



**Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory**

Standing Committee on Economics,
Industry and Recreation

Inquiry into barriers and opportunities for participation in community sports in the ACT

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

Approved for publication

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About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation on 3 December 2024.

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Gaming and racing
- Gaming and Racing Commission
- Arts
- Creative industries
- Screen Canberra
- Tourism
- Skills
- Sport and Recreation
- Building and construction
- Business
- Access Canberra
- ACT Events Fund
- Community events
- Major events
- Night-time economy
- Industrial relations and workplace safety
- Economy
- Economic development and diversification
- Infrastructure Canberra
- Employment

You can read the full establishing resolution on our [website](#).

Committee members

Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA, Chair

Ms Fiona Carrick MLA, Deputy Chair

Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Mr Jeremy Hanson CSC MLA (from 12 February 2025 to 26 June 2025)

Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA (to 12 February 2025 and from 26 June 2025)

Ms Deborah Morris MLA (to 26 June 2025)

Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA (to 15 May 2026)

Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA (from 11 June 2026)

Secretariat

Ms Sophie Milne, Committee Secretary

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About this inquiry

Under Standing Order 216, standing committees can self-initiate an inquiry into any subject area it is given responsibility for by the establishing resolution. The Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation resolved to conduct an inquiry into barriers and opportunities for participation in community sports in the ACT on 30 April 2025.

The Committee informed the Assembly of its intention to conduct this inquiry on 6 May 2025.

Terms of reference

The Committee will examine the access to community sport in the ACT, focusing on barriers and opportunities to participation for everyone, with reference to:

1. objectives of community sport in the ACT;
2. effectiveness of the implementation of the Sport and Recreation Strategy 2023-2028;
3. how access to community sports facilities is planned and delivered for locals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds;
4. barriers to participation in community sport;
5. lessons from successful strategies used in the ACT and around the world that effectively increase sports participation;
6. opportunities to improve participation rates, focusing on policy changes, community programs, and infrastructure improvements;
7. policy around ownership, funding and operating arrangements of sports facilities; and
8. any other relevant matters concerning participation in community sport.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Long form
ACIF	Australian Cricket Infrastructure Fund
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CDRL	Canberra District Rugby League Football Club
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
CSA	Community Sports Alliance
IACS	Independent Advocates for Community Sport
MPS	Equex multi-purpose stadium
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
PO	Peak organisation
QON	Question on notice
QTON	Question taken on notice
RMCGC	Royal Military College Golf Club
WWVPS	Working with Vulnerable People Scheme

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government build on the Sport Report and develop a 10-year sports and recreation strategy by the end of 2027, co-designed with the community sports sector and reviewed every three years, that:

- includes an infrastructure pipeline with specific commitments;
- outlines a proactive maintenance schedule for sport facilities; and
- allocates directorate responsibilities for the delivery of any outcomes.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop and publish criteria for determining locations for future recreation infrastructure, including consideration of public transport access, integration with community activity centres, contribution to street activation, and equitable geographic distribution.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore ways to strengthen how community sport and recreation needs are identified, assessed, and reflected in planning processes, including district strategies, with meaningful engagement with community councils and sporting organisations to ensure an equitable distribution of facilities across Canberra.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government split the Wellbeing indicator for ‘participation in community events and activities’ to identify participation in sporting activities.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government support the re-establishment of a recognised peak organisation to provide member services and a coordinated advocacy and communication channel for the community sport sector.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government regularly audit its list of ACT sports and recreation groups to ensure it is comprehensive – including small and non-traditional sports – complete, and contact information is up-to-date.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government realigns its policy, funding, and coordination settings to support partnerships between itself, community sports organisations, and service providers where these are integral to delivering the objectives of the *Next Move* strategy.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate policy and planning mechanisms to protect community access to significant sport and recreation facilities where redevelopment, closure or change of use is proposed, particularly where those facilities have historically been supported by licensed clubs and provide important community sporting outcomes.

In doing so, the Government should work with sporting organisations, licensed clubs and community stakeholders to explore opportunities for facility retention, replacement or alternative provision.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with stakeholders to ensure that the investment into community sports that has traditionally been provided by the community clubs sector continues in light of likely reduction in community contributions into the future.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government strengthen the Charter of Procurement Values to include community needs, and that these procurement values be considered 'over and above' the core outcomes of the procurement.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government give consideration to the sports infrastructure projects put forward in this inquiry, including those which are listed in Appendix F.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government activate suitable dryland ovals for community sport to reduce pressure on main fields.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake a pilot program to extend the standard cut-off time for the use of appropriately lit outdoor fields to 10 pm, where doing so would not result in an unreasonable impact on immediately adjoining residences.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate bringing all sports facilities available for community use at ACT public schools and willing private schools onto the current centralised booking system, which includes a minimum cancellation period for facilities.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve lighting, safety, and amenities in public spaces to support informal and recreational sport.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider signing up to the Swimmable Cities Charter to show a commitment to working in accordance with its principles and values.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends the ACT Government expand and reform the existing sport voucher program to simplify its eligibility requirements and broaden its coverage to address barriers to access as raised in their inquiry.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends the ACT Government create a centralised online portal for all grants, subsidies, and financial assistance programs for sport participation to improve awareness and uptake.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider options for establishing sport equipment libraries at suitable sporting venues to assist those people who experience cost as a barrier to participating in sporting activities.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends the ACT Government reduce its school hall and ground hire fees for volunteer-led organisations.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that, when designing future transport access, the ACT Government enhance public transport links to existing sports facilities, particularly during scheduled game or social hours.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise co-investment under the community sports facilities program for upgrades that unlock participation, including linking grants to measurable outputs.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government actively seek out partnership opportunities with national and state sporting bodies to facilitate and expedite the development sporting facilities which would alleviate costs imposed on the ACT Government.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government identify and implement best-practice models to deliver dual-use school facilities upgrades, including flexible co-investment arrangements.

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the Federal Government to maximise funding opportunities for community sporting activities and facilities in the ACT.

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase promotion and education of existing programs, both in schools and in sports organisations, including the Play by the Rules program, that are aimed at creating an inclusive and non-discriminatory sporting environment.

Recommendation 27

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government encourage representation and leadership diversity in clubs and governing bodies.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends the ACT Government work with sport and recreation bodies to ensure that young people are aware of the breadth of opportunities available to them for participation in sport.

Recommendation 29

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government support funding for community sporting groups for adaptive sporting equipment suitable for participants with a disability.

Recommendation 30

The Committee recommends the ACT Government improve regulatory processes for sports volunteers in the ACT and continue to report to the Assembly on how it is improving these processes.

Recommendation 31

The Committee recommends the ACT Government reduce the administrative burden on volunteers by providing fit-for-purpose training, toolkits and templates for governance, compliance, and child safety requirements for community sport organisations, and promoting these resources widely.

Recommendation 32

The Committee recommends the ACT Government improve volunteer engagement strategies by public awareness campaigns including utilising existing government channels.

Recommendation 33

The Committee recommends the ACT Government explore recognition programs (e.g. annual awards) and incentives to improve volunteer recruitment and retention.

1. Introduction

About the inquiry

- 1.1. An online form was set up to capture the views of individuals in the community, and nearly half of the submissions which were received came through this form (76 out of 154 submissions total).
- 1.2. The Committee received 154 submissions to the inquiry, two of which were confidential.
- 1.3. The remaining submissions were published on the inquiry webpage and are listed in [Appendix A](#).
- 1.4. The Committee resolved to adopt two exhibits as part of the inquiry. These exhibits provide further information from submitters about community sport in the ACT. All exhibits are available to view on the [inquiry website](#).
- 1.5. The Committee held public hearings on 8 October and 5 November 2025, hearing from a range of stakeholders as well as the Minister for Sport and Recreation. A list of witnesses is available at [Appendix B](#). Transcripts and video recordings of the hearings are available on the [Legislative Assembly website](#).
- 1.6. Eight questions were taken on notice at the hearings. The answers to these questions are available on the [inquiry webpage](#) and listed at [Appendix C](#).
- 1.7. Statistics on the gender of witnesses, collected in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, are at [Appendix D](#). The information is collected to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses.
- 1.8. Ms Carrick MLA, Ms Lee MLA, and Mr Rattenbury MLA undertook a site visit to Wagga Wagga on behalf of the Committee on 7 November 2025. They met with members of Wagga Hockey and Wagga Wagga Athletics, and were given a tour of public sport facilities by the Wagga Wagga Council. A report of that trip is at [Appendix E](#).
- 1.9. The Committee resolved on 28 January 2026 to inquire into E-Pet-063-25 Lack of indoor sporting facilities on Canberra's northside, as a part of this inquiry.¹
- 1.10. The following petitions about sport infrastructure were also referred to the Committee during 2026:
 - Petitions No 3-26 and 18-26 – Diving and deep water facilities in new aquatic centre in Commonwealth Park;
 - Petitions No 80-25 and 21-26 – Deliver an Ice Sports Venue in Tuggeranong;
 - Petitions No 84-25 and 31-26 – Closure of Kaleen Indoor Sports Centre; and
 - Petitions No 8-26 and 30-26 – Hawker Tennis Centre.

¹ Minutes of Proceedings No 41, 2 December 2024, p 544; and Minutes of Proceedings No 44, 3 February 2026, p 679.

- 1.11. The issues raised in these petitions were canvassed in the evidence received in this inquiry, and influenced the Committee’s considerations in this report.
- 1.12. The petitions about the Hawker Tennis Centre were re-referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning on 5 June 2026, at their request.
- 1.13. Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA joined the Committee on 10 June 2026 and she was not able to participate in the hearings for this inquiry. As such, she engaged with a review function only and participated in the finalisation of the report with other members.

What is community sport?

- 1.14. Community sport does not have one definitive meaning.
- 1.15. The ACT Government defined community sport as ‘local competitions, training and programs or activity that is in some way structured in its organisation and delivery.’ They did not believe it includes unstructured activity (e.g. jogging), exercise, incidental activity, active transport, or school sport.² However, the Youth Coalition does include casual recreation activities such as gym use in their understanding of community sport.³
- 1.16. Community sport does encompass a wide range of participants of differing age groups, and includes those who play sport, in addition to officials, coaches and spectators who support it.⁴
- 1.17. While community sport is not elite or professional sport it does not exclude participants, such as coaches or administrators, from being paid. It can also provide a pathway to elite or professional sport, sometimes within the structure of a single club.⁵

Community sport in the ACT

- 1.18. According to the submissions for this inquiry, there is a large variety of community sports played in the ACT, including but not limited to the following:

Australian Rules	Dragon boat	Handball
Football	racing	Hockey
Badminton	Diving	Ice sports
Bowls	Equestrian sports	Kabaddi
Rock climbing	Football	Mini golf
Cricket	Futsal	Netball
Cycling	Golf	Parkour
Dance	Grid iron	Pétanque

² ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 5.

³ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 5.

⁴ Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 118; Ms Simone Hunter, Chair, Weston Creek Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 152.

⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 5.

Pickleball	Skating	Underwater
Powerchair	Squash	hockey
football	Swimming	Underwater rugby
Rugby league	Tennis	Water polo
Rugby union	Triathlon	
Running	Volleyball	

- 1.19. Surveys have shown that ACT residents undertake physical activity at a higher level than in the rest of Australia. In 2023-24, 92.1 percent of Canberrans (15 and over) participated at least once per year, with 77.9 percent participating once per week. The comparative national figures were 84.1 percent and 66 percent respectively.⁶
- 1.20. Socio-economic factors can influence participation levels in physical activity and sport. Individuals from households with an annual income of less than \$40,000 have the lowest participation levels for both adults and children, with participation rates generally continuing to rise in line with income.⁷
- 1.21. The ACT population median total income is considerably higher than Australia, with the territory at \$72,122 and Australia at \$55,062.⁸
- 1.22. This trend can be observed in specific sports. Running is more common at higher income levels and ACT has the largest number (on a per capita basis) of people who run. People earning \$200,000 or more annually have a 26.1 percent participation rate while participation drops to 15.5 percent at \$70,000–99,000, and just 9.1 percent at \$40,000–69,000.⁹
- 1.23. AUSPLAY data from 2023-2024 (national data) identifies a participation differential (three times per week) above the average of 8.3 percent for women with a tertiary education and over 15 percent for women from households with income greater than \$200,000 per annum. For people with a disability, their participation is far reduced, around 12 percent less than the population average¹⁰.
- 1.24. Some barriers for lower-socioeconomic households in the ACT include: finding spare time, a reliance on public transport, a high representation of physically active jobs (e.g. manual labour) and prioritisation of the needs ‘of the family unit over their own’. Although households are active, many may often seek out free or low-cost options for participation.¹¹

⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 6.

⁷ Clearinghouse of Sport, *The Information and Knowledge sharing platform for Australian Sport, Socio Economic*, <https://www.ausport.gov.au/clearinghouse/evidence/factors-influencing-sport-participation/socio-economic> , accessed (28 January 2026); ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 11.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Region summary: Australian Capital Territory*, <https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=gccsa&rgn=8ACTE> (accessed 29 January 2026)

⁹ Canberra Runners Inc, *Submission 146*, p 2.

¹⁰ ACT Government *Submission 135*, p 11.

¹¹ ACT Government *Submission 135*, p 11.

- 1.25. The ACT has a higher rate of participation in sport by children than the average for Australia, including a high frequency of participation per week.¹²
- 1.26. As a non-professional activity, community sport relies heavily on the contribution of volunteers.¹³ 21.1 percent of volunteers in the ACT volunteer in sports and recreation activities, which is similar to the average across Australia of 25 percent. In 2022, 3.1 million Australians volunteered in sports and recreation, contributing an estimated \$4 billion of labour value each year.¹⁴
- 1.27. Community sports facilities in the ACT are a combination of ownership and operational models including those provided by the ACT Government (i.e. sportsgrounds and district aquatic facilities), the commercial sector (indoor sport facilities, fitness centre, aquatic facilities including learn-to-swim) and not-for-profit community organisations (i.e. sport specific facilities such as the ACT Netball Centre and ACT Hockey Centre).¹⁵

- 1.28. Serving a broad range of objectives, reflecting its multifaceted value to society, community sport enhances community health and wellbeing, strengthens social cohesion and community, stimulates employment, visitation and economic activity and fosters community pride and volunteerism.¹⁶
- 1.29. Sport and physical activity contribute to improved physical health, including preventative measures which help to prevent the onset of disease, illness or injury.¹⁷ Physical health and/or fitness is the strongest motivator for Australians 15 and over to participate in sport and physical activity.¹⁸
- 1.30. In addition to physical health, sport also supports positive mental health. The Mental Health Community Coalition in the ACT notes that ‘Community sport plays a vital role in preventing poor mental health across the broader population. Regular participation provides structure, physical activity, and social connection—all of which are protective factors against the development of mental distress.’¹⁹
- 1.31. This position is supported by the submission from the President of ACT Masters Squash, who describes the advantages of squash as follows:

¹² ACT Government *Submission 135*, pp 6 & 7.

quick thinking, and adaptability. The satisfaction of improving skills and competing—regardless of the outcome—boosts self-esteem and resilience. Moreover, the sense of achievement and enjoyment derived from playing, learning, and socialising with fellow enthusiasts contributes to a positive outlook and emotional balance.²⁰

- 1.32. Community sport also plays an important role in social cohesion, with Mr Anthony Corder stating in his submission:

Community sport has been important to me as a competitive pursuit, a social activity and for fitness and health. I have also grown to realise the importance it has on community cohesion, mental health and just general community building. It's an important opportunity for people to interact with others that aren't just like them, see different perspectives and counteract the increasingly narrow echo chamber of online community.²¹

²⁰ Mr Larry Davin, President ACT Masters Squash, *Submission 119*, p. 2.

²¹ Mr Anthony Corder, *Submission 13*, p 1.

2. Strategy and policy

- 2.1. First of the five key themes around which the Committee heard barriers and opportunities to sports participation cluster is ACT Government strategy and policy.
- 2.2. This section examines the adequacy of existing sport-specific strategies, their integration with broader government frameworks, and the systems through which government engages and consults with the community sport sector.

Top-level sport and recreation strategy

- 2.3. Since at least 2010, ACT Government sport and recreation policies and delivery have been guided by a top-level strategy. At the time, this developed out of advocacy by the community sport sector for long-term planning to ‘enhance the sport and recreation experience for all Canberrans’.²²
- 2.4. The *Active 2020* strategy, co-designed by government and a working group representing the sport sector, was in place from 2010-20. The ten-year strategy set seven priorities, each containing a list of sub-initiatives with delegated responsibility for their delivery and a stated success indicator. These indicators included both higher-level change statements – e.g., ‘corporate sector providing regular workplace sport and recreation activities’ (2.5)) – and specific deliverables, such as marketing campaigns (2.1), institutional partnerships (5.6), and the development and upgrade of specific facilities (6.4).
- 2.5. The replacement *Next Move* strategy was launched in late 2022.²³ The six-year strategy sets four priorities, each containing a list of projects, outcomes, and success indicators. Unlike *Active 2020*, *Next Move* was not co-designed with a sector working group and its priorities have no specific deliverables. Instead, deliverables are listed in its annual implementation plans.²⁴
- 2.6. Submissions and witnesses raised several concerns with *Next Move* and government’s approach to setting a sports and recreation strategy:
 - a) **Strategy length too short:** Submissions and witnesses argued that the six-year duration of *Next Move* strategy is insufficient and represents a backwards step from the ten-year timeline of *Active 2020*. They consistently called for a return to a rolling, ten-year strategy to provide a stable, shared vision for both government and the community sport sector.²⁵ Shorter strategies weaken both community sport and private sector confidence necessary for joint investment and constrain forward planning.

²² ACT Government, [A Strategic Plan for Sport and Active Recreation in the ACT & Region 2011-2020](#) (Active 2000), p 6.

²³ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 6; ACT Government, [CBR Next Move: Sports and Recreation Strategy 2023-2028](#) (Next Move).

²⁴ For example, see: ACT Government, [Sport and Recreation Implementation Plan 2024](#); ACT Government, [Sport and Recreation Implementation Plan 2025](#).

²⁵ See: Independent Advocates for Community Sport (IACS), *Submission 124*, p 6; Community Sport Alliance ACT (CSA), *Submission 120*, p 9; Mr Mark Vergano, Mr Jim Roberts, Mr Mick Brady, and Ms Nichole Bowles, community sport advocates panel; *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, pp 160–65.

- b) **No long-term infrastructure plan or commitments:** Evidence highlighted the absence of a clear, long-term infrastructure plan and investment pipeline as a critical weakness of *Next Move*.²⁶ Witnesses described an environment in which planning is largely reactive, funding is dictated by annual grant rounds or election-year commitments, and the sector is unable to plan beyond the short term. As a result, facilities are operating at or above capacity, asset condition is deteriorating, and population growth outpaces investment – creating a widening facilities gap that the government and sector are attempting to bridge in constant ‘catch-up’ mode.
- c) **Policy relationships unclear:** Evidence also pointed to the lack of clarity about how *Next Move* related to existing and emerging policy documents. These include the 2013 aquatic facilities strategy,²⁷ 2015 indoor facilities study,²⁸ 2018 basketball, futsal and gymnastics facilities study,²⁹ and 2023 infrastructure register,³⁰ all of whose relationships to *Next Move* and their influence on decision-making remain unclear. Similarly, references were also made to additional user strategies – aquatic, ice sports, and skating – still under development, which while Minister Berry explained will sit under *Next Move*, will add further complexity to an already crowded policy landscape.³¹

2.7. When asked about the exclusion of specific infrastructure commitments from the *Next Move* strategy, Minister Berry explained that this reflected a deliberate decision not to bind future governments to long-term projects or risk community disappointment where funding was ultimately not provided:

The absolute challenge with a longer-term plan [with an infrastructure pipeline], 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... When a future government says, ‘actually, we’re not going to fund that,’ the community gets upset because you have put that in your forward plan.

The higher-level strategy that we have developed – it does not go to action, details or particular projects... it will not have: ‘a pool will be built in Woden in 2028.’³²

²⁶ See: Cricket ACT, *Submission 152*, p 4; Belconnen Community Council, *Submission 150*, pp 2–3; Dickson Squash Club, *Submission 137*, pp 2–3; Weston Creek Community Council, *Submission 61*; IACS, *Submission 124*, pp 10–11; CSA, *Submission 120*, p 7; Mr Mick Brady, Executive Officer, CSA, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 160–61; Mr Jim Roberts, Member, IACS, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 171.

²⁷ ACT Government, [Aquatic Facilities Planning Framework 2013-2033](#) (accessed 12 August 2026).

²⁸ ACT Government, [ACT Indoor Sports Facilities Study](#) (accessed 12 August 2026).

²⁹ ACT Government, [Planning for Indoor Facilities and Other Sports and Recreation Infrastructure](#) (accessed 12 August 2026).

³⁰ ACT Government, [Sport and Active Recreation Infrastructure Survey – Proposal Register](#) (accessed 12 August 2026).

³¹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 187.

³² Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 187.

- 2.8. The Committee also observed that certain features identified as best practice for effective long-term planning in a 2025 ACT Auditor-General's report are not present in the design of the *Next Move* strategy.³³ Specifically, the current strategy falls short in the following areas:
- a) **Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for specific internal and external stakeholders:** While the strategy identifies ACT Sport and Recreation as the lead coordinating body, it does not clearly define or assign responsibility for specific outcomes across other ACT Government bodies or external partners, limiting accountability for delivery.
 - b) **Governance or oversight group with defined responsibilities:** There is no governance group identified, leaving both implementation and oversight of the strategy with ACT Sport and Recreation. The strategy also does not provide a role for external stakeholders in governance or oversight arrangements.
 - c) **Collection of performance data to assess plan implementation:** While the strategy emphasises the importance of data and evidence-based decision-making, it does not specify what performance data will be collected, how it will be used to assess progress against strategic outcomes, or how this will be reported.
 - d) **Mechanisms for regular evaluation of plan implementation:** While the strategy includes implementation plans, it does not clearly articulate how progress will be formally evaluated, reported, or acted on over its lifespan, nor does it identify governance arrangements responsible for overseeing and responding to evaluations.

