



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Education and
Community Inclusion

Inquiry into Skateboarding and Skate Parks in the ACT

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

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About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion on 2 December 2020.

The committee is responsible for the following areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
- Disability
- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- LGBTIQ+
- Multicultural Affairs
- Seniors
- Skills
- Sport and Recreation
- Veterans
- Women (including the Office for Women)
- Youth Affairs

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

Committee members

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, Chair

Miss Laura Nuttall MLA, Deputy Chair (from 5 December 2023)

Mr Johnathan Davis MLA, Deputy Chair (to 12 November 2023)

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Secretariat

Ms Katie Langham, Committee Secretary (from 6 November 2023)

Dr Adele Chynoweth OAM, Committee Secretary (until 29 September 2023)

Ms Anna Hough, Assistant Secretary (from 4 September 2023)

Mr Peter Materne, Assistant Secretary (until 1 September 2023)

Mr Dikshes Patel, Administrative Assistant

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About this inquiry

The Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion (the committee) informed the Assembly of its intention to conduct this inquiry on 11 May 2023.¹

Terms of Reference

On 10 February 2022, a petition requesting that Gungahlin Skate Park be refurbished was received by the Assembly and forwarded to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion.

Further, on 4 April 2023, the committee resolved to accept and consider a petition considering the redevelopment of Tuggeranong Skate Park.

The committee resolved to expand its scope to inquire into skateboarding and skate park facilities across the ACT.

The committee's inquiry into skateboarding and skate parks in the ACT denotes its commitment to consider both petitions. The inquiry is informed by the committee's responsibility concerning community inclusion and the associated understanding that the physical construction of sporting sites comprises one element amidst a range of factors that encompass access and participation.

Therefore, the committee has resolved to inquire into the following matters:

- a) accessibility of skateboarding and skate parks across the community;
- b) skateboarder safety and welfare;
- c) skate parks, including planning and maintenance;
- d) skateboarding and skate park history;
- e) the relationship with other cultural activities, e.g., music and visual art;
- f) any other related matters.

¹ Mr Michael Petterson MLA, Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, Statement by Chair, 'Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee', *Assembly Hansard*, 11 May 2023, p 1293.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Long form
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
committee	Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion
CROSS	Canberra Region Old School Skaters
CSA	Canberra Skateboarding Association
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
TCCS	Transport Canberra and City Services

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide additional funding to support art and culture activities at skate parks in the ACT.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a skate park strategy for Canberra.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the ACT Government encourage the integration of skating into the community by building skating facilities close to urban hubs.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the ACT Government design skating facilities that promote the active use of the space and enliven areas to ensure there are always bystanders (for example, shopfronts and food vans) for the safety of users.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that skateboard deterrents and skate-stoppers are only used in public places across Canberra when necessary, and that the reasons for those deterrents are publicly and accessibly listed.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise building new skate parks and skate-friendly spaces in new and growing suburbs, as well as existing suburbs where the community has identified a need for such spaces.

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the ACT Government integrate skating elements when building new play infrastructure in Canberra, to cater to a wider demographic of the community and encourage multi-use public spaces.

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the ACT Government update ageing skating infrastructure to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligns to modern skate park designs.

Recommendation 9

The committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure Canberra skating facilities are designed for all disciplines and, where necessary, update infrastructure that has become worn and is no longer suitable for skaters.

Recommendation 10

The committee recommends that the ACT Government build a skating facility that is useable during inclement weather.

Recommendation 11

The committee recommends that the ACT Government build an asphalt pump track.

Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that the ACT Government build an uphill and downhill asphalt track.

Recommendation 13

The committee recommends that the ACT Government install safety signs at skate parks that provide modern user instructions and safety warnings that accurately reflect skating culture.

Recommendation 14

The committee recommends that the ACT Government install adequate lighting at all skate facilities in Canberra.

Recommendation 15

The committee recommends that the ACT Government assess the weather protection offered at current skate parks and ensure skate facilities incorporate anti-glare designs.

Recommendation 16

The committee recommends that the ACT Government consider landscape materials during the design of skate parks and surrounding areas to reduce natural debris on skate park surfaces.

