is an outcomes-based framework. Is this a good outcome? If it is, please explain it to me. Otherwise, it is a political decision.

Ms Berry: It is a good outcome for some people, for an indoor pool with playparks and splash areas and program schools—for young people, in particular. But I understand that there are other people who are users of the outdoor 50-metre pool who will not be as happy with that outcome. Unfortunately, we cannot please everybody all of the time with decisions that are made, and some of the decisions are out of our control. But, in this situation, there will be—

MS CARRICK: It is the 50-metre pool we are losing.

Ms Berry: I understand, but there will be a whole new community of pool user groups, should the development go ahead, that will be, I think, pleased with the outcome up there.

THE CHAIR: I am going to wrap it up there. On behalf of the committee, Minister Berry and your officials, thank you very much for your attendance today. There were questions on notice that were taken. Please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank our witnesses who have assisted the committee through their experience and knowledge. We also thank Broadcasting and Hansard for their support. If a member wishes to ask questions on notice, please upload them to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible and no later than five business days from today. This meeting is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 5.04 pm.