Committee comment

- 2.9. The Committee recognises that the *Next Move* strategy is not a like-for-like replacement for the former *Active 2020* strategy. In contrast to the ten-year, co-designed plan it replaced, *Next Move* provides fewer long-term commitments, no specific infrastructure projects, and limited clarity on deliverables beyond annual implementation cycles. The Committee heard evidence that this lack of forward visibility discourages future investment and entrenches reliance on annual budget cycles, constraining the ability of the community sport sector to plan and deliver activities for Canberrans.
- 2.10. While the Committee understands the Minister's concern about managing expectations and preserving flexibility for future governments, the evidence demonstrates that the absence of any such commitments in the current strategy had contributed to uncertainty across the sector. The sector indicates the challenge is not the absence of binding funding commitments, but of any long-term signalling to support planning and co-investment. In other infrastructure areas, government routinely adopts this approach through publishing long-term pipelines caveated as subject to future funding decisions. The Committee considers that adopting a similar model for sport and recreation would enhance

³³ ACT Audit Office, [ACT Government long-term plans and strategies](#), Auditor-General's Report No 3, 2025, pp 1–3.

transparency and sector confidence while maintaining the same fiscal discipline and political flexibility.

- 2.11. The Committee notes that, since the hearings, the Government has published a list of sport and recreation infrastructure projects for the 2024-28 period.³⁴ The Committee welcomes this as it improves forward visibility for the sector and partially addresses the information gap raised in the evidence received.
- 2.12. However, the Committee highlights that it is unclear what the strategic intent behind this list is, or how these particular infrastructure projects would lead to equitable distribution of sport and recreation facilities across Canberra. The Committee also highlights that the list wasn't published until March 2026, leaving a 15-month information gap between the end of the previous 2020–24 list and now.³⁵ The Committee considers this reinforces the need for a strategy-embedded infrastructure pipeline, rather than irregular standalone products. The Committee also notes both the 2020–24 and 2024–28 lists are caveated as subject to future funding approval, demonstrating that transparency can be improved without binding future budget decisions.
- 2.13. Further, the Committee acknowledges that, since the beginning of this inquiry, the Government has embarked on work in the space of sports policy in the ACT. For example, the Government began work to develop a new aquatic strategy in early 2026.³⁶
- 2.14. The Committee also notes a resolution of the Assembly of 4 February 2026, which calls on the Government to commission an independent Sport Report to ensure the community has access to the facilities required to stay active. The report must:
 - a) define the report's objective to assess future demand and guide the ongoing supply, maintenance, and upgrade of sporting infrastructure, taking into account the current and future needs of the community;
 - b) conduct a needs assessment to analyse community demand and identify gaps in existing facilities;
 - c) engage with community members and sporting organisations to understand their needs and priorities;
 - d) review trends and demographic data to inform evidence-based decision-making;
 - e) audit existing facilities to assess their condition, capacity, suitability and compliance with relevant lease and planning requirements;
 - f) identify gaps in the provision of sporting infrastructure and recommend strategies for short, medium and longer term upgrades and new facilities to meet the needs of current and future users; and
 - g) include clear criteria for selecting sites for new facilities.³⁷

³⁴ ACT Government, [Sport and Recreation Capital Infrastructure Project 2024–28](#).

³⁵ For the 2020–24 list, see: ACT Government, [Sport and Recreation Capital Infrastructure Projects 2020–24](#).

³⁶ Mr Nelson Tang, President, Woden Valley Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 154. Minutes of Proceedings No 44, 3 February 2026, p 675.

³⁷ Minutes of Proceedings, No 45, 4 February 2026, pp 802-806.

Equitable distribution of recreation facilities

- 2.15. The Committee heard evidence that the distribution of recreation infrastructure across Canberra is not always aligned with demonstrated community need, participation growth, or population trends. Several submitters and witnesses expressed concern that investment has occurred unevenly across districts, resulting in some regions enjoying access to new and upgraded facilities while others continue to rely on ageing infrastructure and facilities operating beyond their intended capacity.³⁸
- 2.16. The Committee notes evidence from the Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club that participation in basketball has doubled since 2019, yet significant indoor court shortages remain in Canberra's south. The Club submitted that while investment is proceeding in Belconnen and Gungahlin, there has been "no equivalent investment ... in Woden/Weston Creek or Tuggeranong, despite our region's demonstrated growth and need."³⁹

Committee comment

- 2.17. The Committee considers that equitable distribution does not mean every district should receive identical facilities. Rather, investment decisions should be guided by population growth, demonstrated demand, participation trends, geographic access, and the characteristics of local communities. Facilities should be planned as part of a connected Canberra-wide network that ensures residents in all districts have reasonable access to opportunities for sport and recreation.
- 2.18. The Committee considers that the proposed independent Sport Report should provide a transparent evidence base for future infrastructure planning and assist the Government to prioritise investment according to need rather than opportunity alone.
- 2.19. The Committee notes the Assembly has requested that the independent Sport Report establish clear criteria for selecting sites for future recreation infrastructure. The Committee considers that transparent site-selection criteria are critical to ensuring community confidence and achieving long-term planning outcomes.
- 2.20. The Committee believes that future recreation infrastructure should be assessed against the following considerations:
- demonstrated current and future demand;
 - equitable geographic distribution across Canberra;
 - access by public transport;
 - accessibility via walking and cycling networks;

³⁸ Mr Jochen Zeil, Deputy Chairperson, North Canberra Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 153; Molonglo Juggernauts FC, *Submission 154*, p 2; Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*, p 2; Mr Garry O'Keeffe, *Submission 86*, p 2; Ms Sarah Ransom, Convenor, Save Phillip Pool, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 33.

³⁹ Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*, p 3.

- integration with existing community movement patterns;
 - opportunities for co-location with other community facilities;
 - contribution to active and vibrant public spaces;
 - ability to support social connection and community participation; and
 - the capacity and scale required to meet future population growth.
- 2.21. The Committee considers that infrastructure planning should move beyond simply identifying available land and instead prioritise locations that maximise community participation and long-term public benefit.
- 2.22. The Sport Report is due to be tabled by 24 March 2027.⁴⁰ The Committee hopes that it will provide a systematic base of reference for issues with infrastructure, such as capacity and maintenance, which are discussed in [Chapter 3](#) of this report, and can be used to inform the next sports and recreation strategy.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government build on the Sport Report and develop a 10-year sports and recreation strategy by the end of 2027, co-designed with the community sports sector and reviewed every three years, that:

- includes an infrastructure pipeline with specific commitments;
- outlines a proactive maintenance schedule for sport facilities; and
- allocates directorate responsibilities for the delivery of any outcomes.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop and publish criteria for determining locations for future recreation infrastructure, including consideration of public transport access, integration with community activity centres, contribution to street activation, and equitable geographic distribution.

Alignment with whole-of-government planning

- 2.23. As recognised in the *Next Move* strategy, ‘sport and recreation does not exist in a silo’ and requires coordination across government. ACT Sport and Recreation is the lead agency for this, with a coordinating role that spans multiple directorates, particularly Sport and

⁴⁰ Minutes of Proceedings 45, 4 February 2026, pp 806-807.

Recreation Facilities (City Services Directorate) and Property Group (Infrastructure Canberra).⁴¹

- 2.24. Despite this stated commitment to whole-of-government coordination, the Committee received substantial evidence that sport and recreation objectives are poorly aligned with or absent from several key policy areas. Submitters and witnesses identified a range of specific examples, including:
- a) **Mental health and wellbeing:** Sport and recreation is not sufficiently embedded within broader mental health and wellbeing strategies, despite strong evidence of sport as a mental health promotion and prevention activity. It is not included as a reportable metric under the government's Wellbeing Indicators.⁴²
 - b) **Environment:** Environmental and conservation policies often fail to recognise sport and recreation users as legitimate stakeholders. As a result, seasonal water quality testing, prohibitive conservation measures, and access restrictions can exclude sporting users or prevent organised sport in public spaces.⁴³
 - c) **School infrastructure:** Community sport use is not being adequately integrated into the planning, development, and operation of school infrastructure. One pain point is the trend of pricing school facilities for cost-recovery, in contrast to the significant subsidies applied to outdoor venues. The result is schools operating as closed assets, despite the sport and recreation strategy assuming they function as open community facilities.⁴⁴
 - d) **Transport:** Transport design and service planning do not adequately consider access to sport and recreation facilities, particularly during evenings and weekends, or in suburban or growth areas where facilities are increasingly found. The cost and availability of parking around major recreational areas was also highlighted.⁴⁵
 - e) **District planning:** Sport and recreation considerations were not adequately integrated into the development of the new district plans, which form a cornerstone of the revised planning framework. Concerns were raised about limited consultation and the absence of evidence- and needs-based assessments, resulting in an inequitable geographic distribution of facilities.⁴⁶

⁴¹ ACT Government, *Next Move*, p 5.

⁴² Mental Health Community Coalition ACT, *Submission 76*, p 4; Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, pp 17–18; Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 123.

⁴³ Mr Zaz Zaharias, President, Canberra Climbers Association, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 21–27; Mr Todd Hayward and Ms Kylie Sheffield, open water swimming panel, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 41–42; ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*.

⁴⁴ Ms Veronica Elliott, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 114; Mr David Reeson, President, Royals Volleyball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025; pp 48–52; Belconnen Community Council, *Submission 150*; Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*.

⁴⁵ Ms Veronica Elliott, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 114; Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, pp 12–13; Mr Craig Wallace, Head of Policy, Advocacy for Inclusion, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 129; Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 178–179; Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, p 118; Canberra Runners, *Submission 146*, p7.

⁴⁶ Mr Jochen Zeil, Deputy Chairperson, North Canberra Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 153; Molonglo Juggernauts FC, *Submission 154*, p 2; Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*, p 2;

- f) **Other strategies:** While other government strategies may reference sport and recreation in principle, the sport and recreation strategy fails to operationalise these. This was particularly evident in disability and inclusion, and carer policy spaces.⁴⁷
- 2.25. Additionally, broader concerns were raised about the systemic effects of policy siloing. The Community Sport Alliance noted that sports organisations have to interact with five different government directorates, taking extra time and reducing policy cohesion. Independent Advocates for Community Sport had a similar view, saying that cross-agency cooperation was ‘poor at best.’⁴⁸

Committee comment

- 2.26. The Committee recognises that evidence pointed to a breadth and consistency of misalignment between sport and recreation objectives and core government policy areas. The trend across evidence was that government decision-making does not consistently consider cross-portfolio community outcomes. This raises broader questions about whether ACT Sport and Recreation is adequately resourced and empowered to fulfil the whole-of-government coordination role envisioned in the *Next Move* strategy.
- 2.27. The Committee notes that recommendations addressing significant areas of policy misalignment are made throughout this report under the five thematic chapters. The recommendations that follow this section are intended to identify early, achievable opportunities to improve alignment in the immediate-to-short term, while longer-term structural reform suggested elsewhere is considered.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore ways to strengthen how community sport and recreation needs are identified, assessed, and reflected in planning processes, including district strategies, with meaningful engagement with community councils and sporting organisations to ensure an equitable distribution of facilities across Canberra.

- 2.28. The ACT has a Wellbeing Framework which identifies indicators of social progress beyond economic factors. It is used to measure issues which are important to the community, and the Government takes this into consideration when making decisions such as setting policy.⁴⁹

Mr Garry O’Keeffe, *Submission 86*, p 2; Ms Sarah Ransom, Convenor, Save Phillip Pool, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 33.

⁴⁷ Mr Craig Wallace, Head of Policy, Advocacy for Inclusion, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 125–130; Advocacy for Inclusion, *Submission 148*, pp 2–4; Capital Region Powerchair Football, *Submission 43*; Carers ACT, *Submission 131*.

⁴⁸ ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, p 6; CSA, *Submission 120*, pp 5-6; Independent Advocates for Community Sport (IACS), *Submission 124*, pp 6-7.

⁴⁹ ACT Government, *ACT Wellbeing Framework*, 2020, p 2.

- 2.29. The Framework captures indicators across 12 ‘domains of wellbeing’, including health, identify and belonging, education and life-long learning, etc. Sport is only mentioned once, as part of the ‘participation in community events and activities’ indicator, which measures participation in:
- community events;
 - sports groups;
 - local community clubs or hobby groups; and
 - local online community groups.⁵⁰
- 2.30. Some submitters offered the opinion that the Wellbeing Framework was an underutilised resource for cross-portfolio integration, with the CSA noting that its use is currently ‘opaque to those across our sector.’⁵¹

Committee comment

- 2.31. Access to sport is an important driver of physical and mental wellbeing for Canberrans, as well as social cohesion and community building. The Committee believes that participation in and access to sport and recreation should be added as an indicator under the Wellbeing Framework.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government split the Wellbeing indicator for ‘participation in community events and activities’ to identify participation in sporting activities.

Sector engagement and representation

Peak organisation and sector communication

- 2.32. A peak organisation is a high-level not-for-profit representative body for a sector, such as community sport, that provides services to member groups and engages with government on the sector’s behalf. Peak organisations provide both members and government an authoritative point of contact through which sector-wide advocacy and centralised communication can be coordinated.
- 2.33. There is currently no community sport peak organisation in the ACT. A previous body, ACTSPORT, operated between 1985 and 2015 before being wound down due to sector-

⁵⁰ ACT Government, *ACT Wellbeing Framework*, <https://www.act.gov.au/wellbeing/explore-overall-wellbeing/social-connection/participation-in-community-events-and-activities> (accessed 30 June 2026)

⁵¹ CSA, *Submission 120*, p 10; ICAS, *Submission 124*, p 10.

wide changes in sports administration and the withdrawal of government funding.⁵² No organisation has emerged in the decade since to fill the gap created by its closure.

- 2.34. Evidence from many witnesses linked the lack of a community sport peak organisation to the government's inconsistent approach to sport and recreation matters. Because the sector comprises many small, separate, and unevenly resourced organisations, the lack of a peak organisation means each group must advocate individually. This disadvantages those without capacity to do so and results in duplication of effort among those that can.⁵³ Evidence also indicated that when smaller groups collaborate to form peak bodies, they are often unable to meet government recognition criteria, or that they lose it once established.⁵⁴
- 2.35. In addition, the growing number of recreational, non-membership, and non-competitive sports operating outside traditional sector structures were described as disconnected from established systems and largely unrepresented in sector-wide consultation and planning.⁵⁵
- 2.36. Witnesses characterised the overall effect of not having a community sport peak organisation as a fractured sector, isolated from planning processes, with some groups feeling disadvantaged or ignored by inconsistent and uneven consultation pathways.⁵⁶

Committee comment

- 2.37. The Committee believes the evidence is clear that the absence of a community sport peak organisation is a significant contributor to systemic shortcomings in the ACT's sport and recreation policy and planning. Community sports groups expressed the view that re-establishing such a body would better equip the sector to coordinate internally and engage meaningfully with Government.
- 2.38. While the Committee appreciates Minister Berry's assurance the sector is small enough for Government to engage directly with individual organisations,⁵⁷ the evidence suggests that this approach is unsatisfactory in practice. In particular, smaller and non-traditional groups reported not finding current engagement mechanisms effective or inclusive.

⁵² IACS, *Submission 124*, p 12; Henry Belot, 'Peak sports body ACTSport disbands after 30 years of advocacy', *The Canberra Times*, 8 July 2015, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6064529/peak-sports-body-actsport-disbands-after-30-years-of-advocacy/> (accessed 31 March 2026); 'ACTSPORT: Canberra's peak sporting body to shut down after 30 years of service', *ABC News*, 8 July 2015, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-08/canberra-sporting-peak-body-actsport-to-close-after-30-years/6604402> (accessed 31 March 2026).

⁵³ Mr Grant Keys, Senior Coordinator, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 140; Mr Jim Roberts, Member, IACS, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 164-165; Ms Bridget Larsen and Ms Lina Tiyce, parents of players, Canberra Region Powerchair Football, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 18-19; Ms Glenys Beauchamp AO PSM, IACS, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 169.

⁵⁴ ACT Equestrian Association, *Submission 81*, pp 2-3; Ms Lori Modde, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoors NSW & ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 93-96.

⁵⁵ ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, pp 9-10; Ms Lori Modde, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoors NSW & ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 96; Miss Shannon Lanza, Ms Natasha Mhishi, Ms Hannah Watts, and Miss Tshering Yangden, Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 122-23.

⁵⁶ Mr Steve Boyd, Ms Fia Cumming, and Mr Steve Jordan, equestrian sports witnesses, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 70-76; ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, p 10; IACS, *Submission 124*, p 7.

⁵⁷ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, pp 195-96.

- 2.39. The Committee note the Government's *Commissioning* project to reform the human services sector, including efforts to strengthen the role of peak organisations in consultation, policy development, and service delivery. Given the evidenced disconnect between sector and government and the resulting policy inconsistency, the Committee considers this an appropriate time to re-introduce a community sport peak organisation designed to align with the *Commissioning* model.
- 2.40. On balance, the Committee considers that a re-established peak organisation could materially improve the sector's capacity to participate in consultation, contribute to policy, and coordinate sector-wide services.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government support the re-establishment of a recognised peak organisation to provide member services and a coordinated advocacy and communication channel for the community sport sector.

- 2.41. While re-establishing a community sports peak organisation would strengthen coordination and advocacy, the Committee also consider it necessary for government to strengthen its own capacity to identify, contact, and communicate with the full breadth of sport and recreation groups in the ACT, especially given smaller and non-traditional groups find themselves being excluded.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government regularly audit its list of ACT sports and recreation groups to ensure it is comprehensive – including small and non-traditional sports – complete, and contact information is up-to-date.

Sector-service partnerships

- 2.42. The *Next Move* strategy identifies 'building partnerships and collaboration across Government and with the community' as a key mechanism for achieving its outcomes.⁵⁸ However, evidence received indicates that community sport organisations are largely being left to initiate and sustain such partnerships without systemic government support.
- 2.43. Community sport groups are independently forming partnerships with service providers in ways anticipated by the *Next Move* strategy. Examples include the collaboration between Canberra Runners and Stepping Stone Social Enterprise to deliver an introductory running program for migrant and refugee women.⁵⁹ In other cases, sport organisations have been

⁵⁸ ACT Government, *Next Move*, p 17.

⁵⁹ Canberra Runners, *Submission 146*, p 5.

created with in-built service provision, such as Canberra Eagles, which integrates basketball with structured enrichment and nutrition education for young South Sudanese Canberrans.⁶⁰ These initiatives demonstrate the feasibility and value of sector-service partnerships, yet they appear to operate primarily on the goodwill and resources of participating organisations, as well as local schools and businesses, rather than through structured government facilitation or backing.

- 2.44. In other instances, community sport groups have sought to partner directly with government agencies to deliver shared outcomes but experienced barriers to effective collaboration. One prominent example was the Canberra Climbers' Association's four-year effort to engage with ACT Parks on plans to establish a bouldering park at Pierces Creek, which did not progress and was accompanied by actions that reduced site accessibility.⁶¹
- 2.45. Related concerns were raised by groups that expressed a willingness to contribute to the delivery of *Next Move*'s objectives but lacked the support required to do so effectively. Bowls ACT and the Royal Military College Golf Club (RMCGC) described aspirations to expand more inclusive and accessible programs, but identified limited access to specialist expertise, partnerships, and resources as barriers for smaller clubs.⁶²

Committee comment

- 2.46. The Committee considers this evidence to suggest a gap between strategic intent and delivery. While *Next Move* anticipates that sport and recreation outcomes will be delivered through collaboration, partnerships are occurring inconsistently and largely without government support. As one submitter put it:

Largely, the [Next Move] strategy requires the actions of the sector to fulfil the government's expectations. This implicit expectation places additional pressure on the already stretched resources of ACT based sporting organisations.⁶³

- 2.47. The Committee is concerned that, in the absence of structured coordination and resourcing, partnership-based delivery will remain uneven across the sector and place disproportionate administrative and financial burdens on community organisations.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government realigns its policy, funding, and coordination settings to support partnerships between itself, community sports organisations, and service providers where these are integral to delivering the objectives of the *Next Move* strategy.

⁶⁰ Canberra Eagles Basketball, *Submission 145*.

⁶¹ Canberra Climbers Association, *Submission 128*, p 7.

⁶² Bowls ACT, *Submission 38*, pp 2-3; Royal Military College Golf Club Inc, *Submission 147*, p 3.

⁶³ CSA, *Submission 120*, p 5.

The role of sporting clubs in providing recreation facilities

- 2.48. The Committee heard repeated evidence that community sport clubs are not merely users of recreation infrastructure but are often partners in its development, activation and ongoing operation.⁶⁴
- 2.49. Community sports clubs provide thousands of volunteer hours supporting facility management, programming, maintenance, fundraising and community engagement. They are often the organisations that transform buildings and playing fields into active community spaces.⁶⁵
- 2.50. The Committee notes that clubs frequently identify infrastructure needs, contribute to facility improvement proposals and work with governments, schools and community organisations to maximise facility usage.⁶⁶

Committee comment

- 2.51. The Committee considers that recreation infrastructure planning should recognise clubs as key delivery partners rather than simply facility users. The expertise, volunteer effort and community connections held by clubs represent a valuable resource that can improve planning outcomes, increase facility utilisation and strengthen community participation.
- 2.52. The Committee further notes that strong clubs contribute to social cohesion, community identity and local volunteering outcomes, all of which support the objectives of the Next Move strategy.

The changing role of licensed clubs in supporting community sport

- 2.53. The Committee heard evidence that licensed clubs have historically played an important role in the development and support of community sport across Canberra.⁶⁷ Many sporting facilities and community clubs were originally established, operated or financially supported by licensed clubs, creating important opportunities for participation, volunteering and social connection across the Territory. The Committee notes that in many instances this was supported by Governments through the provision of concessional land, grants and other mechanisms.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ ACT Equestrian Association Inc, *Submission 81*, pp 1-2; Cricket ACT, *Submission 152*, pp 2-3; Molonglo Juggernauts Football Club, *Submission 154*, p 2.