Recommendation 17

The committee recommends that the ACT Government review processes for maintenance to reduce debris on skate parks, such as litter and tree detritus.

Recommendation 18

The committee recommends that the ACT Government implement specific standards for skate park repairs.

Recommendation 19

The committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure all maintenance contractors are proficient in modern techniques for the restoration and repair of skate park infrastructure.

Recommendation 20

The committee recommends that the ACT Government assess maintenance contractors in collaboration with skate park users to inform procurement decisions and ensure, where possible, contractors have specialised knowledge of skating infrastructure.

Recommendation 21

The committee recommends that the ACT Government increase the frequency of skate park infrastructure audits and maintenance packages to update and repair defects and safety concerns.

Recommendation 22

The committee recommends that the ACT Government implement a monitoring system for skate park infrastructure that frequently and proactively assesses damage and defects.

Recommendation 23

The committee recommends that the ACT Government install location-specific QR codes at each skate park to support people to easily report maintenance and repair issues on site.

Recommendation 24

The committee recommends that the ACT Government publish the criteria used to determine whether skating facilities are at end of life.

Recommendation 25

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support Canberra skating events, such as the Belco Bowl Jam.

Recommendation 26

The committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate opportunities to promote Canberra as a skating tourism destination.

Recommendation 27

The committee recommends that the ACT Government explore opportunities to build unique skating infrastructure to encourage skating tourism to Canberra.

Recommendation 28

The committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a micro-grant scheme for skate park users to add new functionality to existing skate parks.

Recommendation 29

The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide assistance to community groups who run learn to skate programs.

Recommendation 30

The committee recommends the ACT Government establish a plan to increase participation of women and girls in the Canberra skating community, including:

- investigating any current gender barriers to participation; and
- ensuring skate parks have facilities for women and girls.

Recommendation 31

The committee recommends that the ACT Government review skating infrastructure in the ACT to assess accessibility, and upgrade facilities to provide designated areas that are accessible and encourage participation by people with a disability.

Recommendation 32

The committee recommends that the ACT Government, in consultation with the Canberra skating community, assess and place key Canberra skating locations on the heritage register.

Recommendation 33

The committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake an oral history of skateboarding in the ACT to appropriately capture the local skating culture and development of global skating infrastructure in Canberra.

1. Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.1. On 10 February 2022, a petition requesting that Gungahlin Skate Park be refurbished was received by the Assembly and forwarded to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion (the committee). Further, on 4 April 2023, the committee resolved to accept and consider a petition considering the redevelopment of Tuggeranong Skate Park.
- 1.2. On 5 May 2023, the committee resolved to expand its scope to inquire into skateboarding and skate park facilities across the ACT.
- 1.3. A media release advising the public of the inquiry and inviting submissions was published on 8 May 2023. A subsequent media release published on 10 May 2023 advised that the committee would hold a media conference on 11 May 2023.
- 1.4. The committee also launched an online survey on 8 May 2023. A total of 396 responses to the online survey were received.
- 1.5. The committee received six submissions from individuals and organisations, which are listed at Appendix A.
- 1.6. On 9 November 2023, the committee conducted a public hearing. Witnesses who appeared at the hearing are listed at Appendix B. A breakdown of witnesses by gender identification is at Appendix C.
- 1.7. The committee conducted site visits at five skate parks across the ACT—Tuggeranong Skate Park, Erindale Skate Park, Kambah District Park, Belconnen Skate Park and Gungahlin Skate Park—on 23 September 2023.

Questions taken on notice

- 1.8. Four questions were taken on notice, listed at Appendix D.

