



OPENING STATEMENT – PUBLIC HEARING 5 NOVEMBER 2025

INQUIRY into BARRIERS and OPPORTUNITIES for PARTICIPATION in COMMUNITY SPORT in the ACT

Opening comments

Reflecting upon this Inquiry, perhaps the strong interest highlights that community sport in the ACT is valued and far-reaching to the way of life for Canberrans. In light of the number of submissions provided to this Committee's Inquiry, maybe this reflects a wider call for a stronger Government focus on servicing daily life and a way of life in Canberra.

Our group of nine sport organisations has been active for seven years in seeking better ways to provide community sport to ACT citizens. These organisational and individual connections are based on goodwill that is geared towards making a constructive and meaningful contribution to the ACT community.

We believe our statement and our submissions offer ideas about how to improve the system that supports and/or impacts community sport in the ACT. We acknowledge that these may not be quick fix measures, instead offering a longer term perspective.

There are three areas that we would like to discuss with you today.

Volunteers:

1. The capability and capacity of the volunteer workforce is intrinsic and critical to the community sport sector. Without volunteer contributions, the sector could not provide the opportunities currently available for the Canberra community.
2. We suggest that measures be found to better support and better recognise the contributions of volunteers to Canberra's way of life.
3. To that end, the ACT could formally recognise the skills and knowledge (and capability building) that Canberra citizens acquire in their volunteer roles.
4. There could also be broader provision for encouragement of volunteer participation by ACT employers, perhaps through regular time away from the workplace.
5. The volunteer workforce could be included in the ACT Government's Skills and Workforce Agenda. This would be a broader acknowledgement of the contribution the volunteer capability offers the ACT.

The roles that volunteers undertake for the community, and the skills they acquire, are critical to social and sectoral cohesion and in providing a sense of identity for Canberra and its citizens.



Government and the Sector:

1. Our group has advocated for some considerable time, and is asking again, for the establishment of a sport sector representative entity.
2. The purpose of such an entity would be to:
 - a. advocate on behalf of the sector to Government and other relevant elements of the community and with other jurisdictions.
 - b. gain greater input by the sector into the issues impacting on its future direction.
 - c. take leadership for the development of staff and volunteers in the sector.
 - d. provide a concierge service for community sport organisations to intersect with Government and other services.
 - e. seek a more holistic and cohesive approach for the provision of sport and physical activity to the Canberra Community.
3. This representative body could involve stronger working relationships with the education and health sectors to sustain and improve the active life of all Canberrans.
4. Importantly, including the sector in the various stages of the Government's planning and development processes of sporting facilities and amenities would benefit the whole community.
5. These measures can assist in reducing barriers to participation in community sport.

Facilities:

1. We would strongly encourage the implementation of a long term Facilities Plan, especially given the predicted increase in the ACT's population in the next few decades.
2. Such a Facilities Plan would best include:
 - a. A vision and aspiration for the purpose of community sporting facilities in supporting Canberra's future.
 - b. An articulated purpose of sporting facilities in contributing to Canberra's social and economic well-being.
 - c. Identification of the specific role of:
 - i. neighbourhood playing fields.
 - ii. district playing fields.
 - iii. school sport facilities.
 - iv. Indoor sporting facilities.
3. A Facilities Plan would:
 - a. offer greater certainty to the sectoral stakeholders.
 - b. enable sporting facilities are readily accessible to all Canberrans seeking a health and active life.



3. (continued)

- c. help to avoid the 'retrofitting' of sporting facilities in greenfield developments.
 - d. explore if there are better ownership-management models for facilities.
4. We would also strongly encourage the creation of a sinking fund for community sport facilities through Government action.
 - a. As a starting point, the Government's current budgetary and accounting processes could have unused maintenance monies for community sport venues placed into such a fund (rather than be placed back into consolidated revenue).
5. Ensuring that the principles applied by Government to community sport facilities are of good quality and fit-for-purpose and are supported by the coordinated provision of transport options and planned in close proximity of other services.
6. We strongly suggest a coherent, and better integrated, approach to the use of schools' sporting facilities, including an ongoing commitment to having school sporting facilities fit-for-purpose for community sport requirements.

As a stand-alone point, we ask the Committee to note the provision of community sporting facilities by the licensed club sector of the ACT.

- Acknowledging how difficult it would be to maintain and/or replace such amenities and services to community sport should be considered seriously.
- We strongly encourage the Legislature to assist ACT's licensed clubs in developing alternative revenue streams in order to keep contributing to the community and to assist in overcoming barriers for community sport participation.

We thank the Assembly for agreeing to this Inquiry and we thank the Committee for conducting the Inquiry. We have greatly appreciated the opportunity to contribute and hopefully provide some impetus to keep improving everyday life and the future for Canberrans.

Finally, we would like the Legislature and the Government to know that we are willing to work collaboratively and collectively to assist participation in community sport in the ACT.

Yours sincerely



Michael Brady
Executive Officer



on behalf of members of the Community Sport Alliance of the ACT

Cricket ACT & Chair of Community Sport ACT – Olivia Thornton	AFL NSW/ACT – Steven Mahar
Basketball ACT – Nicole Bowles	ACT and Southern NSW Rugby Union – Craig Leseberg
Canberra Region Rugby League – Mark Vergano	Capital Football – Samantha Farrow
Hockey ACT – Rob Sheekey	Netball ACT – Sally Clark
Tennis ACT – Mark LaBrooy	