⁶⁵ The Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club demonstrates this role with their volunteer network of around 100 administrators, coaches, managers and coordinators supporting almost 700 players. Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*, p 4.

⁶⁶ The Dodgers describe working with schools, churches and Basketball ACT to secure access to facilities and develop proposals for upgraded infrastructure. See Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*, p 3; Ms Nicole Bowles, Chief Executive Officer, Basketball ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 87 and p 89.

⁶⁷ ClubsACT, *Submission 67*, p 2 and p 5.

⁶⁸ ClubsACT provided examples of government support including land use and grants. See Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 146-147 and p 150.

- 2.54. However, the Committee also heard concerns that changes in the licensed club sector, including financial pressures, changing business models and redevelopment opportunities, have led to the loss of sport and recreation facilities previously relied upon by the community.
- 2.55. Evidence presented to the Committee highlighted examples where sporting facilities have closed or been repurposed following decisions by licensed clubs. Submitters pointed to the closure of the Dickson Squash Club and the proposed closure of the Weston Creek Bowling Club as examples of recreation assets that are no longer available to their communities. The Committee heard that once these facilities are lost, replacement opportunities are often difficult and expensive to provide elsewhere.⁶⁹

Committee comment

- 2.56. The Committee recognises that licensed clubs are independent organisations and are making commercial decisions regarding their assets and financial sustainability. It also notes that some of these decisions include leveraging assets that may have been provided to them at a discounted/concessional rate. In most cases, the Committee reflects that these assets have a significant community value and the community expects to be able to continue to gain benefit from these types of assets that enable sport and recreational activity. It notes that these facilities support physical activity, social inclusion, volunteering, community identity and local participation in sport.
- 2.57. The Committee is concerned that Canberra currently lacks a strategic framework to assess the community impact of the loss of privately owned sporting facilities. While considerable attention is often given to the construction of new facilities, less consideration is given to the cumulative impact of facility closures and the resulting loss of recreation capacity.
- 2.58. The Committee considers that when significant sporting or recreation facilities are proposed to be closed, redeveloped or removed from community use, governments and community stakeholders should have an opportunity to understand the implications for participation, facility supply and local recreation opportunities. These implications should be factored into the decision-making process, and Government must have a role in ensuring that an appropriate number of facilities are maintained.
- 2.59. The Committee further notes that licensed clubs continue to play an important role in supporting community sport through sponsorship, volunteer support, provision of facilities and partnerships with local sporting organisations, a significant proportion of which is related to their community contribution obligations. The Committee encourages clubs, sporting organisations and government to work collaboratively to identify opportunities to retain, repurpose or replace important recreation assets where community benefit can be demonstrated. It also encourages the Government to work with stakeholders to explore models that will protect the significant investment into community sports in a future where there are reduced revenues generated through licenced clubs.

⁶⁹ Dickson Squash Club, *Submission 137*, p 3; Bowls ACT, *Submission 38*, pp 3-4.

- 2.60. The Committee considers that protecting Canberra's recreation infrastructure requires attention not only to the delivery of new facilities but also to the retention of existing community assets that support sport and recreation participation.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate policy and planning mechanisms to protect community access to significant sport and recreation facilities where redevelopment, closure or change of use is proposed, particularly where those facilities have historically been supported by licensed clubs and provide important community sporting outcomes.

In doing so, the Government should work with sporting organisations, licensed clubs and community stakeholders to explore opportunities for facility retention, replacement or alternative provision.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with stakeholders to ensure that the investment into community sports that has traditionally been provided by the community clubs sector continues in light of likely reduction in community contributions into the future.

Procurement models

- 2.61. Another option to increase partnership delivery of community sport needs would be to tie it with the Government's procurement model.
- 2.62. An example of how this can be done is the UK's Social Procurement Model. Under the model, social value is delivered in tandem with the government's commercial activities:

The public sector must maximise social value effectively and comprehensively through its procurement. Applying social value requirements in procurement can have a significantly positive impact by broadening the benefits that are delivered.⁷⁰

- 2.63. Social value must be explicitly evaluated in government procurement, by the consideration of 'how what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the relevant area.' Improvements that may be considered included helping local communities to recover from the impact of COVID-19, tackle workforce inequality, or improve social cohesion.

⁷⁰ UK Government, Action Note PPN 06/20 - Procurement Policy Note – *Taking Account of Social Value in the Award of Central Government Contracts*, September 2020, p 2.

- 2.64. These social value impacts must be considered distinctly from the core deliverables of the procurement:

In-scope organisations must ensure that any benefit identified as social value in tenders or contracts under this policy is over and above the core deliverable/s of the tender or the contract. For example, in a contract for the supply of employment support for the public, the core service (i.e. employment support) could not be defined as social value delivered through the contract. However, in this case, the wellbeing benefit associated with how the tenderer plans to recruit, train and retain the contract workforce carrying out that service could represent social value.⁷¹

- 2.65. The ACT Government has a Charter of Procurement Values which ‘outlines the key values the ACT Government seeks to embed in its procurement.’ These values must be considered in the management of procurement activities. They are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic participation;
- business development and innovation;
- diversity, equality and inclusion;
- environmental responsibility;
- fair and safe conditions for workers; and
- transparent and ethical engagement.⁷²

- 2.66. The Committee believes that the ACT Government should strengthen the Charter of Procurement Values, using the UK’s Social Value Procurement Model as an example. Community needs should be added as a procurement value, and the values should be explicitly and distinctly evaluated alongside factors such as value for money and core deliverables. This change would allow for community needs, as well as other needs as defined by the procurement values, to be addressed alongside core commercial activities, which would in turn reduce the need for targeted Government action and capital outlay.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government strengthen the Charter of Procurement Values to include community needs, and that these procurement values be considered ‘over and above’ the core outcomes of the procurement.

⁷¹ UK Government, Government Commercial Function, *Guide to using the Social Value Model*, Edition 1.1, 3 December 2020, p 3.

⁷² NI2020-580, Government Procurement (Charter of Procurement Values) Direction 2020.

3. Infrastructure

- 3.1. The second theme around which barriers and opportunities to sports participation coalesce is the type, quality, and availability of sport and recreation infrastructure.
- 3.2. Sport infrastructure in the ACT is delivered through a mixed ecosystem of publicly owned assets, government facilities operated by third parties, and privately owned venues: some of which are available for hire (and others restricted to private use).⁷³
- 3.3. Evidence received on this theme indicates that some elements of Canberra's sport infrastructure are struggling to adequately serve the breadth of sports codes and their growing participation, suffer from at times ad. hoc. maintenance and lacks clear plans and exploitable funding mechanisms to replace or expand supply. The practical impact of this is that some facilities are overused – exacerbating their deterioration and creating safety and quality issues – and unreliably accessible, which in turn impacts Canberrans' ability and preparedness to participate. The result is the report's most physical manifestation of barriers to sports participation.
- 3.4. This chapter examines evidence on infrastructure barriers across four areas – capacity, condition and maintenance, accessibility, and governance – and identifies practical opportunities to reduce them in the short term.

About this chapter's recommendations

- 3.5. The recommendations in this chapter do not propose that the ACT Government make new capital funding commitments to any sports infrastructure projects.
- 3.6. This is not because the Committee did not receive evidence of infrastructure needs. Submitters and witnesses described a wide range of infrastructure issues, from small upgrades to calls for entirely new facilities. The Committee heard clearly the community's experience of deteriorating condition, overuse, and pressure on existing supply. Specific recommendations from stakeholder submissions are compiled at [Appendix F](#).
- 3.7. Costs to build sport facilities – especially indoor ones – run high. Using the example of publicly-funded indoor multi-use sports centres, which many participants in the inquiry called for, costs can run to over \$100 million. The Bundha Sports Centre, a community sports and fitness centre in Melbourne which opened to the public earlier this year, cost \$54.5 million.⁷⁴ A similar centre in Sydney, the Indoor Multi-Sports Stadium in Penrith, cost the NSW Government over \$106 million, and a planned indoor sport stadium on the Sunshine Coast is projected to cost \$142 million.⁷⁵

⁷³ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 17.

⁷⁴ Development Victoria, 'Bundha Sports Centre – Australia's first publicly accessible vertical sports centre – is now officially open to the public.', <https://www.development.vic.gov.au/projects/fitzroy-gasworks/pages/bundha-sports-centre> (accessed 12 May 2026).

⁷⁵ Queensland Government, 'Works for new \$142m Sunshine Coast Indoor Sports Centre now out to market' <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/100901> (accessed 12 May 2026); NSW Government, 'Indoor Multi-Sports Stadium Project', <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/western-sydney-infrastructure-grants-program/project-information/projects-penrith-lga/indoor-multi-sports-stadium-project> (accessed 12 May 2026).

- 3.8. Unfortunately, there is also less investment in sports facilities from the private sector than in other states and territories, due to our small size.⁷⁶ Climbers ACT pointed to the closure of the Hume and Mitchell rope climbing gyms, which folded in part due to financial matters and have not been replaced due to a lack of local capital.⁷⁷ Mr Shannon from Clubs ACT also raised the issue of cost, saying that funding sports infrastructure is not financially viable enough to justify the large initial investment.⁷⁸

Capacity pressure

- 3.9. Evidence received indicates that demand for sport and recreation infrastructure in Canberra is increasingly outstripping supply. Respondents to the inquiry's submission e-form frequently cited the lack of facilities as a reason they participated less in sport than they would prefer.⁷⁹ Multiple sports organisations advised that they were turning away prospective participants or unable to host or attend national-level competitions due to insufficient places to train and compete.⁸⁰
- 3.10. While this pressure applies across all facility types, concerns were grouped around three main types of facilities: indoor multi-use facilities, aquatic facilities, and outdoor fields.
- 3.11. **Indoor multi-use facilities**, set out to cater to multiple sports codes within the same space, are increasingly inaccessible as these codes' memberships grow to exceed their available share of court time.⁸¹ Such venues are highly sought-after during Canberra's harsh winter weather, and the intensifying extremes of a changing climate will likely exacerbate such demand.⁸²
- 3.12. Some sports clubs are experiencing a growth in membership and are struggling to maintain enough court booking time. Mr Schuermann from Badminton ACT described their clubs as 'bursting at the seams' and said that 'there is a complete lack of indoor sports centres in this city.'⁸³
- 3.13. Members of the Royals Volleyball Club called for a multi-purpose indoor sports centre to be built in Woden or Weston Creek, as their club has outgrown its current training facility.⁸⁴ ACT Handball Association, the Weston Creek Dodgers Basketball Club, Capital Region

⁷⁶ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 188.

⁷⁷ Mr Zac Zaharias, President, Canberra Climbers Association, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 24.

⁷⁸ Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, Clubs ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p 144.

⁷⁹ For example, see: Submissions 40, 60–62, 65, 66, 71, 72, 74, 75, 78, 79, 82, 84, 86, and 88.

⁸⁰ Mr Jonathan Saunders, President, ANU Football Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 4–5; Ms Nicole Bowles, Chief Executive Officer, Basketball ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 86; Mr Grant Keys, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 132; Ms Lina Tiyce, parent of a Canberra Region Powerchair Football player, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 14; Mr Steve Boyd and Ms Fia Cumming, equestrian sport panel, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 67–69.

⁸¹ Mr David Paul Reeson, President, Royals Volleyball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 52–54; Mr Olaf Schuermann, President, Badminton ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 78, 82–83.

⁸² Ms Simon Hunter, Chair, Weston Creek Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 152; Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, *Heath, Humanity, and the Hockey Stick: Climate Change and Sport in Canberra*, September 2019.

⁸³ Mr Olaf Schuermann, President, Badminton ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 78.

⁸⁴ Royals Volleyball Club et al, *Submission 89-118*.

Powerchair Football, and ACT Badminton also said they did not have enough access to indoor courts to meet the demands from their players.⁸⁵

- 3.14. E-petition 063-25, signed by 709 residents, brought this pressure (specifically in Canberra's north) to the Assembly's attention late last year.⁸⁶
- 3.15. The ACT Government say they are 'committed to investigating the provision of a new public high school in Woden, including a co-located indoor sports facility', as well as a new two court gymnasium at Garran Primary School.⁸⁷
- 3.16. They said in their submission to this inquiry:

The provision of new larger multi-purpose indoor court facilities is a noted demand and is being progressed, with funding provided in 2025-26 Budget to commence early civil works to prepare the Casey Precinct for future development that enables community use and delivery of new health, emergency and sports facilities. Planning for the provision of a multi-purpose indoor sports facility in Woden has also commenced.⁸⁸

- 3.17. **Aquatic facilities** are heavily relied on for water-based sport and recreation.⁸⁹ The ACT has seven public pools and over a dozen private pools.⁹⁰ In 2025, there were over a million visits to the public pools.⁹¹
- 3.18. The Committee heard concerns from groups and individuals about the lack of swimming facilities, such as the closure of Big Splash in Macquarie, and the upcoming closures of Phillip Pool (privately owned), and the knock-down re-build of Civic pool (publicly owned). Uncertainty around venue capacity, continuity, and future provision has created anxiety among user groups.⁹² Community concern is reflected in the four petitions the Assembly has received on re-opening or retention of such facilities – with over 13,900 signatures collectively.
- 3.19. The Government had previously approved a 25-metre indoor pool as a replacement for the current 50-metre outdoor pool in Woden,⁹³ however the Chief Minister told the Canberra Times on 18 February that 'an outdoor 50-metre pool would go in Woden', so long as it did

⁸⁵ Capital Region Powerchair Football, *Submission 43*, p 4; ACT Handball Association Inc, *Submission 83*, p 1; Badminton ACT, *Submission 127*, p 1; Weston Creek Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*, p 1.

⁸⁶ Mr Ben Phillips and 708 others, [E-PET-063-25: Lack of indoor sporting facilities on Canberra's northside](#) (tabled 2 December 2025).

⁸⁷ Mr Chris Steel MLA, *answer to QON 216*, 19 August 2025.

⁸⁸ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 10.

⁸⁹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Parliamentary Debates* (proof), 3 February 2026, p 42.

⁹⁰ ACT Government, 'Aquatic and leisure facilities', <https://www.sport.act.gov.au/sport-facilities/aquatic-and-leisure-facilities> (accessed 11 February 2026).

⁹¹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Proof Daily Hansard*, 3 February 2026, p 43.

⁹² Friends of Manuka Pool, *Submission 41*; Friends of Canberra Olympic Pool, *Submission 60*; Save Phillip Pool, *Submission 62*; Claire Fenwick, ['Philip public pool petition gathers 5688 signatures as next DA deadline looms'](#), *Region Canberra*, 6 May 2025; Niki Burnside, ['Concerns for the future of Canberra's public pools amid closure and redevelopments'](#), *ABC News*, 7 December 2025; Megan Doherty, ['Stop 'giving pool sites to developers', pool advocates say'](#), *Canberra Times*, 23 January 2026.

⁹³ Megan Doherty, Steve Evans, ['An utter disgrace': Geocon wins approval for 286-unit development on the site of Phillip pool](#), *Canberra Times*, 17 December 2025.

not exceed budgetary constraints. He also indicated that the Government was exploring options for a new dive pool to replace the one which would be demolished in Civic.⁹⁴

- 3.20. **Irrigated and dryland fields** are operating at or near capacity across Canberra with limited alternatives to absorb further growth.⁹⁵ The supply of playing-grade surfaces – including artificial turfs – has not kept pace with demand, and past decisions to downgrade some school ovals to general green space further reduced available ‘sports-ready’ spaces.⁹⁶ The standard booking cut-off of 9pm is also constraining usable hours.⁹⁷
- 3.21. The ACT has around 884 public irrigated sports fields, making up 280 hectares, and an additional 31 public dryland ovals.⁹⁸ These can be hired for competition and training. Each facility has different amenities, such as floodlights, goal posts, or toilet blocks. Bookings can be made through an online portal at <https://actsportsgrounds.act.gov.au/home>, where you can also find the conditions of hire and the list of fees and charges. Fees are significantly subsidised; according to the Government submission, in 2023-24, over 153,000 hours of fees only covered 18.4 percent of the \$15.3 million cost to operate and maintain sportsgrounds.⁹⁹
- 3.22. The ACT Government has listed several major sport infrastructure capital projects for 2024-28, dependent on funding approval.¹⁰⁰ Many of these will expand or add to the existing capacity of infrastructure supply:
- Construction of full-sized single court gymnasium at Strathairn School and full-sized double court gymnasiums at Telopea Park, Whitlam, and Garran Primary Schools;
 - Construction of the Canberra Aquatic Centre in Commonwealth Park and a new 50-metre public outdoor pool in Woden;
 - Construction of new skateparks at Kippax shops and in Jacka;
 - Construction of the Canberra Arena (ice rink and rock climbing) in Tuggeranong;
 - Construction of a new tennis facility in Amaroo and new district playing fields at Throsby; and
 - Expansion of the Jacka netball courts, Taylor District Playing Fields, and Belconnen Basketball Stadium.
- 3.23. The biggest projects from this list – Canberra Arena, Canberra Aquatic Centre, and the 50-metre pool in Woden – are replacements for existing infrastructure earmarked for

⁹⁴ Megan Doherty, *Three options for new dive pool, says Barr*, Canberra Times, 18 February 2026; Ian Bushnell, *Barr commits to 50-metre indoor pool at Commonwealth Park, offers possible diving sites*, The Region, 20 February 2026.

⁹⁵ Mr Thomas Izzard, President, Yarabi Football Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 9; Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p210.

⁹⁶ Mr Daniel Hately, *Submission 24*; ACT Parents, *Submission 62*, pp 3–4; Yarabi Football Club, *Submission 138*, p 3.

⁹⁷ Mr Thomas Saunders, President, ANU Football Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 10–11.

⁹⁸ ACT Government, City Services, ‘Using sportsgrounds and ovals’, <https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/sportsgrounds> (accessed 11 May 2026).

⁹⁹ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 17.

¹⁰⁰ ACT Government, *Sport and Recreation Capital Infrastructure Projects 2024-2028*, undated.

closure.¹⁰¹ That these new facilities are, at a minimum, like-for-like replacements of existing infrastructure has been a particular pain point for the community.¹⁰² The Committee notes that, following sustained community and sector feedback, the ACT Government has since revisited aspects of its approach.¹⁰³

Committee comment

- 3.24. The Committee considers that district centres should not be viewed solely as residential and commercial destinations. They should also function as community hubs that support social connection, physical activity, recreation and community wellbeing. Recreation facilities located within major centres can attract people of all ages and backgrounds, extending activity throughout the day and evening and contributing to the vitality, safety and economic performance of those centres.
- 3.25. It is clear from the evidence that demand exceeding infrastructure supply is a barrier to growing sports participation, and that additional facilities are a suggested means of relieving this pressure. The Committee notes that projects listed in paragraph 3.22 go some way to addressing infrastructure supply. However, community advocacy indicates concern that some replacement projects may result in net capacity loss – rather than at least maintaining existing capacity.
- 3.26. The Committee heard that access to sport is shaped not only by the availability of facilities but also by where facilities are located.
- 3.27. The Committee considers that recreation facilities should be viewed as community destinations. Their location can influence participation levels, reduce transport barriers, strengthen local businesses, and contribute to safer and more vibrant public spaces.
- 3.28. The Committee believes that major district-level recreation facilities should be located, where possible, within town centres and major activity hubs. Such locations generally provide:
- existing public transport services;
 - connections to active travel networks;
 - proximity to community services;
 - opportunities for shared use;
 - increased visitation to surrounding businesses; and
 - greater visibility and participation opportunities for all age groups.

¹⁰¹ Canberra Aquatic Centre will replace Canberra Olympic Pool, and the Canberra Arena and 50-metre Woden pool will replace Philip Swimming and Ice-Skating Centre.

¹⁰² Megan Doherty, [‘We did expect like for like’: no dive pool or diving boards cited for \\$138 million Canberra Aquatic Centre’](#), *Canberra Times*, 3 January 2026; Megan Doherty, [‘ACT government says a 25-metre pool is good enough for Woden’](#), *Canberra Times*, 11 February 2025; Megan Doherty and Steven Evans, [‘“An utter disgrace”: Geocon wins approval for 286-unit development on the site of Phillip pool’](#), *Canberra Times*, 12 December 2025.

¹⁰³ James Tugwell and Harry Frost, [‘ACT government promises 50-metre Woden pool as part of new aquatic strategy’](#), *ABC News*, 29 January 2026; Megan Doherty, [‘Dive pool being discussed for new Commonwealth Park aquatic facility’](#), *Canberra Times*, 19 March 2026.

- 3.29. The Committee considers that sport and recreation facilities should not be seen as isolated land uses but as important elements of community infrastructure that contribute to economic activity, public life and social connection.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government give consideration to the sports infrastructure projects put forward in this inquiry, including those which are listed in Appendix F.

Dryland ovals

- 3.30. Many submitters to the inquiry's survey were of the opinion that there are not enough grass fields available for community sport, leading to increased wear and tear and maintenance issues. People said that the fields are overused and are of low quality, and complained of lack of space and booking times for their games.¹⁰⁴
- 3.31. According to a submission from ACT Parents, many school sports fields were 'downgraded from sports-ready to general green space' as a cost savings measure. They call for this decision to be revisited in light of the growth of community sport participation rates.¹⁰⁵
- 3.32. Belconnen Community Council also recommended that dryland ovals should be upgraded for sports use, as did community members Michelle Bourdet and Bill Gemmell in their submission.¹⁰⁶
- 3.33. Of the 32 dryland ovals across Canberra, the Government stated that 14 could potentially be upgraded for sports use, in order to relieve the pressure on existing fields. Mr Fitzgerald explained that the requirements to do so were not too onerous:
- 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.¹⁰⁷
- 3.34. Minister Berry told the Committee that a field at Melba Copeland is being reactivated for junior training.¹⁰⁸
- 3.35. Community consultation was also held last year on revitalising Fraser Oval, which indicated a strong level of community sport for re-surfacing and irrigation.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Jody Gleeson, *Submission 4*, p. 1; Loretta H, *Submission 23*, p. 1-2; Daniel Hately, *Submission 24*, p. 2; Tamara Haitsma, *Submission 25*, p. 1; Name withheld, *Submission 29*, p. 1; Amanda Banks, *Submission 42*, p. 1; Andreas Sneyers, *Submission 139*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 3.