2. Introduction

Skate parks in the ACT

- 2.1. The ACT's current skating infrastructure comprises 19 facilities, including seven major skate parks and 12 smaller parks which include skating features. These facilities are typically located 'within land designated as urban open space' and in close proximity to other public activity hubs.²
- 2.2. The seven skate parks are located at Belconnen, Canberra City, Eddison Park (Woden), Erindale, Tuggeranong, Weston, and Yerrabi District Park (Gungahlin). The 12 parks with skating features are located at Barton, Campbell, Charnwood, Fadden Pines, Flynn, Kambah, Kippax (Holt), Lanyon (Conder), Macarthur, Richardson, Rivett and Stirling.³
- 2.3. Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) is designing a new skate park to be located at the Kippax Group Centre at Holt. The committee understands funding for the construction has not yet been determined and will be informed by the design work.⁴

Skating and skate park culture

- 2.4. Skating facilities in the ACT are used by a variety of groups including, but not limited to, skateboarders, BMX riders, mountain bikers, scooter riders, and inline skaters.⁵ Skate parks are also used by the 'non-skating community' for socialising, spectating and parenting.⁶
- 2.5. The committee heard that, unlike other sports where participants use facilities for a set period, these groups may spend many hours a day at skate parks, often visiting multiple days per week.⁷
- 2.6. Each of these groups brings with them a unique history which contributes to the skating culture in Canberra today. Dr Dan Johnston told the committee that this culture can often intersect with the cultures of other groups, including street art, surfing, music and photography.⁸
- 2.7. In the ACT, a number of graffiti projects have been undertaken at skate parks with funding delivered by the ACT Government.⁹ The ACT Government advised there is opportunity to increase graffiti projects, which can 'revitalise' skate parks in the ACT:

Subject to available funding, there is opportunity for more graffiti projects to be carried out at skateparks around Canberra and to potentially integrate and

² ACT Government, *Submission 2*, pp 1–2.

³ ACT Government, City Services, 'Skateparks', <https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/public-spaces-and-facilities/skateparks> (accessed 19 April 2024).

⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 6.

⁵ Dr Dan Johnston, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 3–4.

⁶ Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, p 1.

⁷ Dr Dan Johnston, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 2; Mr Tony Caruana and Mr Brenden Wood, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 19.

⁸ Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, pp 10–14.

⁹ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 4.

celebrate music, street dance and other aspects of urban culture through events and workshops. These projects could involve artists, community groups, local schools, skateboarding and BMX associations and other local community.¹⁰

- 2.8. The committee heard during its inquiry that the skate park infrastructure and skating culture in Canberra had led to its ‘reputation as a skate-friendly city.’¹¹

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide additional funding to support art and culture activities at skate parks in the ACT.

¹⁰ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 4.

¹¹ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 3.

3. Skate strategy

- 3.1. Throughout the inquiry the committee heard there was a need for an overarching ACT skate strategy to ensure that the Territory’s current and future skating infrastructure and maintenance needs are addressed in a systematic way.¹²
- 3.2. The Canberra Region Old School Skaters (CROSS) suggested that a skate strategy for the ACT could incorporate, among other things:
- planning for the construction of modern skating facilities;
 - provision of facilities across the range of skating disciplines;
 - skate park functionality, including in a range of weather conditions; and
 - ensuring that skate parks are built and maintained in ways that are fit for purpose.¹³
- 3.3. During the public hearing, the Canberra Skateboarding Association (CSA), pointed to Melbourne as an example of an Australian city with a comprehensive skating strategy:
- I think we looked at precedents like the Melbourne Skate Plan—Skate Melbourne Plan, sorry—and the way that they identify public spaces that are appropriate for skating; the way that they articulate their support for skateboarding and related sports; and the way that they take a structured approach to planning the maintenance and construction of facilities.¹⁴
- 3.4. The Minister for Sport and Recreation advised she had received representations from CSA regarding developing an overarching strategy for skating infrastructure in Canberra, and this was under consideration.¹⁵

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a skate park strategy for Canberra.

¹² Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*; Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*.

¹³ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 5.

¹⁴ Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 17. See also City of Melbourne, ‘Skate Melbourne Plan’, www.participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/skate (accessed 19 April 2024).

¹⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 4.

4. Incorporating skating infrastructure into urban planning

Urban areas

- 4.1. Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard evidence about the benefits of locating skating facilities in urban areas, particularly for greater access and safety.¹⁶ This evidence is outlined below.