¹⁰⁶ Belconnen Community Council, *Submission 150*, p 3; Michelle Bourdet and Bill Gemmell, *Submission 142*, p 2.

¹⁰⁷ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, CMTEDD, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 211.

¹⁰⁸ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 211.

¹⁰⁹ ACT Government, *Your Say, Fraser Oval Refresh Project*, p 2.

Committee comment

- 3.36. The Committee considers that activating Canberra’s dryland ovals for community sport use would be an effective and welcomed way of increasing sports fields availability, and of reducing wear and tear across other fields. However, the Committee notes the cost of reactivating one dryland oval as an irrigated sportsground in 2019-2020 was \$2.6 million, which in 2026 equates to more than \$3.2 million.¹¹⁰

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government activate suitable dryland ovals for community sport to reduce pressure on main fields.

- 3.37. Notwithstanding the issues identified with overuse of fields and ovals, the Committee observes that increasing the usable hours of appropriately lit outdoor fields could also ease capacity pressure by enabling additional late evening booking windows at relevant venues. The Committee also notes that new and upgraded lighting included in the Government’s 2024–26 sport infrastructure program may expand the number of venues able to support later evening use.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake a pilot program to extend the standard cut-off time for the use of appropriately lit outdoor fields to 10 pm, where doing so would not result in an unreasonable impact on immediately adjoining residences.

Facility accessibility

- 3.38. Concerns about the unreliable accessibility of Canberra’s sports infrastructure appeared across multiple submissions and witnesses.
- 3.39. As with condition and maintenance, accessibility concerns are intertwined with capacity pressure. The Committee heard that this pressure is forcing similar sports groups to share venues that either lack capacity to cater to the collective training and competition needs of all groups forced to share a facility,¹¹¹ or lack facilities accessible for all participants and spectators, especially women, older, and disabled people.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ ACT Government, City Services Directorate, *Dryland Ovals/Stirling Turf Farm, Question Time Brief*, 8 October 2025, https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/3025342/25-124-Records-Part-2.pdf (accessed 30 June 2026); Reserve Bank of Australia, Inflation Calculator, <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualDecimal.html> (accessed 30 June 2026)

¹¹¹ Mr Logan Hareb and Mr Jonathan Saunders, Yarabi and ANU football clubs, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 10; Mr Grant Keys, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 132–133 and 140.

¹¹² ACT Greens, *Submission 123*, p 3; ACT Discrimination, Disability, and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 3–4; Capital Region Powerchair Football, *Submission 43*, p 4; Advocacy for Inclusion, *Submission 140*; Name

Booking school facilities

- 3.40. The inaccessibility of school facilities to community sports groups caused by its decentralised booking systems is one non-capital area that stood out to the Committee.
- 3.41. The ACT Government provides an online booking platform for sports clubs to book public fields, pavilions, cricket nets, batting cages, and some indoor facilities such as meeting rooms, halls, and portable changerooms.¹¹³
- 3.42. A map of locations, conditions of hire, and a schedule of fees and charges is also available on the website.¹¹⁴
- 3.43. Only three school sportsgrounds are able to be booked through the online booking system. All other sports facilities located in schools are managed by the individual schools.¹¹⁵ When sports clubs train and compete across multiple facilities, as is often the case, they must deal with multiple schools, which increases their administrative burden.¹¹⁶
- 3.44. Mr Reeson, President of Royals Volleyball Club, described feeling stressed at having to call multiple schools at the start of the season to find a rare open booking.¹¹⁷
- 3.45. Ms Bowles from Basketball ACT explained how they are required to cold call some schools to see if they can hire facilities, but with others they liaise with the education directorate:
- If they are existing schools, you can cold call, see what is available, and beg, borrow or steal off everyone. If you have a contact at a school that you can have some sort of conversation and negotiation with, that generally works in your favour as well. When a new school comes online, the Education Directorate and Sport have established a quite good process for us to put in a submission and bid for places.¹¹⁸
- 3.46. Several witnesses also spoke of problems such as frequent cancellations due to school events, not being able to access facilities during school holidays, poor cleaning, and access to some facilities being limited or cut off.¹¹⁹

Withheld, *Submission 69*; Kerrie Keyes, *Submission 71*; Kerry Hurkett, *Submission 75*; Mr Liam Brown, Yarabi Football Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 4; Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, Clubs ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 142, 145–146; Mr Craig Wallace, Head of Policy, Accessibility for Inclusion, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 128–130; Ms Natasha Mhishi, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 124; Mr Todd Hayward, Canberra Wild Swim Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 42, Ms Bridget Larsen, Canberra Region Powerchair Football, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 13.

¹¹³ ACT Government, Sport and Recreation, *Locations search*, <https://actsportsgrounds.act.gov.au/locations/search> (accessed 11 May 2026).

¹¹⁴ ACT Government, Sport and Recreation, *Home*, <https://actsportsgrounds.act.gov.au/home> (accessed 11 May 2026).

¹¹⁵ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *answer to QTON 8*, 20 November 2025, p 3.

¹¹⁶ Mr Paul Reeson, President, Royals Volleyball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 52.

¹¹⁷ Mr Reeson, Royals Volleyball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 52; Ms Nicole Bowles, Chief Executive Officer, Basketball ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, pp 86–87.

¹¹⁸ Ms Bowles, Basketball ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 87.

¹¹⁹ Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*; Mr Grant Keys, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator and Life Member, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 139; Kerrie Keyes, *Submission 71*; Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 13.

- 3.47. Multiple submitters recommended expanding the access of school facilities and implementing a centralised booking platform.¹²⁰
- 3.48. The Minister for Sport and Recreation provided some more information on school bookings at the public hearing on 5 November 2025 and via a Question Taken on Notice. The Government is moving to ‘a centralised process for all sport and rec [sic] facilities that might be used outside of school hours.’¹²¹ A centralised schedule of fees has been implemented,¹²² trials of electronic gates have been used for some outdoor facilities, and a centralised booking system is being considered ‘to reduce the need for schools to be contacted individually to access this information.’¹²³ Internal school facilities such as gymnasiums remain under the administration of the Education directorate.¹²⁴

School facilities and community facilities both have important roles

- 3.49. The Committee heard strong support for increasing community access to school facilities.¹²⁵ Schools are often located within suburbs, close to where people live, and can provide valuable opportunities for training, junior sport, recreation activities and local community use. Increased utilisation of existing school infrastructure can reduce costs, improve participation and maximise the value of public assets.
- 3.50. However, the Committee also heard compelling evidence that school facilities cannot fully replace dedicated community recreation facilities. The Committee notes evidence from Grant Keys and the Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club regarding the limitations of relying predominantly on school facilities.
- 3.51. Mr Keys told the Committee:
- Since the demolition of Woden basketball stadium and the CIT courts, we have no home venue. Our 74 teams train across seven different sites.¹²⁶
- 3.52. Mr Keys further explained that school facilities are subject to cancellations, examinations and other school priorities and that “not having a home court significantly hampers our efforts to foster a sense of community.”¹²⁷
- 3.53. The Dodgers submission highlighted additional challenges associated with reliance on school facilities, including:

¹²⁰ Community Sport Alliance, *Submission 120*, p 11; Clubs ACT, *Submission 67*, p X; Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 13.

¹²¹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November, 2025, p 208.

¹²² Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 208.

¹²³ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *answer to QTON 8*, 20 November 2025.

¹²⁴ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 208.

¹²⁵ Ms Veronica Elliot, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 110; Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 117; Ms Simone Hunter, Chair, Weston Creek Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 153.

¹²⁶ Mr Grant Keys, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator and Life Member, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 132.

¹²⁷ Mr Grant Keys, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator and Life Member, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 132.

- limited access during school holidays and examination periods;
- frequent cancellations;
- inconsistent maintenance standards;
- facilities below competition standard; and
- the inability to host community competitions and events.¹²⁸

Committee comment

3.54. Purpose-built community facilities:

- provide reliable access outside school operational requirements;
- support competition and event hosting;
- create a permanent home for clubs and community organisations;
- strengthen volunteer sustainability;
- foster community identity and belonging; and
- activate major commercial and civic centres through regular visitation.

3.55. The Committee supports initiatives that improve access to school facilities through centralised booking arrangements, consistent pricing frameworks and clear community access policies. However, the Committee also considers that school facilities and dedicated community recreation facilities are complementary assets within the broader recreation network and should be planned together rather than viewed as substitutes.

3.56. The Committee notes that schools are ‘schools primarily’ as well as recognising that each school will need to use its facilities at different times for different reasons, and sometimes at short notice, to the exclusion of community users. The current use of sports facilities across Canberra’s public and private schools demonstrates that after-hours community sports access can be accommodated without compromising schools’ core education function.

3.57. The Committee also notes that Government policy and the *Next Move* strategy anticipate that public schools can operate as community assets outside of school hours, including through systems and processes that make their facilities suitable and accessible for community use:

Working across government, developing the systems, processes and resources for facilities, such as schools, to be suitable and accessible for the community.¹²⁹

3.58. The Committee encourages the Government to move beyond ‘aspiration’ and take practical steps to improve school facility accessibility, including by expanding centralised booking arrangements for community users.

¹²⁸ Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Submission 143*, pp 2-3.

¹²⁹ ACT Government, *Next Move*, p 22.

- 3.59. The Committee also acknowledges the benefits of dedicated community recreation facilities within the broader recreation network and that dedicated community facilities and school facilities should be planned together, rather than viewing school facilities as substitutes.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate bringing all sports facilities available for community use at ACT public schools and willing private schools onto the current centralised booking system, which includes a minimum cancellation period for facilities.

Conditions and maintenance

- 3.60. The Committee heard that the condition and maintenance of sport and recreation infrastructure is a material barrier to sports participation. Witnesses – including the Government – linked this deteriorating condition to facilities’ overuse and the subsequent inability to take these offline for rest and substantive repairs.¹³⁰
- 3.61. Evidence highlighted that maintenance-linked deterioration has left some facilities unsafe, with games either cancelled or unable to be booked, or – where they do proceed – players getting injured as a result of facility conditions.¹³¹
- 3.62. There was dissatisfaction amongst the people who gave evidence to this inquiry with the level of investment in existing sports infrastructure, with several clubs calling for increased grants for maintenance and upgrades.¹³²
- 3.63. Yarabi Football players found that community football fields were ‘severely poor quality’, saying that they were uneven, unlevel, and had poor drainage. They said in their submission that they did not see ‘adequate investment from the ACT Government’,¹³³ explaining at the hearing on 8 October 2025 that they regularly raise complaints with the Government but do not see evidence of improvements.¹³⁴
- 3.64. The Molonglo Juggernauts FC, Wildcats FC and Weston Creek Cricket Club have also had issues with the scoreboard at Stirling Oval, which was jointly funded but which has fallen in disrepair despite their attempts to raise the issue with various Government agencies.¹³⁵
- 3.65. Cricket ACT raised sports fields preparation as a safety issue, saying that:

¹³⁰ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director-General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 211.

¹³¹ Mr Liam Brown, Committee Member, Yarabi Football Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 3

¹³² Eg: Name Withheld, *Submission 73*, p 1; Bowls ACT, *Submission 38*, p 2.

¹³³ Yarabi Football Club, *Submission 138*, p 3.

¹³⁴ Mr Logan Hared, Committee Member, Yarabi Football Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 5.

¹³⁵ Molonglo Juggernauts Football Club, *Submission 154*, pp 3-4.

Inconsistent grass length may compromise the playability and fairness of outfields, especially for junior and social games, and can limit accessibility for participants with diverse needs.¹³⁶

- 3.66. The Youth Coalition said that young people felt that many facilities are not well maintained, citing issues such as ‘inadequate equipment, lighting and hygiene options, as well as safety concerns.’¹³⁷
- 3.67. Basketball ACT noted that there are some schools which they won’t schedule juniors’ games in due to safety concerns with the flooring.¹³⁸
- 3.68. A member of the Capital Pétanque Club, Kerry Hurkett, said in her submission that the club is hampered by a lack of basic amenities, such as toilets, pathways and shelter from weather, which is especially hard on their senior members.¹³⁹
- 3.69. Representatives of Equestrian Park spoke about the need for maintenance and upgrades at the facility, explaining that although the facility is used for elite sport, 98 percent of users are ‘normal people’, and the rate of wear-and-tear is very high. Ms Cumming said: ‘This has always been a premier facility, and to have it run down is really sad. It is really sad for the ACT’s reputation. Sport is not just about individuals; it is about national pride as well.’¹⁴⁰
- 3.70. According to the ACT Government submission, ‘[t]he identification of infrastructure delivery requirements is influenced by community consultation, sector advocacy or identified need.’ In 2023 a survey of all recognised ACT peak sport and recreation bodies, district community councils and Licensed Clubs was held to identify potential infrastructure projects. This information is used as a guide for investment prioritisation in the short and medium term.¹⁴¹
- 3.71. The Asset Renewal Program covers maintenance and improvements to existing Territory owned assets, including sports infrastructure. It has funded, for example, upgrades to pavilions, irrigation systems, and lighting.¹⁴²
- 3.72. For non-publicly owned sports infrastructure, not-for-profit and community sector organisations can be funded through the annual Sport and Recreation Investment Scheme.¹⁴³ Recent recipients of the program include ACT Netball for a stadium roof replacement, the ACT Water Ski Association for clubhouse facilities upgrades, and Table Tennis ACT for the installation of air conditioning and solar panels.¹⁴⁴
- 3.73. When questioned about field maintenance issues during the public hearing, Mr Fitzgerald pointed to the difficulties of high usage, which limits the times fields can be taken offline

¹³⁶ CricketACT, *Submission 152*, p 5.

¹³⁷ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 13.

¹³⁸ Mr Keys, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 139.

¹³⁹ Kerry Hurkett, *Submission 75*, p 1.

¹⁴⁰ Ms Fia Cumming, Vice President, ACT Endurance Riders Association, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 68.

¹⁴¹ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 9.

¹⁴² ACT Government, *Submission 135*, pp 16-17.

¹⁴³ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 17.

¹⁴⁴ ACT Government, *Funding Recipients*, <https://www.sport.act.gov.au/grants/funding-recipients> (accessed 27 April 2026).

for repairs. Fields are closed for short times twice a year for this work, however this time has decreased as community demand has risen.¹⁴⁵

- 3.74. As well as being unsatisfied with the level of infrastructure investment by the government, sports clubs expressed frustration at some of the processes within the maintenance program.
- 3.75. Yarabi Football Club acknowledged at the hearing the work that is being done to maintain the large number of sports fields with ‘only so much money to spend.’¹⁴⁶ However they felt that communication from the government could be improved. They said that once they reported maintenance issues to the government, ‘it just goes into thin air’ and they are not made aware of any follow up action.¹⁴⁷
- 3.76. Ms Hunter from the Weston Creek Community Council spoke about the inefficiencies in the grants process which is used to fund community sport infrastructure maintenance. She explained that each grant application could take 20 to 30 hours to prepare, and are mostly unsuccessful. She believes that the government should switch to a ‘properly resourced routine maintenance schedule, based on needs assessments, consulted early and often.’¹⁴⁸
- 3.77. Ms Hunter also said about the grants process that it was often ‘the squeaky wheel that gets the oil’, and that ‘there does not seem to be a program of renewal.’ Mr Hipkins from North Canberra Community Council added that there had been no proactive consultation on the state of their sports fields.¹⁴⁹
- 3.78. According to government officials, there is no ‘performance standard’ for maintenance work.¹⁵⁰

Committee comment

- 3.79. The Committee hears the frustrations of the community that investment in maintenance and upgrades of existing sports infrastructure is lower than what some would like. Poor quality facilities can present a real barrier to participation, resulting in lower player satisfaction and increasing the risk of injury.
- 3.80. Currently, maintenance investment, especially via the grants process, appears reactive and piecemeal. The Committee recommends a more proactive approach, in which issues are identified and addressed earlier alongside regular consultation with facilities users. A more strategic, long-term approach would ideally also lead to more equitable funding prioritisation and possibly also some cost savings.
- 3.81. This is why the Committee recommends that a proactive maintenance schedule for sports infrastructure be included as part of a 10 year strategy (see Recommendation 1).

¹⁴⁵ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, Deputy Director General, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 210.

¹⁴⁶ Mr Jonathan Saunders, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 9.

¹⁴⁷ Mr Jonathan Saunders, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 6.

¹⁴⁸ Ms Simone Hunter, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 152.

¹⁴⁹ Mr Marcus Hipkins, Media Coordinator, North Canberra Community Council, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 157.

¹⁵⁰ Mr Bruce Fitzgerald, City and Environment Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 210.

Upgrades to public spaces

- 3.82. The Committee heard evidence that people often take part in informal community sport in public, multi-use spaces. They may or may not have access to facilities that are used and maintained by sporting clubs, instead relying on natural areas like parks, or general facilities like public toilets and pedestrian pathways.
- 3.83. For example, Wild Swimmers of Canberra use the lakes instead of swimming pools and said that there are not many places to safely enter the water.¹⁵¹ ACT Triathlon also raised concerns with lake swimming, especially about water quality and lack of facilities such as lockers at popular open swimming areas.¹⁵²
- 3.84. ACT Triathlon also spoke about safety concerns with designated cycling routes involving gaps between paths and potential conflict with pedestrians on shared paths.¹⁵³
- 3.85. A similar risk was brought up by Ms Cummings from the ACT Endurance Riders Association, who called for more signage to educate people about sharing the path with horse riders.¹⁵⁴
- 3.86. Canberra Parkour explained their experience with using urban public areas for their sport, saying that they sometimes come across hazards such as broken glass, sharp objects or used needles, as well as frequently training in the dark due to little or no lighting.¹⁵⁵
- 3.87. Canberra Runners recommended improvements to shared public spaces in their submission as well. They said:

One of the advantages of running compared to participating in other sports, is that it is relatively cheap and accessible. [...] It is important that community facilities such as the network of community paths, bush trails and ovals and parks be maintained at a level that ensures safety for runners and others using these facilities.¹⁵⁶

Committee comment

- 3.88. Sports facilities in shared public spaces may be overlooked because they are used outside of the structures of large or formal sporting organisations. However, investment in these facilities can bring multiple benefits for the wider community, including the increasing number of people who are participating in informal, recreational sport.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve lighting, safety, and amenities in public spaces to support informal and recreational sport.

¹⁵¹ Ms Kylie Sheffield, Swimmer, Canberra Open Water Swimmers, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 42.

¹⁵² ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, pp 3-4.

¹⁵³ ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, p 4.

¹⁵⁴ Ms Fia Cumming, Vice President, ACT Endurance Riders Association, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 76.

¹⁵⁵ Ms Emi Callaway, Trainee Instructor, Canberra Parkour, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 101.

¹⁵⁶ Canberra Runners, *Submission 146*, p 6.

Swimmable Cities

- 3.89. Todd Haward from Canberra Wild Swimmers raised the issue of water quality in Canberra's waterways, saying:

Safe, healthy and swimmable waterways should be accessible to all people. Swimmable urban waterways are vital to the liveability of cities and communities, as shared civic places that promote the health of people (physically, mentally, spiritually).¹⁵⁷

- 3.90. ACT Triathlon also advocated for open water quality improvements.¹⁵⁸
- 3.91. Canberra Wild Swimmers recommended that the ACT join Swimmable Cities, an international organisation which promotes urban swimming through improved waterway health and accessibility.¹⁵⁹

Committee comment

- 3.92. The Committee notes that several Australian jurisdictions including Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Melbourne, and Sydney have become signatories of the Swimmable Cities Charter.¹⁶⁰ The charter is voluntary and self-regulating.¹⁶¹ The Committee believes that signing the Charter would show the ACT Government's positive commitment to supporting sport and recreation as well as environmental stewardship in our city.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider signing up to the Swimmable Cities Charter to show a commitment to working in accordance with its principles and values.

¹⁵⁷ Canberra Wild Swim Club, *Submission 78*, p 2.

¹⁵⁸ ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, p 4.

¹⁵⁹ Canberra Wild Swim Club, *Submission 78* and also Swimmable Cities, www.swimmablecities.org (accessed 13 March 2026).

¹⁶⁰ Swimmable Cities, www.swimmablecities.org (accessed 13 March 2026).

¹⁶¹ Swimmable Cities, Signatories, www.swimmablecities.org/ (accessed 13 March 2026).

4. Affordability

- 4.1. The third barrier to community sport is expense. The cost of fees, of uniforms, sport appropriate footwear and sports equipment can be prohibitive, especially for families and low-income earners.¹⁶² In a 2023-24 national AUSPLAY survey, cost was cited by 4.7 percent of men, 8.4 percent of women and 8.4 percent of children as being a reason they could not play.¹⁶³
- 4.2. Affordability also impacts the provision of infrastructure and services on a community level, as discussed in [Chapter 3](#).

Government voucher schemes

- 4.3. Across Australia, state governments provide vouchers to financially assist school aged children to play sport. In NSW, the Active and Creative Kids Voucher Program provides two \$50 vouchers per calendar year to assist eligible families (means tested) with school-aged children to access sport, recreational, and/or creative and cultural activities.¹⁶⁴ This program replaced the separate Active Kids and Creative Kids vouchers, which started on 31 January 2018 and was closed in January 2024.¹⁶⁵ Between 2018 and 2022, 4.4 million vouchers were created, with over 1 million redeemed a year. 98 percent of cohorts of children increased physical activity due to the program, with children aged 9-11 from lower socioeconomic areas with a disability and overweight benefiting the most. The program was the first universal voucher program of its kind in Australia.¹⁶⁶ The NSW Government moved to means tested vouchers on 1 February 2024.¹⁶⁷
- 4.4. In Victoria, the Get Active Kids Voucher Program provides eligible families up to \$200 to cover the costs for membership and registration fees for children zero-18 (who are named on a valid and issued Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card).¹⁶⁸ Since launching in 2020, there have been more than 225,000 vouchers created, with almost 20 percent of children who received the voucher joining a local sporting club for the first time.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶² Ms Veronica Elliott, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 111; Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 180; IACS, *Submission 124*, p 2; St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra and Goulburn, *Submission 130*, p 4; Canberra Eagles Basketball, *Submission 145*, p 2; Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 5.

¹⁶³ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 11.

¹⁶⁴ NSW Government, Service NSW, <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-an-active-and-creative-kids-voucher#eligibility> (accessed 6 March 2026)

¹⁶⁵ The CIE, Final Report, *Economic evaluation of the Active Kids program*, Prepared for NSW Office of Sport, 5 July 2022, p 3.

¹⁶⁶ The CIE, Final Report, *Economic evaluation of the Active Kids program*, Prepared for NSW Office of Sport, 5 July 2022, p 2.

¹⁶⁷ NSW Parliament, Legislative Assembly, The Hon. Jihad Dib MP, Minister Customer Service and Digital Environment, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Youth Justice, answer to QON 902, 2 August 2023 (received 6 September 2023).

¹⁶⁸ Victorian Government, Get Active Victoria, 'Kids Voucher Program', <https://www.getactive.vic.gov.au/vouchers/> (accessed 11 March 2026).

¹⁶⁹ Sport and Recreation Victoria, 'Get Active Kids Vouchers are back in play', <https://sport.vic.gov.au/news/2026/march/get-active-kids-vouchers-are-back-in-play> (accessed 6 March 2026).

- 4.5. Although NSW and Victoria have means tested vouchers, in Queensland, eligibility expanded, together with an increase in the value of the voucher. For the Play On! Sports vouchers (previously the FairPlay Program) parents, carers or guardians of every Queensland child aged five and 17 may apply for a voucher valued up to \$200 per child.¹⁷⁰ The number of vouchers for the program has also increased from up to 50,000 to up to 200,000. A portion (50,000 vouchers) remain guaranteed to those under the current eligibility criteria whose parent, carer or guardian holds a valid Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card with the child's name on it. Since the program began in 2019, over \$30 million has been redeemed by activity providers with more than 210,000 vouchers used by eligible families.¹⁷¹
- 4.6. In the ACT, dedicated sport voucher programs such as Every Chance to Play and Youth InterACT Scholarships , provide support to eligible families. The uptake of existing ACT Government financial assistance through the Future of Education Equity Fund also shows high use of grants for sport participation. The fund provides financial help to low-income households for school aged children, through a \$400-750 one off payment to help with school costs.¹⁷² Forty-eight percent of successful 2025 fund applicants indicated that it would be used for sport.¹⁷³
- 4.7. Every Chance to Play provides vouchers are valued at up to \$250 for kids to support costs associated with registration in junior sport. Specific participant criteria are used when determining eligibility for funding including being five-18 years of age, being referred through a 'trusted referrer' and being registered with an Every Chance to Play connected sports club.¹⁷⁴
- 4.8. An approved registered referrer is given the responsibility of identifying children that would benefit from connecting with a community sporting or recreational club or organisation with some examples of disadvantage being low-socioeconomic stress, financial stress, jobless household and refugee status. All applicants must be referred by a Trusted Referrer.¹⁷⁵
- 4.9. To ensure support is provided to those who need it, Ms Veronica Elliott, Executive Officer of ACT Parents suggested greater collaboration between schools and ACT Government voucher programs:

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

¹⁷⁰ Queensland Government, 'Play On! Sports Vouchers frequently asked questions', <https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/sports/funding/playon/about/play-on-sports-vouchers-frequently-asked-questions> (accessed 11 March 2026).

¹⁷¹ Queensland Government, 'FairPlay for all Queensland kids', Media Release, 8 June 2024, <https://www.sport.qld.gov.au/news/latest/2024/fairplay-for-all-queensland-kids> (accessed 11 March 2026).

¹⁷² ACT Government, Education and Training, <https://www.act.gov.au/education-and-training/life-at-school-and-college/get-help-with-the-cost-of-schooling> (accessed 12 February 2026).

¹⁷³ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, answer to QTON 006, 5 November 2025 (received 25 November 2025).

¹⁷⁴ Every Chance to Play, 'How every chance works', <https://everychance.com.au/familiesandkids/#processandeligibility> (accessed 12 February 2026).

¹⁷⁵ Every Chance, 'Trusted Referrers', <https://everychance.com.au/trustedreferrers/#whatisatrustedreferrer> (accessed 13 February 2026).

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.¹⁷⁶

- 4.10. In other jurisdictions, such as NSW and Victoria, families directly apply for sport vouchers through online portals to the relevant state government department for assessment.
- 4.11. Funding is provided to Every Chance, a charity, through the ACT Government.¹⁷⁷ The ACT Government does not have responsibility in relation to the criteria and eligibility for individual clubs.¹⁷⁸
- 4.12. The addition of a sports voucher program into the suite of support in the ACT is not a priority for the ACT Government at this time. Within the ACT submission to the inquiry, it explains:

While jurisdictions with voucher programs in place report benefits, including the number of vouchers processed, the value of vouchers provided and the number of new sports participants supported by a voucher, they do not necessarily correlate with the program's impact on participation or in addressing broader barriers. Recent research released by the University of Sydney and co-authored by Australian sports academic, Dr Lindsey Reece, highlights some caution around the success of voucher schemes, noting that the NSW Active Kids program failed to deliver the kind of broad society-level increases in physical activity and sports participation that had been aimed for.

- 4.13. The Committee received evidence of some areas of improvement which could be made to the ACT voucher schemes.

Expansion of guidelines to enable more sports

- 4.14. Sport organisations are required to nominate to be a part of the Every Chance program and payment can only be made available to teams or clubs that are non-profit. In a submission to the Committee, Ms Hannah Watts, from Youth Coalition recommended consideration of eligible sporting activities.¹⁷⁹
- 4.15. She further explained at the hearing by providing an example of eligibility requirements in the context 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, 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.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Ms Veronica Elliott, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 113.

¹⁷⁷ Ms Rebecca Kelley, Executive Branch Manager, Sports and Recreation, CMTEDD, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 195.

¹⁷⁸ Ms Rebecca Kelley, Executive Branch Manager, Sports and Recreation, CMTEDD, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 195.

¹⁷⁹ Youth Coalition, Submission 148, p 2.

¹⁸⁰ Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 118.

Expansion of guidelines to elite pathways

- 4.16. The Every Chance program must be used for community grassroots sport activities, not representative programs.¹⁸¹ Youth InterACT Scholarships provide for \$500 for individuals or \$1,500 for groups to cover costs to attend events, courses, and activities including representing the ACT in sport, education, or community events. Applicants must be 12-25 years of age and must not have received a scholarship or funding through the Youth InterACT Scholarship Program in the last year of which they are applying.¹⁸²
- 4.17. Mr Grant Keys of the Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club explained the current amount for the Youth InterACT scholarships did not cover the significant expenses to play at an elite level, which often include travel to national championships, shoes and private training. He further explained that this cost can be prohibitive:
- 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.¹⁸³
- 4.18. The Federal Government does provide support for competitors, coaches and officials aged 12-18 participating in state, national and international championships with funding opportunities through the Australian Sports Commission.¹⁸⁴

Extra support for those living with and supporting those with disability

- 4.19. Several people raised the additional cost burden on those living with a disability or caring and supporting someone who does.¹⁸⁵
- 4.20. ACT Parents identified a need to support neurodivergent children who do not meet the eligibility threshold for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) support. Although programs exist to support skill development and participation in modified sports (including pathways to mainstream sports), these often carry significant costs that are unaffordable for many families not receiving NDIS funding. Their submission describes the impacts on this section of the community:

¹⁸¹ Every Chance, 'Process and Eligibility', <https://everychance.com.au/familiesandkids/#processandeligibility> (accessed 13 February 2026).

¹⁸² ACT Government, 'Funding for young people to attend events', <https://www.act.gov.au/money-and-tax/grants-funding-and-incentives/funding-for-young-people-to-attend-events> (accessed 12 February 2026).

¹⁸³ Mr Grant Keys, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator and Life Member, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 132.

¹⁸⁴ Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission, 'Opportunities', <https://www.ausport.gov.au/grants-and-funding/opportunities> (accessed 10 March 2026).

¹⁸⁵ Ms Veronica Elliott, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 111; Carers ACT, *Submission 131*, pp. 4-6; Mr Craig Wallace, Head of Policy, Advocacy for Inclusion, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp. 129-130; ACT Carers, *Submission 131*, pp 3-8.

As a result, these children are either excluded from sport altogether or their families experience additional financial strain on top of already rising living costs. The absence of accessible, affordable options for these students reinforces broader inequities and contradicts the social inclusion aims of community sport.¹⁸⁶

- 4.21. Carers ACT identified a need to support increase opportunities for carers and people they care for to participate in community sport by expanding flexibility in funding arrangements and broadening the scope of inclusion in grants.¹⁸⁷ Ms Karen Toohey, the ACT Human Rights Commissioner, provided a case study where a person with a psycho-social disability had a support person, funded under the NDIS, and the support person had been denied access to premises unless they had a separate membership. The impact of the support person's exclusion meant:

that the person with disability could not participate in sport and exercise in accordance with recommendations made as the cost of paying for their support person's activities was prohibitive.¹⁸⁸

Committee comment

- 4.22. The Committee considers that the ACT Government should work to ensure that publicly funded programs like Every Chance to Play do not impose restrictions on eligibility requirements that unnecessarily reduce opportunities for participation.
- 4.23. Expansion of grants available to support ACT's diverse community would provide better opportunities to support those with financial pressures, disability, caring for others and/or moving through elite pathways.
- 4.24. The Committee acknowledges that any changes or initiatives should consider unintended consequences such as inappropriately supporting for-profit organisations or inflating the costs of participation.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends the ACT Government expand and reform the existing sport voucher program to simplify its eligibility requirements and broaden its coverage to address barriers to access as raised in their inquiry.

- 4.25. The Committee notes that information about what financial support is available is scattered and can sometimes rely on word of mouth. Ms Watts from the Youth Coalition told the Committee that:

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. [...] Having one place that people can go to would be really helpful.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 6.

¹⁸⁷ Carers ACT, *Submission 131*, p 6.

¹⁸⁸ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 2.

¹⁸⁹ Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 119.

- 4.26. She recommended that the ACT maintain a centralised online portal with grant, sponsorship and scholarship opportunities.¹⁹⁰

Committee comment

- 4.27. The Committee is aware that the ACT Government maintains a searchable, online register for Government-funded financial support opportunities.¹⁹¹
- 4.28. The Committee believes this useful resource could be expanded to include all Federal Government and non-Government funding options that are available for ACT citizens.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends the ACT Government create a centralised online portal for all grants, subsidies, and financial assistance programs for sport participation to improve awareness and uptake.

Equipment costs

- 4.29. Equipment costs were highlighted in evidence as a particular barrier to participation.
- 4.30. Often grant programs do not cover the cost of equipment, for example, the Every Chance program can be used for registration fees but not equipment.¹⁹² Under the program requirements, successful recipients are assumed to have access to any equipment pool available from the club.¹⁹³
- 4.31. To broaden access to equipment for general use, the concept of ‘equipment libraries’ was raised in evidence presented to the Committee. Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission explained the opportunities that young people and children had identified:

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 affordable¹⁹⁴.

- 4.32. There is an existing example of a successful equipment lending library in ACT. The Bike Library provides access to refurbished bikes and scooters, as well as accessories such as helmets and bike locks. Volunteers refurbish and safety check donated bikes, which can

¹⁹⁰ Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 119.

¹⁹¹ ACT Government, ‘Funding and support’, <https://www.act.gov.au/money-and-tax/grants-funding-and-incentives> (accessed 12 June 2026).

¹⁹² Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 118.

¹⁹³ Every Chance, ‘Trusted Referrers’, <https://everychance.com.au/trustedreferrers/#role> (accessed 17 March 2026).

¹⁹⁴ Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook, ACT Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 176.

then be loaned to the community free of charge. The Bike Library is supported through donations, volunteer support, Pedal Power ACT (a cycling advocacy group), the Margaret Hendry School, Suburban Land Agency's Mingle Program and Community Services #1.¹⁹⁵

Committee comment

- 4.33. The Committee supports the establishment of equipment libraries as a low-cost way to enhance casual and financially assist sports players across the community.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider options for establishing sport equipment libraries at suitable sporting venues to assist those people who experience cost as a barrier to participating in sporting activities.

Hall and ground costs

- 4.34. As well as equipment, clubs and players need access to space. The high cost of ACT Government school hall and ground hire fees was raised by community led organisations and sporting groups.¹⁹⁶
- 4.35. Most local sportsgrounds are owned and operated by the ACT Government. In 2023-24, sportsground operations cost \$15.3 million. Over 153,000 hours of hire fees from community sport covered 18.4 percent of this cost (11.2 percent in 2022-23), highlighting the substantial subsidy provided by the ACT Government.¹⁹⁷
- 4.36. Indoor facilities, often located in schools, do not have the same subsidy level. Mr Grant Keys from Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club explained that court hire fees are the club's largest expense. Hiring costs are driving up registration fees and 'making community basketball significantly more expensive than private school programs that enjoy exclusive and free access to their own venues'.¹⁹⁸ Mr Keys explained that increases to hiring fees, 'flow back to the participants through registration fees... we have had to put up our registration fees to compensate'.¹⁹⁹
- 4.37. The ACT Education Directorate sets annual fees and charges for ACT public schools. Spaces include gymnasiums, synthetic-surface courts, dance studios and large open areas. The schedule of fees includes a flat rate for facilities and gymnasium hire. For other areas (classrooms, dance studios) a varied rate is charged, based on type of space and if the hire

¹⁹⁵ Pedal Power ACT, 'Bike Library', <https://www.pedalpower.org.au/bike-library> (accessed 17 March 2026).

¹⁹⁶ North Canberra Community Council, *Submission 144*, p 2; Mr Liam Brown, Yarabi Football Club, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 1; ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 4; IACS, *Submission 124*, p 11; Basketball ACT, *Submission 134*, pp 5–10.

¹⁹⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 17.

¹⁹⁸ Mr Grant Keys, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator and Life Member, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 132.

¹⁹⁹ Mr Grant Keys, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator and Life Member, Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 136.

is a type of commercial use (as outlined in the description of charges). Rates are set for the cost recovery associated with the space.²⁰⁰

- 4.38. The ACT Government confirmed the schedule of hire fees increased by the Wage Price Index, which was 3.25 percent for the 2024/25 financial year. Hiring fees for gymnasiums increased from \$84 in the 2024/25 financial year to \$86.70 in the 2025/26 financial year for weekday and Saturday hire.²⁰¹
- 4.39. The ACT Government acknowledges there are fees variations between schools due to historical arrangements, with the Directorate working with schools to align fees for community hirers with the approved schedule of fees.²⁰²
- 4.40. Inconsistency of pricing between codes and indoor and outdoor sports for community sporting clubs was raised by Basketball ACT, who noted in their submission:

Hiring an enclosed oval for junior sport for football codes and cricket is \$24.30 per field per hour. To hire one indoor court for an hour at a school facility is \$17.70 more expensive compared to the enclosed oval example.²⁰³

Committee comment

- 4.41. The Committee acknowledges the large subsidy provided by the ACT for the cost of sportsground hire which allows more sports clubs, and therefore their members, to keep playing on those grounds.
- 4.42. The Committee would like to see this subsidy model applied to all community sports facilities, including those located on school grounds.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends the ACT Government reduce its school hall and ground hire fees for volunteer-led organisations.

Public transport

- 4.43. Sporting venues are spread across the ACT and can be difficult to access without a private vehicle. Ms Veronica Elliott from ACT Parents explained:

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.

²⁰⁰ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, answer to QTON 002, *Inquiry into E-Petition 007-25: Build a new gym for Lyneham High School*, 4 November 2025 (received 20 November 2025).

²⁰¹ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, answer to QTON 005, 5 November 2025 (received 28 November 2025).

²⁰² Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, answer to QTON 002, *Inquiry into E-Petition 007-25: Build a new gym for Lyneham High School*, 4 November 2025 (received 20 November 2025).

²⁰³ Basketball ACT, *Submission 134*, p 9.

I know that some sports actually travel from home, away, and that travel can be from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong, or vice versa²⁰⁴.

- 4.44. The Committee heard that many young people increasingly rely on public transport due to family circumstances (such as one or more family members playing sport at the same time) or inconvenient times for parents due to work or other commitments.²⁰⁵ Improvements to public transport scheduling to sporting venues, including increasing frequency at peak times and days (including Saturdays) would allow another transport avenue for those without access to a private vehicle.²⁰⁶

Committee comment

- 4.45. The Committee heard multiple calls for increased public transport linkage to sports grounds and stadiums during this inquiry. The Committee believes that a more proactive approach to planning for sports infrastructure should include improved public transport access to uplift participation.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that, when designing future transport access, the ACT Government enhance public transport links to existing sports facilities, particularly during scheduled game or social hours.

Funding and investment sources

- 4.46. During the course of this inquiry, the Committee heard examples of successful co-investment models for the delivery sporting events and facilities.

Cricket

- 4.47. The Australian Cricket Infrastructure Fund (ACIF), through Cricket Australia, provides funding for community cricket facility projects, with a focus on growing participation in the sport.²⁰⁷ Increased engagement and ongoing co-investment with ACT Government has allowed for accelerated facility development in cricket infrastructure across the ACT.²⁰⁸
- 4.48. Since September 2023, the ACIF has contributed over \$560,000 in funding to local projects, helping to unlock approximately \$2.5 million in total cricket infrastructure upgrades. It has supported the delivery of 15 successful projects in the ACT, to address critical needs in the cricket community.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Ms Elliott, Executive Officer, ACT Parents, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 114; Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Office, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 118.

²⁰⁵ Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Children and Young People Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 178.

²⁰⁶ St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, *Submission 130*, p 6.

²⁰⁷ Cricket Australia, Play Cricket, <https://play.cricket.com.au/community/resources/facilities-infrastructure/the-acif> (accessed 3 June 2026).

²⁰⁸ ACT Cricket, *Submission 152*, pp 2-3.

²⁰⁹ ACT Cricket, *Submission 152*, pp 2-3.

- 4.49. Key upgrades delivered with ACIF support include: practice net facilities: six new or refurbished synthetic practice net complexes for training; turf wicket renewals: four turf wicket block reconstructions to protect and rejuvenate quality playing surfaces; pavilion improvements: three clubhouse/pavilion upgrades to provide modern, inclusive amenities for players and supporters; and other amenities: construction of new shade structures and an equipment storage shed to support club activities.²¹⁰

Committee comment

- 4.50. The success of the partnership with the ACIF shows that local community needs can be addressed with a mix of private and public funding. When considering future infrastructure priorities, the Government should seek out co-investment with the sports sector in the first instance.
- 4.51. The Committee also considers it important that such partnerships deliver facilities for the community at the grassroots level, as well as for elite sport.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise co-investment under the community sports facilities program for upgrades that unlock participation, including linking grants to measurable outputs.

Rugby League

- 4.52. The Raiders (National Rugby League) Centre of Excellence in Braddon was a joint venture by the ACT Government, Canberra District Rugby League and NSW Government.²¹¹ Opening in 2023, the facility includes sports and recreation areas, grassed oval playing area, training areas, adjacent viewing areas and the Canberra District Rugby League Football Club (CDRL) headquarters and administrative units. Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Deputy Chief Minister described the facilities as:

[S]tate of the art headquarters for one of Canberra's elite sporting teams, combined with new community facilities, in the heart of the city, [which] will enhance the area and provide new opportunities for Canberrans of all ages and abilities to get involved with the sport.²¹²

- 4.53. The Centre provides for the community to have access to carnivals, clinics and training camps, and elite game development opportunities.²¹³

²¹⁰ ACT Cricket, *Submission 152*, pp 2-3.

²¹¹ Lachlan Roberts, *Raiders' new centre of excellence expected to be ready by 2020 pre-season as construction begins*, Regional Canberra, 15 November 2018, <https://region.com.au/raidernew-centre-of-excellence-expected-to-be-ready-by-2020-pre-season-as-construction-begins/273750/> (accessed 18 March 2026); Canberra Raiders, 'Raiders Announce Cross-Border funding for Centre of Excellence', *Media Release*, 4 June 2018; Mr Mick Brady, Executive Officer, Community Sport Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 166.

²¹² Canberra Raiders, 'Raiders Announce Cross-Border funding for Centre of Excellence', *Media Release*, 4 June 2018.

²¹³ Canberra Raiders, 'Raiders Announce Cross-Border funding for Centre of Excellence', *Media Release*, 4 June 2018.

Committee comment

- 4.54. The Committee acknowledges that the ACT Government has an Industry Partnership Program, which is designed to facilitate the Government to form similar strategic partnerships with ACT State Sporting Organisations who have the capability to deliver projects of significance.²¹⁴ In the development of these partnerships, further exploration of opportunities to facilitate and expedite sporting facilities could be investigated, if not already.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government actively seek out partnership opportunities with national and state sporting bodies to facilitate and expedite the development sporting facilities which would alleviate costs imposed on the ACT Government.

New education Infrastructure

- 4.55. For Badminton, an escalation of player numbers has seen an increase in demand on clubs and requests for suitable indoor venues in the ACT. During peak evening periods clubs need to 'compete with many other sports to hire the sports halls of schools, colleges, tertiary institutions and the two private sports facilities available for badminton'.²¹⁵
- 4.56. Badminton ACT acknowledged ACT Government's consultation with them and other indoor sporting associations on the development of a 'model' school gym for all new schools being built. This led to eight badminton courts and purpose lighting; nests and posts being incorporated into new school builds such as Shirley Smith High School and the Aunty Agnes Shea High School.²¹⁶
- 4.57. ACT Parents encouraged a review of the availability, quality and accessibility of school sporting infrastructure in their submission, with encouragement for the ACT Government to explore a co-investment model between education and sport portfolios.²¹⁷

Committee comment

- 4.58. During the hearing the Committee heard from Ms Yvette Berry MLA, who is both Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Education and Early Childhood Education, that the Government was considering building extra courts at a new school in Woden specifically for community needs.²¹⁸
- 4.59. Given the example of how successful consultation with stakeholders by the ACT Government improved outcomes for Badminton ACT and the wider community, the

²¹⁴ ACT Government, *Sport and Recreation 2024 Report Card*, March 2025, p 4.