Access

- 4.2. During its site visit, the committee was advised that skating infrastructure located in less central areas may be challenging to travel to, particularly for people who rely on public transport.
- 4.3. This premise was supported by AusCycling, which advised a lack of easy access to public transport may act as an ‘extra obstacle’ to children and young people, reducing their ability to use skating facilities regularly and independently.¹⁷
- 4.4. In its submission, the ACT Government advised while many of the existing skate parks in the ACT are over a decade old, they ‘may have retrofitted active travel connections.’¹⁸ The committee understands skate parks in Canberra are typically accessible by footpath and shared path connections.¹⁹
- 4.5. In addition to ease of access, Dr Dan Johnston advised that skate parks located in urban areas tended to increase use.²⁰ He provided the example of the urban Somerset Skate Park in Singapore, which attracted far greater patronage than the larger facility located on the outskirts of town.²¹ This was supported by one submitter, who explained:
- In my experience, skatepark users gravitate to skateparks that are close to public transport, shops, food outlets and the heart of urban settings and these locations should be strongly considered for new skatepark investment ...²²
- 4.6. During its appearance at the public hearing, Canberra Region Old School Skaters (CROSS) advised that appropriate urban infrastructure could also increase the use of skating as a means of transport for young people and adults.²³

¹⁶ Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, p 3, p 8; Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 8; Name Withheld, *Submission 3*, p 3; Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 22; Mr Nick Hannan, Executive General Manager, Government Strategy, AusCycling, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 29–30.

¹⁷ Mr Nick Hannan, Executive General Manager, Government Strategy, AusCycling, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 32.

¹⁸ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 1.

¹⁹ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 1.

²⁰ Dr Dan Johnston, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 2–3.

²¹ Dr Dan Johnston, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 2.

²² Name withheld, *Submission 3*, p 3.

²³ Ms Ayesha Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 9.

- 4.7. The evidence received by the committee suggests locating skate parks near urban hubs, such as town centres, shops, and community centres, supports easier access by a broader range of users.²⁴

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the ACT Government encourage the integration of skating into the community by building skating facilities close to urban hubs.

Safety

- 4.8. The committee heard placing skate parks in prominent locations and designing them for high visibility and accessibility helps deter antisocial behaviour and ensure the safety of skate park users and the broader community.²⁵

- 4.9. In his submission, Dr Johnston explained:

Skateboarding is unregulated, largely unsupervised and is predominantly practiced by children and young adults. Placing skateparks in sites with low visibility and little passer-by surveillance puts youth at risk.²⁶

- 4.10. The Canberra Skateboarding Association (CSA) told the committee that ‘skate parks have been shown to promote positive social behaviours and provide significant community and public health benefits.’²⁷ Additionally, having skate parks physically integrated into the wider community promotes a positive image of skating and encourages young skaters and other new skaters to try the sport.²⁸ This view was supported by one submitter, who advised that integrating skate parks into the community ‘fosters mutual compliance, respect and visibility’.²⁹

- 4.11. The Belconnen Skate Park was provided to the committee as an example of a skate park with good ‘passive surveillance.’³⁰ The skate park is located close to main roads, public transport, a school, a park, food outlets and public walkways.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the ACT Government design skating facilities that promote the active use of the space and enliven areas to ensure there are always bystanders (for example, shopfronts and food vans) for the safety of users.

²⁴ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 7.

²⁵ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 8.

²⁶ Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, p 3.

²⁷ Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 15.

²⁸ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 8.

²⁹ Name Withheld, *Submission 3*, p 3.

³⁰ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 25.

Public spaces

- 4.12. In addition to incorporating skating infrastructure into urban areas, the committee heard that skaters often use urban street spaces for skating purposes.
- 4.13. Dr Johnston spoke of the benefits of welcoming skaters into public urban spaces, noting in addition to bringing ‘an interesting culture and vibrancy to the space’, it is not unusual for skaters to ‘deliver almost a degree of policing’ to the areas they skate.³¹
- 4.14. Some public spaces in Canberra contain skate deterrents, including skate-stoppers, which are products designed to deter skateboarders from skating on public spaces such as walls, street furniture and handrails (see example at image 1).³² The CSA advised that these devices can ‘signal that skateboarders are not welcome in particular areas.’³³



Image 1: Skate-stoppers on a ledge near the ACT Legislative Assembly. Source: ACT Legislative Assembly.