²¹⁵ Badminton ACT, *Submission 127*, p 3.

²¹⁶ Badminton ACT, *Submission 127*, p 1.

²¹⁷ ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 6.

²¹⁸ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 188.

Committee encourages continued early consultation with the local sport community when building and upgrading schools.

Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government identify and implement best-practice models to deliver dual-use school facilities upgrades, including flexible co-investment arrangements.

Federal funding support

- 4.60. The Federal Government provides several initiatives to support schools, local clubs and groups, and local governments to develop sporting facilities and activities for community sport.²¹⁹
- 4.61. Two main strategies, the 'Play Well – Australia's Sport Participation Strategy' and 'Win Well – Australia's High Performance 2032+ Sport Strategy' outline priority areas and provide direction for grant programs.²²⁰
- 4.62. Key focus areas include increasing participation, women and girls in sport, sport in schools and increasing social inclusion in sport.²²¹

Committee comment

- 4.63. Given the alignment in these policy areas between the Federal Government and ACT Government, continued engagement between these levels of government will benefit the community.

Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the Federal Government to maximise funding opportunities for community sporting activities and facilities in the ACT.

²¹⁹ Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Community Sport', <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sport/community-sport> (accessed 27 May 2026).

²²⁰ Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Community Sport', <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sport/community-sport> (accessed 27 May 2026).

²²¹ Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Community Sport', <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sport/community-sport> (accessed 27 May 2026).

5. Inclusion and equity

- 5.1. Diversity, equity and inclusion are important principles that should actively be upheld and promoted within our whole community. Discrimination and lack of inclusion can be significant barriers to participation in sport, as noted by the Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, Ms Karen Toohey. In her submission, she provided an example of how this can occur:

These experiences can and do lead to people isolating themselves for fear of reoccurrences of these types of events. The Commission has dealt with matters where children and young people have been vilified or discriminated by others at their schools or sports and so have sought to withdraw from social activities including sport.²²²

- 5.2. The Youth Coalition also supported this view, highlighting in their submission that ‘young people ... identified accessibility and inclusivity as a barrier to participation in community sports’²²³.

- 5.3. For the ACT Government, the *CBR Next Move Sport and Recreation Strategy 2023 to 2028* says:

We want all Canberrans regardless of who they are to feel welcome and safe in our sport and active recreation environments. By increasing the representation of traditionally under-represented groups as participants, volunteers and administrators our community will benefit as a whole. We will invest in training and the development of minimum standards to help organisations develop their culture, products and services to meet the needs of the broad cross section of the ACT community.²²⁴

- 5.4. Legislative requirements for inclusion do exist under the *Discrimination Act 1991*. In addition to general protections, under section 23A of this Act, it is unlawful for a person responsible for the organisation or administration of a formally organised sporting activity (including a coach or manager) to discriminate against another person in relation to participation in the activity.²²⁵
- 5.5. Some of the demographics which are at risk of experiencing discrimination or lack of inclusion are listed below.

CALD inclusion

- 5.6. The Committee received several submissions outlining challenges to participation in community sport faced by people with CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds), including language difficulties, complex registration processes and racism.²²⁶

²²² ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 1.

²²³ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 14.

²²⁴ ACT Government, *CBR Next Move Sport and Recreation Strategy 2023 to 2028*, December 2022, p 25.

²²⁵ *Discrimination Act 1991*.

²²⁶ See, for example, Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services Australia Inc, *Submission 151*, p 1; St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, *Submission 130*, p 3; ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, pp 3-4; ACT Children & Young People Commissioner, *Submission 126*, p 13; VolunteeringACT, *Submission 77*, pp 8 & 12.

- 5.7. The Committee notes the 'Play by the Rules' guidelines *Inclusion in Sport - Removing Barriers to Participation*, which says the following about inclusion of people from CALD backgrounds:

Sport participation can help newly arrived migrants to navigate the challenges of life in a new country, such as learning the language and building social relationships. Sometimes sport can be a place where negative social stereotypes and barriers can be broken down and replaced with positive ones, leading to broader social harmony.²²⁷

- 5.8. The ACT Government acknowledged that digital platforms are being used to promote community sport opportunities and may 'inadvertently exclude certain groups, particularly from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, who may face barriers to accessing or engaging with these mediums.'²²⁸
- 5.9. There are language barriers to registering CALD children into sport, with St Vincent de Paul providing an example of recently arrived teenagers to Australia.²²⁹ One teenager outlined their experience of trying to register to play sport:

All I wanted to do was play football. So, when I was asked to submit many documents, I did not know what that meant. More difficult for me was that, after my family and the team at Vinnies [Canberra Goulburn] had helped me to submit the documents, I had to wait anxiously for about 6 weeks. It was a very anxious time for me. I kept asking myself, "Will I ever get to play football?". Some days, I will go to watch the teams play and hope that one day, I will be able to play like the other kids ... I am looking forward to playing other sports. However, I am anxious that I will not be able to complete the registration process by myself next year. The process is a lot, and I will still need help to complete it if things don't change.²³⁰

Women and girls

- 5.10. Some cultures find it inappropriate for women and girls to engage in sports. These beliefs may continue to be held by migrants to Australia, despite our different social values.²³¹
- 5.11. Women may also have extra needs in order to play sport, such as culturally appropriate clothing. For young people in schools who are disengaged and physically inactive, the Australian Institute of Sport data indicates that they are likely to be female and from CALD backgrounds.²³² The Youth Coalition, in their submission, raised that 'community sports often overlook cultural and religious needs, for example, by only offering uniforms without modifications to suit cultural needs'.²³³

²²⁷ Play by the Rules, 'Resources, Inclusion in Sport – Removing Barriers to Participation Guidelines', <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/inclusion-sport-removing-barriers-participation> (accessed 21 April 2026).

²²⁸ ACT Government, *Submission 135*, p 12.

²²⁹ St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, *Submission 130*, p 4.

²³⁰ St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, *Submission 130*, p 5.

²³¹ Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services Australia Inc, *Submission 151*, p 1.

²³² St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, *Submission 130*, p 3.

²³³ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 15.

- 5.12. The ACT Government acknowledges the barriers for multicultural women and girls, including coverings and other requirements, and their needs not being met by some sports.²³⁴

Racism and behaviour in community sports

- 5.13. More concerningly, the Committee heard that people from CALD communities experience racism and discrimination when participating in sports.²³⁵ The submission by the Children & Young People Commissioner highlighted that:

Children and young people recounted experiences of other players using racial slurs during games, without response from referees or coaches. We were also told that retaliation often results in the victim of the racism being reprimanded.²³⁶

- 5.14. The behaviour of parents and spectators who witness such acts was also of concern to her:

Children and young people reflected the adult coaches and referees often either seemed oblivious, or unsure how to respond, resulting in children and young people having to advocate for their own safety, instead of being able to rely on adults taking appropriate action.²³⁷

- 5.15. She concluded that:

Children and young people have reported that they deliberately avoid places and events where they expect to experience racism. Given sport was identified as having high rates of racism, we can conclude that some children and young people avoid participating in sport for this reason.²³⁸

- 5.16. The Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, Ms Karen Toohey, also provided a case study to the Committee detailing a lodged complaint:

A parent lodged a race discrimination complaint on behalf of their child against a community sporting organisation for failing to take steps to address a complaint that their child had been treated unfavourably by a coach because of their race. It was alleged that the coach made adverse comments to the child about their race in front of the team, which included statements about the child's race being 'lazy', among other things. The child subsequently withdrew from the team and game, and the complainant asserted that the community sporting organisation did not take steps to independently investigate the matter or address the allegations raised.²³⁹

Committee comment

- 5.17. The Committee condemns the continued acts of racism and discrimination that are sadly still present in the ACT community.

²³⁴ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 201-202.

²³⁵ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, pp 14-15 and ACT Children & Young People Commissioner, *Submission 126*, p 13.

²³⁶ ACT Children & Young People Commissioner, *Submission 126*, p 13.

²³⁷ ACT Children & Young People Commissioner, *Submission 126*, p 13.

²³⁸ ACT Children & Young People Commissioner, *Submission 126*, p 13.

²³⁹ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 3.

- 5.18. The Committee notes the ACT Government commitment to welcoming and inclusive environments as outlined in the *Sport and Recreation Implementation Plan 2025*. This includes a 'continued provision and advertising of governance and integrity education and training opportunities through Australian Sports Commission and Sport Integrity Australia.'²⁴⁰
- 5.19. An example of such a program is those offered by *Play by the Rules*, an organisation which helps community sports to improve inclusion. They offer resources and training for administrators, coaches and parents on subjects such as complaint handling, inclusive coaching, and addressing sideline behaviour.²⁴¹

Recommendation 26

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase promotion and education of existing programs, both in schools and in sports organisations, including the Play by the Rules program, that are aimed at creating an inclusive and non-discriminatory sporting environment.

- 5.20. The Committee heard that for younger people, increasing diversity in leadership and coaching positions provides an 'opportunity to encourage increased participation in sports for young people of all abilities and backgrounds'.²⁴²
- 5.21. For example, one young person commented:
- A contributing factor to many (though maybe not a reason on its own) is never seeing people who look like me - body shape, skin colour, gender expression, etc. It really drills in the "not belonging" feeling.²⁴³
- 5.22. The Committee notes that these leadership and coaching concerns are a part of wider social issues. The 'Play by the Rules' guidelines *Inclusion in Sport - Removing Barriers to Participation* describes the complexities of health and social inequalities for diverse groups including 'intersectionality'. The guidelines state that:

There is also an 'intersectionality' regarding the barriers people face – this means no two people are the same and people can face multiple forms of discrimination and multiple barriers to participation. Clubs and sports can address this by doing 'holistic' inclusion work and considering how the various barriers people face may intersect or be cumulative, rather than doing isolated work in one area.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ ACT Government, 'Sport and Recreation Implementation Plan 2025', https://www.sport.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/2831157/Implementation-Plan-2025.pdf (accessed 14 April 2026).

²⁴¹ Play by the Rules, <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/> (accessed 12 June 2026).

²⁴² Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 15.

²⁴³ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 15.

²⁴⁴ Play by the Rules, Resources, 'Inclusion in Sport – Removing Barriers to Participation Guidelines', <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/inclusion-sport-removing-barriers-participation> (accessed 21 April 2026).

Recommendation 27

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government encourage representation and leadership diversity in clubs and governing bodies.

Increasing young people's participation in community sport

- 5.23. Not all people avoid sport because they are being discriminated against. Sometimes the barriers to participation are less malicious, often coming down to pre-conceived notions or assumptions that community sport is not for them. This can be especially true for young people, who may be less sure or less knowledgeable about the options that are available to them.
- 5.24. The Youth Coalition noted in their submission that young people often feel anxious about participating in community sports due to 'fears of judgement' regarding their skill level, particularly when starting out or wanting to learn a new sport. They also noted that there was 'a lack of introductory classes across age ranges' which often resulted in being placed in groups either below or too advanced for their age.²⁴⁵
- 5.25. Children's participation in organised sport tends to peak at the end of primary school, and then decline throughout the teenage years. There are many reasons for this, but one of the main ones can be the pressure of competition, which can include high expectations on performance and feeling like they're not good at it.²⁴⁶ Ms Hannah Watts from the Youth Coalition explained this:
- [O]nce 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.²⁴⁷
- 5.26. Although individual clubs or sports may offer beginner friendly training and social activities for under 18s, these were not widely known about.²⁴⁸
- 5.27. Other reasons for avoiding sport included fear of injury, lack of time, and that it could be too expensive. In contrast, non-competitive, casual sport options are an increasingly popular alternative.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 15.

²⁴⁶ Play By the Rules, 'What makes kids want to drop out of sport, and how should parents respond?', 20 August 2025 www.playbytherules.net.au/news-and-media/what-makes-kids-want-drop-out-sport-and-how-should-parents-respond (accessed 17 March 2026).

²⁴⁷ Ms Hannah Watts, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Coalition, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, pp 122-123.

²⁴⁸ Youth Coalition, *Submission 148*, p 16.

²⁴⁹ Ms Lorri Modde, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoors NSW & ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 93-94; *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 120 and 122; Ms Emi Callaway, Trainee Instructor, Canberra Parkour, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 100.

- 5.28. Youth Coalition ran a survey on young people's experiences with sport and recreation and found a mix of the two:

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 [...] 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.²⁵⁰

- 5.29. Several witnesses spoke about the need to promote non-traditional sport. Miss Tshering Yangden from the Youth Coalition said:

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.²⁵¹

- 5.30. Parkour is an example of a non-traditional, casual sport that is very accessible to young people with less money, as explained by Mr Isaiah Mayersen from Canberra Parkour:

Yes, parkour is completely free—and to an extent that is hard to even believe, coming from other sports. If you come to a parkour training session, you will be taught by absolute experts completely for free. They are totally willing to share all their knowledge and you just join in on the challenges other people are participating in and everyone that can help you will help you and you can ask anyone for advice at any time. We go out for group lunches. We might go, for example, to a park or somewhere a bit further out of town that public transport is not accessible, but people will always drive you. Even if you are new to the community, you can get a lift. If you cannot pay for lunch, we will buy a meal to share. We could not be more supportive. We have many students that are broke and everyone just gets along. It is very affordable.²⁵²

- 5.31. Witnesses talked about how there were places which could be used for advertising alternative sports to young people, such as youth centres, university clubs, social media, or via family members.²⁵³ Mr Maysen said that people got interested in parkour from seeing it in media, hearing about it in climbing gyms, or from seeing people doing it in public.²⁵⁴

Committee comment

- 5.32. Non-traditional, non-competitive, and casual sports should be promoted to young people in order to increase their participation in physical recreation. This could be done through schools or other community hubs such as medical centres. Social media can also be used, however the Committee does note the recent ban on social media for under 16 year olds.

²⁵⁰ Miss Tshering Yangden, ACU social work student on placement and Miss Shannon Jane Lanza, Projects and Events Support Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 122.

²⁵¹ Miss Tshering Yangden, ACU social work student on placement, Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 122.

²⁵² Mr Isaiah Mayersen, Trainee Instructor, Canberra Parkour, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 106.

²⁵³ *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, pp 199-120.

²⁵⁴ Mr Isaiah Mayersen, Trainee Instructor, Canberra Parkour, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 104.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends the ACT Government work with sport and recreation bodies to ensure that young people are aware of the breadth of opportunities available to them for participation in sport.

Disability inclusion

- 5.33. The Committee heard from primary carers of powerchair football players that participation in the sport leads to many positive outcomes for players who have disabilities. Ms Lina Tiyce, parent of a player in Canberra Region Powerchair Football, explained:

Our son has a bubbly personality and loves to talk. The sport allows him to be involved in a team sport independently, just like any other abled individual, without the assistance of parents or carers. The sport has given him so much confidence. It has assisted him in his everyday tasks and has allowed him to see a brighter future—because anything is possible. Just like any other athlete, our son can be very competitive and passionate, and powerchair football gives him the ability to express this drive.²⁵⁵

- 5.34. Ms Bridget Larsen, another primary carer of a player of powerchair football, added:

He loves the speed, the strategy and the freedom of being able to move, kick and be part of a team. It is great for his mental health, and he is proud to say that he plays a sport. We think that the team skills will help him as he transitions from university to paid employment.²⁵⁶

- 5.35. Although Canberra Region Powerchair Football received sponsorships over the years to raise funds for the powerchairs required to take part in the sport, there is a deficit in the servicing and maintenance of them. This has included the charity organisation Rotary helping to provide Velcro straps for players.²⁵⁷

- 5.36. There are additional costs for sport players who have a disability and require specialist adaptive equipment.²⁵⁸ Players and families are generally responsible for transport, repairs and parts for this equipment. For those who are involved with Powerchair Football, a team sport designed and developed specifically for electric chair users, the maintenance of their electric chair is vital. The Capital Region Powerchair Football team specially identified issues with the use of powerchairs:

Many have bald tyres, faulty power controls and missing belts. Astris PME have recently come on board, offering discounted servicing, but this does not cover replacement or spare parts.²⁵⁹

- 5.37. The Committee notes recent changes to the *Discrimination Act 1991* including the staged phase in of positive duty changes and the application of this to 'all other people and

²⁵⁵ Ms Lina Tiyce, Parent of player, Canberra Region Powerchair Football, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 13.

²⁵⁶ Ms Bridget Larsen, Parent of player, Canberra Region Powerchair Football, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 12.

²⁵⁷ Capital Region Powerchair Football, *Submission 43*, p 5.

²⁵⁸ Capital Region Powerchair Football, *Submission 43*, p 5; Advocacy for Inclusion, *Submission 140*, p 3.

²⁵⁹ Capital Region Powerchair Football, *Submission 43*, p 5.

entities who are duty holders under the Act, including sporting clubs and sporting league administration bodies.’²⁶⁰

- 5.38. The ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner outlines that ‘positive duties can be an opportunity for community sporting providers and government to consider what steps they can take to eliminate discrimination in sport and improve accessibility for all’. Further, the Commissioner outlines possible steps initiatives organisations could take including ‘making a provision for adaptive equipment and specially designed sports programs.’²⁶¹

Committee comment

- 5.39. Regularly maintained and serviced equipment is vital to providing a safe way for people with a disability to engage in sport. The example provided by Canberra Region Powerchair Football provides an insight to the financial challenges for players and families in being able to access the equipment required to take part in their chosen sport. Given the positive impacts of sport participation, as identified by players and carers of players, additional support should be provided to clubs to enable them to keep players, and to fulfill their requirements under the *Discrimination Act 1991*.

Recommendation 29

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government support funding for community sporting groups for adaptive sporting equipment suitable for participants with a disability.

²⁶⁰ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, pp 4-5.

²⁶¹ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, pp 4-5.

6. Volunteering

- 6.1. The last, less direct barrier to community sports participation which this report covers is the lack of volunteers. Without volunteers, clubs could not operate and games could not be held.²⁶² A range of different roles are held by volunteers, from committee members, coaches, managers, to administrators.²⁶³
- 6.2. The monetary value of volunteering to the ACT economy is important. The contribution of volunteering expenditure to ACT's Gross Product is 2.2 percent, with a benefit analysis detailing these benefits across the entire community of social and economic benefits at \$14.1 billion per year.²⁶⁴
- 6.3. People volunteer their knowledge, time, effort and money to contribute to their chosen sport. The Committee heard of examples of the different ways that volunteers help, including from the Equestrian Park Management Group who organised the building of seven dressage arenas for \$360 000 and credit volunteers as the major contributor.²⁶⁵
- 6.4. Volunteers also help to care for public spaces where sports take place, in both built and natural environments. Ms Emi Callaway from Canberra Parkour notes:
- We attempt to notify Access Canberra when there are these sorts of issues, particularly like wobbly rails and these sorts of damages. But the process can take quite a long time and does not always work out. Spaces like around libraries and things that we often train at quite frequently have broken glass. That goes away of its own accord, but it can be a week or two. We do try to report these things when possible, but not super frequently—and just as individuals, not in the capacity as a community. We also occasionally sweep up some stuff or remove dead branches and things like that ourselves.²⁶⁶
- 6.5. Advocate groups and sports clubs have highlighted the ability to recruit and retain volunteers as a concern for the ongoing continuity of community sports in the ACT.²⁶⁷
- 6.6. In the ACT, the number of volunteers has decreased, together with the number of hours people want to volunteer.²⁶⁸ This trend is also reflected in volunteer numbers in the sport sector Australia wide, with a 25 percent and 45 percent decrease in the number of volunteers in sport clubs across Australia in 2022 and 2021 respectively. An average 11 volunteers were lost per club in 2022. 63 percent of sporting clubs are reporting their main challenge is not having enough volunteers²⁶⁹

²⁶² VolunteeringACT, *Submission 77*, p 6.

²⁶³ St Vincent de Paul, *Submission 130*, p.4; Mr Zac Zaharias, President Climbers Association, Committee Hansard Proof, 8 October 2025, p 27.

²⁶⁴ VolunteeringACT, *The State of Volunteering in the Australian Capital Territory 2024 report*, p 46.

²⁶⁵ Committee Hansard Proof, 25 November 2025, pp 67 & 68.

²⁶⁶ Ms Callaway, Canberra Parkour, Committee Hansard Proof, 8 October 2025, pp 101.

²⁶⁷ Independent Advocates for Community Sport, *Submission 124*, pp 10 & 11; Basketball ACT, *Submission 134*, p 1; ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, p 9; ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 5.

²⁶⁸ VolunteeringACT, *The State of Volunteering in the Australian Capital Territory 2024 report* p 31.

²⁶⁹ Australian Sports Foundation, *Clubs Under Pressure, Australian Community Sport Research Findings*, May 2023, p 53 and 14.