- 4.15. The committee heard that in some instances, skate deterrents have been removed to provide skate-safe spaces in urban areas. Constitution Avenue was provided as an example

³¹ Dr Dan Johnston, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 4–5.

³² Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 22; Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, site visits, 23 September 2023.

³³ Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 22.

of a public space that has been embraced by skateboarders after skate stoppers were removed from one ledge:³⁴

You always see skateboarders there. It is a hotspot. It was not designed for skateboarding, but it is perfect for skateboarding. It is pretty safe. It has this nice, smooth long promenade that does not get a lot of traffic, except for maybe commuting hours. They have ledges there that they have unfortunately vandalised, but they made it skateable. It is a great spot for skating and for urban skating.³⁵

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that skateboard deterrents and skate-stoppers are only used in public places across Canberra when necessary, and that the reasons for those deterrents are publicly and accessibly listed.

Suburban areas

- 4.16. In addition to major skate parks, skating features are incorporated into suburban play spaces and parks across the ACT.³⁶
- 4.17. The CSA advised that while families and young people in new suburbs would like to have access to skating facilities near their homes, there has not been a coordinated approach to developing these in new areas as the ACT expands.³⁷ As a result, skaters in areas such as Molonglo and Ginninderry, among others, need to travel out of their local area in order to access skating facilities.³⁸
- 4.18. During the public hearing, the committee heard there is no metric used to determine the appropriate number of skate parks for the Canberra population. Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) officials advised ‘skate parks are generally provided at the district level’ in accordance with the recreation standards.³⁹
- 4.19. CROSS advised one way to ensure sufficient skating facilities to cater for ‘population increases in the respective suburban areas’ was to incorporate skating elements into recreational areas and playgrounds.⁴⁰ CSA noted that this would enable more skaters to practice their skills in their local area.⁴¹ In addition, including skate elements can draw a more diverse range of people to ACT playgrounds and encourage a greater sense of community.⁴²

³⁴ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 23.

³⁵ Mr James Raymer, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 9.

³⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, pp 1–2; Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 6.

³⁷ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 3 and p 5.

³⁸ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 5.

³⁹ Ms Sophie Clement, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 46.

⁴⁰ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 7.

⁴¹ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 5.

⁴² Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 5.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the ACT Government prioritise building new skate parks and skate-friendly spaces in new and growing suburbs, as well as existing suburbs where the community has identified a need for such spaces.

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the ACT Government integrate skating elements when building new play infrastructure in Canberra, to cater to a wider demographic of the community and encourage multi-use public spaces.

5. Modern and safe skating infrastructure

Upgrading out-dated infrastructure

- 5.1. A theme raised throughout the inquiry was the need to modernise skating infrastructure in the ACT.⁴³
- 5.2. The Canberra Skateboarding Association (CSA) told the committee that ‘the ACT is falling behind in the provision and maintenance of contemporary skateparks’, with ‘no new skateparks built in the ACT for over a decade’, and with few new play spaces including skate elements.⁴⁴
- 5.3. The committee heard that a lack of recent investment in skating infrastructure in the Territory means that the existing skate parks are outdated, ‘lacking modern street elements’ that form part of the continually evolving skate culture.⁴⁵
- 5.4. The Canberra Region Old School Skaters (CROSS) advised that skate parks built in recent years have different features from the older-style parks in the ACT, reflecting elements included in the Olympic skateboarding and BMX freestyle courses:

The courses that you see are very much interlinked. All the elements of the skate park are interlinked, so they can be skated in one run. That is more of a modern thing that I have seen. Belconnen and Woden are kind of close to that, but they are not really.⁴⁶
- 5.5. CROSS advised these modern skating facilities being built elsewhere in Australia ‘are eclipsing Canberra’s existing skateparks in design, offerings and quality’.⁴⁷
- 5.6. During its site visits, the committee heard from competitive skaters who live in the ACT, but nevertheless need to travel interstate to train for international competitions due to a lack of suitable modern facilities. This was supported by one submitter, who reported having to travel interstate, to locations such as ‘Melbourne, Sydney, [the] Newcastle region, the Gold Coast, Perth, Adelaide and even Albury’ to access ‘high quality, well designed modern skateparks.’⁴⁸
- 5.7. Of Canberra’s larger skate parks, the committee heard that, as identified by the petitioners who originally prompted this inquiry, those in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin were most in need of modernisation.⁴⁹ The committee was told that while ‘Tuggeranong Skatepark was a popular and much-loved facility when it was built around 25 years ago’, since then

⁴³ See, for example Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 6; Name Withheld, *Submission 3*, p 3; Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 6.

⁴⁴ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 3.

⁴⁵ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 7.

⁴⁶ Mr Scott Taylor, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 11.

⁴⁷ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 4.

⁴⁸ Name withheld, *Submission 3*, p 1.

⁴⁹ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 7.

‘skatepark design, construction techniques and materials’ have changed and improved significantly.⁵⁰

- 5.8. When skating infrastructure ages or becomes damaged, it can sometimes remain useable by some disciplines, such as BMX, but become unsuitable for others due to the hazards created by rough surfaces for smaller wheels.⁵¹ The ramp surface at Image 2 was put to the committee during its site visits as an example of a potentially hazardous skating surface.
- 5.9. The committee heard that riding on rough surfaces increases the risk of injury to skateboarders, and skate park facilities should be maintained and ‘designed in a way that appeals to a broad range of users.’⁵²
- 5.10. Consultation with peak bodies for skateboarding and BMX could inform infrastructure upgrades to ensure they align to modern skate park designs and needs.⁵³



Image 2: Cracked skate ramp surface, Tuggeranong Skate Park. Source: ACT Legislative Assembly.

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the ACT Government update ageing skating infrastructure to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligns to modern skate park designs.

⁵⁰ Name withheld, *Submission 3*, p 3.

⁵¹ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 20.

⁵² AusCycling, *Submission 4*, p 2; Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 20.

⁵³ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 10.

Recommendation 9

The committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure Canberra skating facilities are designed for all disciplines and, where necessary, update infrastructure that has become worn and is no longer suitable for skaters.

New skating infrastructure

- 5.11. Participants provided the committee with many recommendations for new skate park infrastructure in Canberra. Some of these are outlined below.

All-weather facility

- 5.12. Witnesses spoke to the committee of the need for an all-weather skating facility in the ACT to allow people to use the facilities throughout the cold, frosty winters and hot summers here in Canberra. Such a facility would allow skating to take place unimpeded by extremes of weather.⁵⁴
- 5.13. Interstate examples provided to the committee include Albury Skate Park where skating elements are sheltered by structures with corrugated iron roofs, and Port Melbourne Skatepark, which is located underneath the Graham Street overpass.⁵⁵
- 5.14. CROSS and CSA also advocated for an indoor facility, similar to The Shed in Melbourne.⁵⁶ While The Shed is a privately run facility, it provides a blueprint for an additional indoor sport option for Canberrans.⁵⁷
- 5.15. In addition, the committee heard an all-weather facility would support community programs aimed at encouraging skating to run all year round, regardless of the weather.⁵⁸

Recommendation 10

The committee recommends that the ACT Government build a skating facility that is useable during inclement weather.

Asphalt pump track

- 5.16. The committee heard that an asphalt pump track was a high priority when it came to building new skating infrastructure in the ACT.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 6; Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 25.

⁵⁵ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 10.

⁵⁶ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023 p 10; Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 25. See 'The Shed Skatepark', <https://theshedskatepark.com.au/> (accessed 19 April 2024).

⁵⁷ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 6.

⁵⁸ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 6.

⁵⁹ Mr Scott Taylor, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 14; Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 24.