- 6.7. For volunteers in the ACT, barriers to volunteering were primarily a lack of time (47.3 percent) followed by cost and burnout (19 percent and 12 percent respectively).²⁷⁰
- 6.8. High administration and compliance requirements (including a lack of clarity around these requirements), costs (including coaching accreditation, parking fees), and volunteer fatigue were common themes in evidence provided from organisations.²⁷¹

Administrative burden

- 6.9. Evidence shows that administrative responsibilities were a large contributing factor to burnout in volunteers, as they prevent them from focusing on their core work. 61 percent of sporting clubs report administration load as their second biggest challenge after the lack of volunteers²⁷².
- 6.10. Mr James Ferguson from Independent Advocates for Community Sport explained the nature of community sports clubs and how it impacts on approaches to business plans and processes:

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.²⁷³

- 6.11. Independent Advocates for Community Sport highlighted paperwork in reference government processes and requirements, where they are required to fill out similar forms requesting the same information from different multiple agencies.²⁷⁴
- 6.12. Ms Lori Modde from Outdoors NSW & ACT explained the complexities of paperwork in maintaining trails when it comes to rock climbing. Climbers, through accessing cliffs, are creating trails yet only 'authorised trails' are maintained by Parks ACT. Fines are applicable to those who trim or cut trees without the appropriate approvals from Parks ACT.
- 6.13. She spoke of frustration due to 'too much paperwork' explicitly:

It is too hard for Parks to actually initiate the volunteer paperwork for us to go out and do weekend's work. There is all sorts of issues. We are keen and able but the bureaucracy and the process seem to be the work against that.²⁷⁵

- 6.14. Similar issues were identified in 2024 when the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality reported on its inquiry into unpaid work. Ten recommendations were made to the ACT Government, with two specifically relevant to this inquiry. The Committee recommended that the ACT Government seek to better

²⁷⁰ VolunteeringACT, *The State of Volunteering in the Australian Capital Territory 2024 report* p 39.

²⁷¹ Scott Glover, *Submission 12*, p 1; Amanda Banks, *Submission 42*, p 2; Capital Region Powerchair Football, *Submission 43*, p. 5; ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 5; Independent Advocates for Community Sport, *Submission 124*, pp 10 & 11; Basketball ACT, *Submission 134*, p 1; Mr Zac Zaharias, President Climbers Association, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 27; Mr Graham Carter, IACS, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 172.

²⁷² Australian Sports Foundation, *Clubs Under Pressure, Australian Community Sport Research Findings*, May 2023, p 14.

²⁷³ Mr James Ferguson, Member, Independent Advocates of Sport, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 164.

²⁷⁴ *Committee Hansard*, 25 November 2025, pp 169 & 170.

²⁷⁵ Ms Modde, Outdoors NSW & ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2025, p 27.

understand the costs internalised by volunteers and seek to address the barriers to volunteering that these may represent. Another key recommendation was that the ACT Government develop online resources on the Access Canberra website to support all volunteer and not for profit organisations in complying with regulations and requirements.²⁷⁶

- 6.15. The ACT Government in response to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality's recommendations in its report into unpaid work, noted that:

There is an opportunity to improve the accessibility and utility of existing information and processes and this is being explored. The Volunteering Strategy Action Plan also includes an action for government to consider how to improve information sharing and development of resources around the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme (WWVPS).²⁷⁷

- 6.16. Agreed in principle, the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) annual report documented that the status of the compliance recommendation was complete and that 'there is an opportunity to improve on accessibility and utility of existing information and processes and this is being explored'²⁷⁸. The Committee notes little detail is available for stakeholders to understand what improvement avenues the government is exploring.
- 6.17. The Committee notes the ACT Government was set to introduce an \$11 fee for volunteers to register for WWVPS to offset increasing costs associated with administration. Instead of introducing the fee, the ACT Government said it would launch a review of the scheme with stakeholders.²⁷⁹

Committee comment

- 6.18. Balance is important to ensure formal requirements for checks and permits are met whilst lessening the burden placed on volunteers during the application process to obtain them. As Mr Mick Brady from Community Sport Alliance ACT explained in relation to grants and other processes:

[T]here 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.²⁸⁰

- 5.14 Communication of how the ACT Government is currently exploring improvements to the accessibility and utility of existing information and processes would assist organisations in navigating these challenges.

²⁷⁶ Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality, *Inquiry into unpaid work*, September 2024, p vi.

²⁷⁷ ACT Government, *Government Response to Report No. 12 of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality Inquiry into unpaid work*, February 2025, p 5.

²⁷⁸ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development, *Annual Report 2024-25*, p 117.

²⁷⁹ Charlie Gore, ABC News online, 'ACT Government backs down on proposed \$11 fee for volunteer Working with Vulnerable People card', 19 July 2025, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-19/act-government-backs-down-on-second-budget-measure/105547992> (accessed 4 February 2026).

²⁸⁰ Mr Brady, Community Sports Alliance ACT, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 165.

Recommendation 30

The Committee recommends the ACT Government improve regulatory processes for sports volunteers in the ACT and continue to report to the Assembly on how it is improving these processes.

- 6.19. The provision of grant writing support or standardised use of templates by the community would help streamline administrative procedures. ACT Triathlon identified the need to reduce administrative burden through simplified grant processes, underpinned by grant writing support and templates. Similarly, ACT Parents recommended targeted support for volunteer guidance, including training, toolkits and simplified compliance processes.²⁸¹
- 6.20. Standardisation of leases was also identified by Mr Craig Shannon CEO of Clubs ACT, who urged 'standardisation of shared use of templates and long-term community leases'²⁸².
- 6.21. ACT sporting clubs reported a limited awareness of support services including those offered by VolunteeringACT and expressed a desire for more accessible resources and training.²⁸³
- 6.22. As not all volunteers have formal training, experience or expertise, support in learning and development is important and should include awareness of current unlawful discrimination and standards for inclusiveness.²⁸⁴
- 6.23. As mentioned in [Chapter 5](#), there have been recent changes made in discrimination legislation in the ACT which will increase the workload on club volunteers. In April 2024, the ACT's *Discrimination Act 1991* was amended to introduce a positive duty to make reasonable adjustments for all protected attributes, not just disability.²⁸⁵ This duty requires individuals and organisations to proactively take reasonable and proportionate steps to accommodate the needs of people arising from any protected attribute, such as age, disability, or race, and to eliminate discrimination.²⁸⁶
- 6.24. The duty relates to all protected attributes in the Discrimination Act including disability, sex, race, nationality, colour, age, gender identity, accommodation status, employment status, subjection to family violence, religion, immigrant status, carer, parent or kinship status, sexuality as well as sexual harassment and vilification.²⁸⁷
- 6.25. It is an unlawful act to fail to do so, which can be subject to a complaint being made to the ACT Human Rights Commission and the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.²⁸⁸

²⁸¹ ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, p11; ACT Parents, *Submission 64* p 6; Cricket ACT, *Submission 152*, p 5.

²⁸² Mr Craig Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, ClubsACT, *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2025, p 143.

²⁸³ VolunteeringACT, *Submission 77*, p 10.

²⁸⁴ St Vincent de Paul Society, *Submission 130*, p. 4; ACT Discrimination, Disability, and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p. 5; IACS, *Submission 124*, p. 4; ACT Handball Association, *Submission 83*, p. 3; ACT Triathlon, *Submission 149*, p 9.

²⁸⁵ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 4.

²⁸⁶ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 4.

²⁸⁷ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 4.

²⁸⁸ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 4.

- 6.26. Positive duty requirements have a staged commencement for different organisations. From April 2025, the positive duty applies to any ACT government administrative unit, territory authority, territory instrumentality and any individual with organisational management responsibility for any of these entities. From April 2027 the positive duty applies to all other people and entities who are duty holders under the Discrimination Act, including sporting clubs and sporting league administrative bodies.²⁸⁹
- 6.27. Enabling community sport organisations to understand these requirements and to strengthen inclusion practices through training assists in building confidence within these organisations.²⁹⁰ In the ACT Parents submission, it was identified that: ‘Many volunteer coaches lack specific expertise in working with children with diverse needs, and while their intentions are often positive, this lack of knowledge can lead to unintentional exclusion.’²⁹¹
- 6.28. The safety of children and young people in sport has been a focus for the sporting industry in the last five years. In 2024, Sport Integrity Australia received 250 complaints related to child safeguarding or discrimination with 58 substantiated breaches of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy in sports.²⁹²
- 6.29. There have also been changes to further legislation in the ACT that impacts on standards in community sports. Implementation of the ACT Child Safe Standards followed amendments to the *ACT Human Rights Commission Act 2005* and came into effect on 1 August 2024. All organisations providing services for children and young people, including community sport clubs, and organisations and private entities that deliver sport, are required to implement the Standards, which aim to protect and promote the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people.²⁹³

Committee comment

- 6.30. Increased legislation to improve the conduct of organisations in regard to child safety and inclusion are positive steps, however they can also impose unintended burdens on volunteer organisations. The Committee notes that community sports clubs are held to some of the same administrative standards as professional organisations. If this is the expectation, they require additional support to meet these requirements.
- 6.31. As outlined in the Sport and Recreation 2024 Report Card, the ACT Government has targeted education and training to ACT Peak Sporting Boards through the ‘Building Better Boards’ governance program.²⁹⁴ Evidence presented to the Committee suggests that further work is to be done to expand the program and its promotion.
- 6.32. The ACT Government has also reported 660 online course completions through their partnership with Play by the Rules.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁹ ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, *Submission 125*, p 4.

²⁹⁰ ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 5.

²⁹¹ ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 5.

²⁹² ACT Children and Young People Commissioner, *Submission 126*, p 10.

²⁹³ ACT Children and Young People Commissioner, *Submission 126*, p 10.

²⁹⁴ ACT Government, *Sport and Recreation 2024 Report Card*, March 2025, p 5.

²⁹⁵ ACT Government, *Sport and Recreation 2024 Report Card*, March 2025, p 5.

- 6.33. Given significant changes to ACT legislation and evidence that organisations and individuals are not aware of the current support available, further promotion and development should be afforded to volunteers.

Recommendation 31

The Committee recommends the ACT Government reduce the administrative burden on volunteers by providing fit-for-purpose training, toolkits and templates for governance, compliance, and child safety requirements for community sport organisations, and promoting these resources widely.

Promotion of sports volunteering

- 6.34. Recruiting and retaining volunteers in community sport is an ongoing challenge for sporting clubs and organisations.²⁹⁶
- 6.35. Peak sporting bodies and major sporting organisations require the development and delivery of consistent, inclusive volunteer engagement strategies, including holistic communication channels to the community.²⁹⁷

Committee comment

- 6.36. The Committee notes that the ACT Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2025 includes the development of a communications plan about volunteering, however no date is provided for its delivery.²⁹⁸
- 6.37. The Committee also notes existing ACT Government channels such as the Volunteering ACT 'find a volunteering opportunity' portal could be considered in the delivery of improved communication for sport volunteering opportunities.

Recommendation 32

The Committee recommends the ACT Government improve volunteer engagement strategies by public awareness campaigns including utilising existing government channels.

- 6.38. More broadly, investing in ongoing professional development for sporting organisations in volunteer recruitment, recognition and retention would assist in building club capacity and ensuring cross-sector alignment in community sport.²⁹⁹ Currently, volunteer recognition varies widely, with some clubs offering tangible rewards, whilst others do not.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 5.

²⁹⁷ ACT Parents, *Submission 64*, p 5; Basketball ACT, *Submission 134*, p 1.

²⁹⁸ ACT Government, 'ACT Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2027', https://www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/2560589/ACT-Volunteering-Strategy-Action-Plan-2024-2027.pdf (accessed 5 February 2026).

²⁹⁹ VolunteeringACT, *Submission 77*, p 7; ACT Cricket, *Submission 152*, p 5.

³⁰⁰ VolunteeringACT, *Submission 77*, p 9.

Recommendation 33

The Committee recommends the ACT Government explore recognition programs (e.g. annual awards) and incentives to improve volunteer recruitment and retention.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The Committee thanks the many community members, organisations, and the Minister for Sport and Recreation and government officials who participated in this inquiry.
- 7.2. The Committee makes 33 recommendations.

Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation
5 August 2026

Appendix A: Submissions

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
1	John Smith	14/06/25	19/06/25
2	Sarah G	20/06/25	03/07/25
3	Karen Bahmann	20/06/25	03/07/25
4	Jody Gleeson	21/06/25	03/07/25
5	Sally Walker	21/06/25	06/02/26
6	Rachel Kane	22/06/25	03/07/25
7	Sarah McAppion	23/06/25	03/07/25
8	Gerard Fitzsimmons	23/06/25	03/07/25
9	Name Withheld	23/06/25	30/01/26
10	Rob Cattnach	24/06/25	03/07/25
11	Name Withheld	25/06/25	03/07/25
12	Scott Glover	25/06/25	03/07/25
13	Anthony Corder	25/06/25	03/07/25
14	Zaneta Morison	25/06/25	03/07/25
15	Name Withheld	27/06/25	30/01/26
16	Name Withheld	28/06/25	06/02/26
17	Chantelle Stewart	28/06/25	03/07/25
18	Julian Brett	28/06/25	03/07/25
19	Name Withheld	29/06/25	08/07/25
20	Kathryn Yuile	29/06/25	03/07/25
21	Andrew Naef	29/06/25	15/07/25
22	Heidi Byrne	29/06/25	03/07/25
23	Loretta H	30/06/25	21/07/25
24	Daniel Hatelly	02/07/25	21/07/25
25	Tamara Haitsma	02/07/25	21/07/25
26	Stefani Perkovic	03/07/25	21/07/25
27	Name Withheld	03/07/25	21/07/25
28	Jacob Padrotta	04/07/25	21/07/25
29	Name withheld	04/07/25	06/02/26
30	Confidential	04/07/25	11/08/25
31	Dean Turner	05/07/25	21/07/25

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
32	Natasha Popple	05/07/25	21/07/25
33	Melissa Mills	06/07/25	21/07/25
34	Name Withheld	06/07/25	04/08/25
35	Justine Redwin	07/07/25	21/07/25
36	Laura Spensberger von Wiorgorski	10/07/25	21/07/25
37	Troy Rutledge	13/07/25	11/08/25
38	Bowls ACT	14/07/25	21/07/25
39	Jessica Ascione	17/07/25	13/08/25
40	Maria Greene	18/07/25	13/08/25
41	Friends of Manuka Pool	29/07/25	13/08/25
42	Amanda Banks	09/08/25	27/08/25
43	Capital Region Powerchair Football	12/08/25	27/08/25
44	Jonathan Saunders	12/08/25	27/08/25
45	Morna Falkland	15/08/25	27/08/25
46	Oscar Gonzalez	15/08/25	27/08/25
47	Kalman Dee	15/08/25	27/08/25
48	John Collis	16/08/25	27/08/25
49	Name Withheld	17/08/25	30/01/26
50	Name Withheld	19/08/25	27/08/25
51	Vijay Vikramadithyan	19/08/25	06/02/26
52	Name Withheld	19/08/25	02/09/25
53	Confidential	20/08/25	27/08/25
54	Julie Hamilton	21/08/25	27/08/25
55	Andrew Mevius	23/08/25	27/08/25
56	Eliza Williams	23/08/25	02/09/25
57	Name Withheld	25/08/25	30/01/26
58	Name Withheld	10/08/25	10/09/25
59	Name Withheld	26/08/25	11/02/26
60	Friends of Canberra Olympic Pool Inc	02/09/25	10/09/25
61	Weston Creek Community Council	07/09/25	10/09/25
62	Save Phillip Pool	04/09/25	01/10/25
63	ACT Endurance Riders Association Inc (ACTERA)	09/09/25	01/10/25
64	ACT Parents	10/09/25	01/10/25

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
65	Benjamin Canet	04/09/25	01/10/25
66	Sally K	14/09/25	01/10/25
67	ClubsACT	15/09/25	01/10/25
68	Name Withheld	16/09/25	06/02/26
69	Name Withheld	16/09/25	06/02/26
70	Outdoors NSW & ACT	17/09/25	01/10/25
71	Kerrie Keyes	18/09/25	01/10/25
72	Name Withheld	18/09/25	06/02/26
73	Name Withheld	19/09/25	01/10/25
74	Stephanie Canet	19/09/25	01/10/25
75	Kerry Hurkett	20/09/25	01/10/25
76	Mental Health Community Coalition ACT	22/09/25	01/10/25
77	Volunteering ACT	23/09/25	01/10/25
78	Canberra Wild Swim Club	23/09/25	01/10/25
79	Emma Hawke	23/09/25	01/10/25
80	Amber Collins	23/09/25	30/01/26
81	ACT Equestrian Association Inc (ACTEA)	24/09/25	01/10/25
82	Name Withheld	24/09/25	01/10/25
83	ACT Handball Association Inc (ACTHA)	24/09/25	01/10/25
84	Nick Westerink	24/09/25	01/10/25
85	ANU South Asian Research and Advocacy Hub (SARAH)	24/09/25	01/10/25
86	Garry O'Keeffe	24/09/25	01/10/25
87	Name Withheld	24/09/25	06/02/26
88	Michael Varga	25/09/25	01/10/25
89 - 118	Royals Volleyball Club et al.	23/09/25 – 26/09/25	01/10/25
119	ACT Masters Squash	25/09/25	01/10/25
120	Community Sport Alliance ACT	25/09/25	01/10/25
121	Louise Raisin	25/09/25	01/10/25
122	Kylie Sheffield	26/09/25	01/10/25
123	ACT Greens	26/09/25	01/10/25
124	Independent Advocates for Community Sport	25/09/25	01/10/25
125	ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner	26/09/25	01/10/25

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
126	ACT Children and Young People Commissioner	26/09/25	01/10/25
127	Badminton ACT (BACT)	26/09/25	01/10/25
128	Canberra Climbers' Association	26/09/25	01/10/25
129	Jennifer Reich	26/09/25	01/10/25
130	St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra & Goulburn	26/09/25	01/10/25
131	Carers ACT	26/09/25	01/10/25
132	Maria Castles	26/09/25	01/10/25
133	Canberra Parkour	26/09/25	01/10/25
134	Basketball ACT	26/09/25	01/10/25
135	ACT Government	26/09/25	01/10/25
136	Capital Petanque Club	26/09/25	01/10/25
137	Dickson Squash Club	26/09/25	01/10/25
138	Yarabi Football Club	26/09/25	01/10/25
139	Andreas Sneyers	26/09/25	01/10/25
140	Advocacy for Inclusion	26/09/25	01/10/25
141	Name Withheld	26/09/25	01/10/25
142	Michelle Bourdet and Bill Gemmell	27/09/25	01/10/25
143	Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club	28/09/25	01/10/25
144	North Canberra Community Council	28/09/25	01/10/25
145	Canberra Eagles Basketball	29/09/25	09/10/25
146	Canberra Runners Inc	01/10/25	09/10/25
147	Royal Military College Golf Club Inc.	31/07/25	09/10/25
148	Youth Coalition	11/10/25	15/10/25
149	ACT Triathlon	14/10/25	27/11/25
150	Belconnen Community Council	16/10/25	27/11/25
151	MARSS Australia Inc.	17/10/25	27/11/25
152	Cricket ACT	17/10/25	27/11/25
153	Team Sports 4 All	27/01/26	11/02/26
154	Molonglo Juggernauts Football Club	11/02/26	18/02/26

Appendix B: Witnesses

Wednesday, 8 October 2025

Individual

- **Mr Jonathan Saunders**

Yarabi Football Club

- **Mr Thomas Izzard**, President
- **Mr Liam Brown**, Committee Member
- **Mr Jared Nichols**, Committee Member
- **Mr Logan Hareb**, Committee Member

Canberra Region Powerchair Football

- **Ms Bridget Larsen**, parent of player
- **Ms Lina Tiyce**, parent of player

Canberra Climbers Association

- **Mr Zac Zaharias**, President

Friends of Manuka Pool

- **Dr Caroline Luke-Evered**, President

Save Phillip Pool

- **Ms Sarah Ransom**, Convenor
- **Mr Martin Miller**, Committee Member
- **Ms Louise Raisin**, Committee Member

Canberra Wild Swim Club

- **Mr Todd Hayward**, Member

Canberra Open Water Swimmers

- **Ms Kylie Sheffield**, Swimmer

Royals Volleyball Club

- **Mr David Paul Reeson**, President

Dickson Squash Club

- **Mr Benjamin Guy Phillips**, President
- **Mr Richard O'Rourke**, Treasurer

ACT Endurance Riders Association

- **Ms Fia Cumming**, Vice President

ACT Equestrian Association

- **Mr Steve Jordan**, President
- **Mr Steve Boyd**, Member

Badminton ACT

- **Mr Olaf Schuermann**, President

Basketball ACT

- **Ms Nicole Bowles**, Chief Executive Officer

Outdoors NSW & ACT

- **Ms Lori Modde**, Chief Executive Officer

Canberra Parkour

- **Mr Isaiah Mayersen**, Trainee Instructor
- **Ms Emi Callaway**, Trainee Instructor

Wednesday, 5 November 2025

Minister

Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation

ACT Parents

- **Ms Veronica Elliott**, Executive Officer

Youth Coalition

- **Ms Hannah Watts**, Chief Executive Officer
- **Ms Natasha Tapera Mhishi**, ACU Social work student on placement
- **Miss Tshering Yangden**, ACU Social Work Student on Placement
- **Miss Shannon Jane Lanza**, Projects and Events Support Officer

Advocacy for Inclusion

- **Mr Craig Wallace**, Head of Policy
- **Mr Harry Lomas**, Senior Policy Officer

Weston Creek Woden Dodgers

- **Mr Grant Keys**, Facilities Subcommittee, Senior Coordinator & Life Member

Clubs ACT

- **Mr Craig Shannon**, Chief Executive Officer

North Canberra Community Council

- **Mr Jochen Zeil**, Deputy Chair
- **Mr Marcus Hipkins**, Media coordinator

Weston Creek Community Council

- **Ms Simone Hunter**, Chair

Woden Valley Community Council

- **Mr Nelson Tang**, President

Community Sport Alliance ACT

- **Mr Mark Vergano**, Member
- **Ms Nicole Bowles**, Member
- **Mr Michael Brady**, Executive Officer

Independent Advocates for Community Sport

- **Ms Glenys Beauchamp AO PSM**, former Secretary, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and Department of Health
- **Mr Graham Carter OAM**, former President ACTSPORT
- **Mr James Alexander Ferguson**, Member
- **Mr James Roberts**, Member

ACT Human Rights Commission

- **Ms Jodi Griffiths-Cook**, Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner
- **Ms Karen Toohey**, ACT Discrimination, Disability and Community Services Commissioner

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

- **Mr Daniel Bailey**, Executive Group Manager Operations, Economic Development

- **Ms Rebecca Kelley**, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation

City and Environment Directorate

- **Mr Bruce Fitzgerald**, Deputy Director-General
- **Mr Ben Green**, Executive Group Manager, Planning and Urban Policy

Appendix C: Questions Taken on Notice

Questions Taken on Notice

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
1	08/10/25	Outdoors NSW & ACT	Data on sports-related activities and non-sports-related activities	08/10/25
2	05/11/25	Youth Coalition	Expanding sports available under the Every Chance to Play program	18/11/25
3	05/11/25	Clubs ACT	A recommendation for sports clubs to accept vouchers and other forms of support	Not received
4	05/11/25	Berry, Yvette	2015 ACT Government Indoor Sports Facility Study - Update on recommendations	28/11/25
5	05/11/25	Berry, Yvette	Fee increases for school gym hires	01/12/25
6	05/11/25	Berry, Yvette	Percentage of successful v unsuccessful applicants for the Future of Education Equity Fund	26/11/25
7	05/11/25	Berry, Yvette	Republication of the ACT Government aquatic facilities framework	24/11/25
8	05/11/25	Berry, Yvette	Sports and rec booking portal - Cancellation policies and guidance	20/11/25

Appendix D: Gender distribution of witnesses

Beginning in April 2023, in response to an audit by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Committees are collecting information on the gender of witnesses. The aim is to determine whether committee inquiries are meeting the needs, and allowing the participation of, a range of genders in the community. Participation is voluntary and there are no set responses.

Gender indication	Total
Female	17
Male	25
Non-binary	0
Gender neutral	0
No data	10

Appendix E: Site visit

On 7 November 2025, Ms Carrick, Ms Lee, and Mr Rattenbury travelled to Wagga Wagga as representatives of the Committee, to visit the city's sports facilities and meet with local sports clubs.

Local sports clubs

The Committee met with the following local sports representatives:

Wagga Hockey

- Ken Larkin, Facilities Manager
- Liz Cronin, President

Wagga Wagga Athletics

- Atlanta Hall, President
- Bob Hay, Treasurer

The Committee heard that scheduling is a major challenge for sporting groups in Wagga Wagga. Most children play more than one sport, and facilities are in great demand. While the council has invested in new facilities with very good grounds and fields, amenities such as lighting, changing rooms and spectator facilities were considered to be lacking.

Sporting groups now want to play year-round, with summer twilight games and other inclusive events, and the sports associations felt that the council was stuck in a mindset of each sport having a well-defined season. This affected their access to sports grounds and facilities and underscored the scheduling challenges.

They also observed that the highest population growth is in the north of the city, which has no sporting facilities. This means that many young families have to travel to venues to participate, and the bridge is a traffic bottleneck.

Another significant barrier to participation is fees. Typical membership fees include membership of a national and a state body as well as the local club, and state fees – which include insurance - can be half of the total. As regional groups, they questioned whether they were getting value for money for state membership, saying that not many development programs, competitions or other support travelled from Sydney. Juniors can expect to pay \$300 per year for Wagga Hockey membership, and have to purchase uniforms and equipment. For athletics, junior membership is \$180 for a season, and uniforms are around \$30.

Volunteer fatigue is a concern, with the pool of volunteers dwindling and the same few people showing up for everything.

Clubs strive to be inclusive. Wagga Wagga Athletics has a connection with the local multicultural council and runs Refugee Day events, as well as having a range of accommodations for all levels of



L to R: Ms Carrick, Ms Cronin, Ms Hall, Mr Hay, Ms Lee, Mr Rattenbury, Mr Larkin

disability, both for social and competitive participation. Wagga Hockey also makes adjustments as necessary for disability, and with anyone over 12 able to play on adult teams, has several families playing together.

In response to a question, the Committee heard that there are relatively few public education facilities in Wagga Wagga, with 3 public high schools and 7 private high schools; out of approximately 30 preschools, only about 3 are public.

Wagga Wagga Council

The Committee then travelled to the Equex Multi-Purpose Stadium to meet with the Mayor of Wagga Wagga, Mr Dallas Tout, and council officials:

- Ben Creighton – Manager City Growth & Regional Assets
- Marc Geppert – Manager Wagga Leisure
- Kadison Hofert – Strategic Recreation Officer

Equex stadium

The Equex multi-purpose stadium (MPS) is part of a complex which includes 17 outdoor netball courts with clubrooms and the Geohex outdoor stadium.

The MPS is council owned and operated, with a branch of the council, Wagga Leisure, set up specifically to manage council facilities.

Funding for construction of the MPS came from the NSW Government, the council, and Wagga Netball.

It has 4 courts marked out for netball, basketball, futsal and volleyball. The council said they aimed for one (indoor) court per 10,000 residents. There is portable courtside stadium seating, and capacity for 600 people in the gallery. The floor is suitable for hosting NBL games or elite netball – this was an important consideration when deciding on specs for the building.

There are four meeting spaces – one is reserved for council use, one is about to be leased to a local sports association, and the others are bookable through Wagga Leisure. There are three change rooms for athletes, all of which can be either male or female. This allows flexibility for major competitions.



L to R: Mr Tout, Ms Hofert, Ms Lee, Ms Carrick, Mr Rattenbury, Mr Creighton. Not pictured: Mr Geppert



Convertible change room at Equex multi-purpose stadium. A sliding indicator allows the room to be marked Male or Female.

There is also a referee's change room, and a laundry. These facilities are required by some sporting associations to be able to host elite competitions. The council advised that determining the needs of sporting associations for their competitions was very important before deciding what features to include in a venue. The council found that state-level associations often had a broader view than local clubs.

There is a catering kitchen, which has been booked for cultural events. As well as sporting competitions, the venue has been used for other events such as school formals, a pigeon show and a CWA conference. It could hold 1,200 people for a sit-down dinner and 4,000 people for a music event.

The building has been designed to allow it to be duplicated in mirror-image, doubling the space in future – this is an option to be considered against the benefits of building a separate facility in the north of the city.

Geohex park

Geohex park is a short walk across more sports fields from the Equex Centre and is 'the second home of the Raiders'. The ground has also hosted soccer games featuring A-League teams Sydney FC and Melbourne Victory. It is an outdoor stadium with seating (using second-hand seats from refurbished stadiums elsewhere) and raised boxes for broadcasting, coaches, operations control and corporate hospitality.

Bolton Park

Bolton Park is a large precinct close to the centre of town. The Committee heard that approximately half of Wagga Wagga's accommodation is within a 3-block radius. The precinct has its own master plan for development, with several facilities to be integrated. It currently includes a tennis centre, netball courts, a multi-purpose oval for cricket, Australian rules and junior soccer, a premium oval, an older indoor stadium, and an aquatic centre with a gym. The new PCYC complex with four indoor courts is nearby.

The Tennis Centre has an upstairs event space, with a commercial kitchen. Business groups book and use this space, which offsets running costs for the centre. The courts are international professional standard and have hosted two major events already.

A new grandstand is planned for the premium oval – current buildings were developed organically as need arose, and the precinct master plan is helping to correct a ‘hodge podge’ of facilities.

The indoor stadium (1977) is slated for demolition and renewal, but is still in frequent use for casual sport as well as other events.

The gym in the aquatic centre was a private business that the council bought and now runs itself. It is accessible 24/7 and has automatic doors for accessibility.

The aquatic complex includes a 22-year-old 50-metre 10-lane outdoor pool, with solar heating, and a 25-metre 10-lane indoor pool (gas heated). There is a hydrotherapy pool which is also used for learn-to-swim classes for 1400 children per week – this often leads to conflicts of needs. The precinct master plan includes another 50-metre pool and more hydrotherapy facilities. Local users are not currently charged lane hire, but this may change to manage demand which is increasing.



Bolton Park tennis centre courts



Oasis aquatic centre indoor recreational pools

The council has a \$2.5 million grant from the federal government to convert the whole venue to electric heating.

There are no privately-operated recreational pools in Wagga Wagga, just two or three private learn-to-swim businesses which typically have 14x4-metre pools.

As with the Equex sporting facilities, the council is considering whether to expand the swimming and other facilities in the central location (and review transport requirements in the city), or build a secondary facility in the north where population is growing.

Construction costs and planning

The council gave estimated construction costs for some local sporting facilities (in the last 10 years) as follows:

- Equex multi-purpose stadium: \$10 million; funding from council, NSW Government and Wagga Netball.
- Geohex Park: valued at \$15-20 million, of which the council has contributed \$3 million over ten years. Mostly built by Rugby League with contributions in kind from members (a ‘grant multiplier’) and funding from the NSW Government and local businesses.
- Pomingalarna Multisport Cycling Complex: \$12 million (breakdown not specified)

- Bolton Park Tennis centre: \$10 million, of which the NSW Government contributed \$5 million, Tennis Australia \$1.25 million and the council the remainder.
- PCYC: \$23 million, of which the council contributed \$3 million. The rest came from the NSW Government and local clubs.

The council created a 10-year strategic plan in 2019, with community consultation, and this was used to support grant applications. The plan is regularly reviewed and revised as priorities change. The council advised that buy-in from sporting bodies, and especially investment from elite sport, is key before committing to construction or development.

There is also a master plan for the Bolton Park precinct, as noted above.

Wagga Leisure

The Committee heard that Wagga Wagga Council have set up a branch, Wagga Leisure, to manage its facilities.

There is an app for making bookings, which allows swipe or QR code access to relevant facilities (with automatic lighting where necessary, such as for one specific tennis court). This reduces the need for on-site staffing, which is the highest cost of running the facilities.

Wagga Leisure also provides catering services across all the facilities, having taken over catering from the stock yards and airport and expanded to the sporting facilities. This is attractive to event-holders who can purchase a package including catering, and allows efficiencies of scale. The council is looking to extend its liquor licence to include the sporting venues, to cover business, multicultural and other events.

The council told the Committee that owning and managing its own facilities meant the council didn't always have to prioritise profit and was able to have a community focus in running the venues.

Thank you

The Committee extends its thanks to Wagga Hockey, Wagga Wagga Athletics, and Wagga Wagga Council for their generosity of time and experience.

Appendix F: Club and Sporting Associations submission recommendations relating to infrastructure

Submission No.	Submission by
38	Bowls ACT - Expand access by supporting the establishment of new greens in under-served areas or co-locating greens with multi-use community sport hubs. This may include the installation / provision of new greens at Retirement Villages / Aged Care facilities. - Provide grants for facility upgrades and support energy-efficient or cost-saving infrastructure. - Enhance public transport links to existing clubs, particularly during scheduled game or social hours - Greater clarity and consistency in government policy regarding ownership, long-term leasing, and public funding would improve clubs' ability to plan, invest, and attract new members. Supporting co-located or multiuse community sport facilities could reduce overhead costs and strengthen inter-sport collaboration
43	Capital Region Powerchair Football - Our team would welcome any assistance with logistics, particularly any opportunities to link with businesses that may be prepared to provide in kind support with transport to nationals, discounted accessible accommodation for nationals or provide other event sponsorship. - Our team would welcome any assistance in securing a suitable "permanent home" for Canberra's powerchair soccer team. This would include a reasonable hourly rate (or waiver), an accessible bathroom and suitable parking, space for a secure powered container and ideally, A/C.

ACT Endurance Riders Association Inc (ACTERA)

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- Many horses in the ACT are agisted in government-owned paddocks distributed across Canberra. Others are kept in privately-owned facilities. There has already been a significant loss of horse agistment facilities within the ACT, including through decisions to develop the North Curtin paddocks and to relocate the RSPCA's ACT facility into part of the Duntroon paddocks. Several privately-owned agistment facilities are in the Western Edge Study Area and within the Urban Growth Line as shown in the recently-released "Close to the Edge" report by the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Without these agistment facilities, horse ownership and participation in equestrian activities would be impossible for most ACT residents.
- Development of former open spaces concentrates recreational activities into increasingly limited areas. Proactive planning and consultation with all user groups is essential to ensure that some, including horse riders, are not forced out by more numerous and/or vocal users and that connectivity of horse-riding trails is not compromised or lost.
- The fact that our recreational and sporting activity requires few specialised facilities contributes to it having a lower profile, which may be a disadvantage. We therefore take the opportunity to highlight targeted provision of basic facilities as a means of enhancing participation in this community sport.

ClubsACT

67

- Implement SRGP Review response changes with a participation-first lens: fast track the IPP ("Game Changer"), Community Sport Facilities Program and Club Enhancement Program with robust performance measures tied to participation outputs.
- Fund IPP projects that are co-invested, multi-year and scalable through club-peak partnerships, including a whole-of-network booking platform and district participation pilots.
- Target the Community Sport Facilities Program to upgrades that unlock "time on facility" and inclusion (lighting, female-friendly, accessibility), with measurable access hours and participation outcomes.
- Standardise shared-use agreements and community leases with Community Use Guarantees, transparent pricing and inclusion standards across publicly supported facilities.
- Expand supply in underserved areas through co-location and small-footprint assets; plan for new/co-located bowls greens where gaps exist, including at multi-use hubs and retirement/aged care settings.

Outdoors NSW & ACT

70

- Strengthen Collaboration: Work in partnership with government, land managers, schools, and local clubs to create a more connected, inclusive, and sustainable active recreation landscape.

Submission No.	Submission by
78	Canberra Wild Swim Club - Barriers to openwater swimming in ACT include; water quality, access to shower and change facilities, and accessible lake entry points. A first step towards removing these barriers is for both the National Capital Authority and ACT Government to become signatories of the Swimmable Cities Charter, to show a commitment to working in accordance with its principles and embodied values.
83	ACT Handball Association Inc (ACTHA) - Develop Multi-Sport Facilities – Invest in indoor and outdoor venues that meet handball court requirements and are flexible and inclusive for multiple sports, including provision for permanent or temporary markings.
89 - 118	Royals Volleyball Club et al. - Our club has outgrown its current training facility and urgently needs access to a larger, more suitable venue with year-round access. - A new facility would be a vital investment in the health, inclusion and vibrancy of our community.
119	ACT Masters Squash - The decline of Squash centers and the sustaining of operations remain a challenge. These organisations depend solely on member subscriptions and fundraising efforts to continue providing opportunities for players despite the recent inclusion of squash in the upcoming Olympic Games. I would make Government grants available to assist in the maintenance and upkeep of facilities.
127	Badminton ACT (BACT) - The ACTBA recommends that, reflecting the significant increase in demand for badminton in the ACT, particularly in the fast-growing Gungahlin and Molonglo regions, that the ACT Government and Liberal Party Opposition jointly commit to the: • co-funding of the order of \$500,000 with a private sector investor the development of a dedicated badminton facility in Canberra.

Submission No.	Submission by
128	Canberra Climbers' Association - Access Management Options a. Electronic key access for registered climbing groups during appropriate times b. Seasonal management instead of blanket closures (proven successful at Red Rocks Gorge and Kambah Rocks) c. Graduated access distinguishing between general public and organised recreation users d. Collaborative agreements with CCA for site maintenance and monitoring of negative impacts - Indoor roped climbing facility in Canberra a. ACT Government consider constructing and operating an indoor roped gymnasium. The CCA believes there is a business model that will enable it to be cost effective and sustainable. The capital doesn't exist for a commercial (private) venue in Canberra. b. There may be scope for the ACT government to co-invest with the AIS for the construction and use of a climbing wall at the AIS which could have parttime public access. It is understood that the climbing holds used at the Paris Olympics have been purchased by the AIS.
133	Canberra Parkour - Improved lighting, - Additional shelter from rain or the fierce summer sun, - Better upkeep of existing infrastructure (e.g. wobbly rails or loose bricks), and - Regular removal of hazardous objects (e.g. needles or broken glass).
134	Basketball ACT - The ACT Government adopt a long-term facilities strategy for which the planning, design and development of new community based multisport indoor facilities will be constructed across the region. - Move to a centralised booking system for School facilities. - Schools have dedicated sports as their primary hirers. - Public School based Indoor Courts cleaning schedules and court surface maintenance
136	Capital Pétanque Club - The provision of adequate shelter, access to water and toilets, parking in vicinity and power and lighting are vital to keep the aging population engaged in community sports available. Many community sporting venues in Canberra are deficient in these essential facilities.

Submission No.	Submission by
137	Dickson Squash Club - Protect existing community sports facilities, including the Dickson Squash Courts, until suitable replacements are secured. - Commit to direct investment in squash and other indoor infrastructure, rather than relying solely on commercial partnerships. - Introduce safeguards in the planning process to ensure existing commercially funded sport infrastructure is preserved. - Engage community clubs in planning and redevelopment processes to ensure inclusive and sustainable outcomes.
138	Yarabi Football Club - The ACT Government should significantly increase investment in ACT sportsgrounds and sporting infrastructure, ensuring paying participants of community sport are receiving value for their investment in these activities.
143	Weston Creek Woden Dodgers Basketball Club - Immediate upgrades - Our 2021 Audit of Basketball Infrastructure in ACT's Weston Creek and Woden Valley recommended upgrading existing venues, including: - Hedley Beare Centre – bring to competition standard with glass backboards, scoreboards, and seating. We were pleased to have facilities upgraded in 2024, however, they remain below FIBA-competition standard, meaning we are unable to host games. - Lancaster Hall (Wesley Church) – rejuvenate floorboards, install compliant backboards and scoring equipment. We worked with Wesley Church to submit a request for funding in the 2025 round of the ACT Government's Community Sports Facilities program, but were unsuccessful. - Resurface Canberra College and Stromlo High School court surfaces - Strategic investment - Establish a multi-court indoor facility in Woden Town Centre, close to public transport. This was a 10th ACT Assembly Parliamentary Agreement commitment (Item 6.3), but there has been no progress. - Progress the planned Garran Primary two-court facility to full FIBA standards and ensure Dodgers are prioritised for community access. - Develop outdoor 3x3 courts in Woden Town Park, Eddison Park or other central precincts, to activate urban spaces with accessible recreation facilities, align with Basketball ACT's move towards 3x3 competitions and establish the first competition standard 3x3 courts in South Canberra 4. - Equitable investment – prioritise Woden/Weston Creek in future facility planning, consistent with Belconnen and Gungahlin commitments. - Upgrade school and community courts to safe, competition-standard facilities, with Government support to reduce cost burdens on volunteer clubs. - Multi-court Woden facility – establish a stakeholder working group to progress planning and delivery

**Submission
No.**

Submission by

146

Canberra Runners Inc

- Improve lighting on the north side of Lake Burley Griffin from the pedestrian ramp off Commonwealth Ave Bridge to the Carillon, especially at the footbridge/Sir Robert Menzies Statue area.
- Toilet facilities at the back of the National Museum of Australia, Lawson Crescent.
- Improve bins around lakes in Canberra - especially for those walking dogs. The increase in high density living with residents who own dogs or those who come into the lakes to walk with their dog or who are carrying takeaway coffee, and the limited number of bins, means that many walkers can go up to 2 km without seeing a bin.
- Install more defibrillators in public areas where people exercise – Lennox Gardens in Yarralumla would be a good location given its popularity with walkers, runners, and fitness groups.
- Add more water bubblers in locations where people run, walk, or cycle – particularly along popular lake circuits and parklands.
- Open public toilets earlier to cater for those who exercise in the early morning, especially in high-use areas like Lake Burley Griffin and Weston Park.
- Separate runners and pedestrians from cyclists and scooter users, by provision of cycle paths separate from footpaths in busy areas, as has been done, for example, on Wendouree Drive.

147

Royal Military College Golf Club Inc.

- That the ACT Government: [...] c) Support infrastructure upgrades to improve accessibility

149

ACT Triathlon

- Infrastructure development at popular open water swimming areas to provide shower, change and locker facilities.
- Prioritise completion of separated cycling infrastructure on key training corridors
- Improve lighting and maintenance on cycle lanes and shared paths popular with cyclists
- Ensure all publicly funded event and training facilities adhere to accessibility standards, enabling equitable access for athletes with disabilities and members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Submission No.	Submission by
152	Cricket ACT - Transparent asset plans for cricket specific and community sports facilities with defined ownership, life-cycle costing, and winter renovation schedules that protect playing standards. - Shared-responsibility models (Government > club > community) to co-fund upgrades and maintenance, ensuring equitable access and local stewardship. Recent ACT projects demonstrate strong outcomes under co-investment. - Evidence-led prioritisation in line with CBR Next Move’s Places & Spaces and Welcoming & Inclusive priorities, focusing upgrades where participation growth (women & girls, juniors, CALD) is occurring or latent, and ensuring accessible amenities (lighting, changerooms, inclusive design). - Utilisation of the Cricket ACT Infrastructure Strategy & Community Impact of Cricket in the ACT report to make informed decisions supporting the strategic direction Cricket ACT are moving for all facility matters. - Multi-year, sustained facility renewal program for turf wickets, practice nets and lighting, prioritising suburbs with substantial population growth will significantly increase the participation rates, not only for cricket but for all community sport. Aligning with “Places & Spaces” in CBR Next Move; embed maintenance funding to protect investments and increase the longevity of existing infrastructure without diminishing the quality. - Investing in fit-for-purpose and Australian Cricket Community Cricket Facility Guideline compliant lighting infrastructure. Lighting enables more flexible and adaptive participation opportunities, allowing cricket to shift training and competition outside of daylight constraints. Evening lighting expands programming into twilight hours, supports mid-week competitions, and improves player welfare by allowing play during cooler parts of the day in summer. - On their own, cricket lighting projects can be cost-prohibitive, however, collaborating with winter sport codes present an opportunity to get lighting project across the line. By strategically identifying opportunities to improve capacity and activate underutilised venues, Cricket ACT can partner and support grant applications and in return, co-fund lighting upgrades to meet cricket’s needs.
154	Molonglo Juggernauts Football Club - Revisit and deliver additional district-level playing fields in the Molonglo/Stromlo region, consistent with commitments discussed in 2012. - Review enclosed field hire costs to ensure community clubs are not unfairly penalised. - Urgently repair or replace the non-functional scoreboard at Stirling Enclosed. - Undertake a comprehensive sportsground capacity assessment aligned with Molonglo’s projected population growth.