- 5.17. A pump track is a small circuit consisting of rollers and berms that can be ridden continuously with little to no peddling.⁶⁰ While dirt pump tracks are largely used by cyclists, the committee heard asphalt pump tracks can cater for a range of users, including cyclists, scooter riders, skateboarders and rollerbladers.⁶¹ In addition, pump tracks are often suitable for a range of ages and experience levels.⁶²
- 5.18. While the ACT has several dirt pump tracks, including one at Stromlo Forest Park, it does not have an asphalt pump track.⁶³
- 5.19. CROSS suggested that the ACT Government consider building an asphalt pump track in Canberra via a collaborative initiative between the government, user groups, and suitable construction companies. CROSS noted that the Sutherland Shire Barden Ridge Pump Track in New South Wales came about through this type of arrangement.⁶⁴

Recommendation 11

The committee recommends that the ACT Government build an asphalt pump track.

Asphalt uphill and downhill track

- 5.20. CROSS suggested that a dedicated uphill and downhill asphalt track would be a welcome addition to the ACT's skating infrastructure.⁶⁵
- 5.21. The committee heard that a non-car use track would provide a safer option for users than roads that are also used by cars.⁶⁶ Such a facility could be used as a training facility by cyclists,⁶⁷ as well as 'a wide range of extreme sports'.⁶⁸
- 5.22. Stromlo Forest Park was recommended to the committee as a possible location for an uphill and downhill asphalt track in Canberra.⁶⁹

Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that the ACT Government build an uphill and downhill asphalt track.

⁶⁰ Cambridge Dictionary, 'Pump track', <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pump-track> (accessed 19 April 2024).

⁶¹ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 25.

⁶² Mr Scott Taylor, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 14.

⁶³ Mr Scott Taylor, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 13.

⁶⁴ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 8.

⁶⁵ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 6.

⁶⁶ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 12.

⁶⁷ Ms Imogen McMillan, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 12.

⁶⁸ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 6.

⁶⁹ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 12.

Safety elements

Signage

- 5.23. During the committee's site visits to Canberra skate parks, committee members witnessed the need for additional safety signs at skate parks.
- 5.24. The committee heard that the rules around skate park use and etiquette are largely part of skating culture rather than the result of formal rules or structures.⁷⁰
- 5.25. While learn to skate courses, like those offered by the CSA, include a focus on skate park etiquette, the CSA recommended updating safety signs at ACT's skate parks to include more modern user instructions and safety warnings. The Wollongong City Council Skatepark Guidelines, which Mr Caruana co-authored, were suggested as an example of the type of information that could be included in updated skate park signage.⁷¹

Recommendation 13

The committee recommends that the ACT Government install safety signs at skate parks that provide modern user instructions and safety warnings that accurately reflect skating culture.

Lighting

- 5.26. The committee heard of the importance of lighting at skate parks to increase safety and use of these facilities.⁷² This was also addressed in e-Petition 051-21, which included calls for the installation of lighting at Gungahlin Skate Park.⁷³
- 5.27. In its submission to the inquiry, the ACT Government advised four of the ACT's large skate parks have lighting that is activated from 5:00pm to 10:00pm each day to allow for evening use.⁷⁴ Recent government investment in skate park lighting includes:
- \$25,000 in April 2021 to improve LED lighting at the Weston Creek Skatepark; and
 - \$10,000 in July 2022 for a lighting upgrade at Tuggeranong Skatepark.⁷⁵
- 5.28. Despite this investment, the committee heard that existing lighting did not meet the needs of skate park users. In its submission, the CSA advised skaters 'regularly experience issues with the lighting at the ACT's major skateparks', with lights either not coming on at all or switching off too early.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 24.

⁷¹ Exhibit A, 'Wollongong City Council Skatepark Guidelines Co-drafted by Tony Caruana'.

⁷² Name withheld, *Submission 3*, p 2; Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 7; Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 10.

⁷³ ACT Legislative Assembly, '[Petitions — Gungahlin skate park upgrade](#)', tabled 11 February 2022.

⁷⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 2.

⁷⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 3.

⁷⁶ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 10.

Recommendation 14

The committee recommends that the ACT Government install adequate lighting at all skate facilities in Canberra.

Weather protection

- 5.29. In its submission, CROSS emphasised the need for improved weather protection at ACT skate parks. While shade sails are in place at some skate parks, these do not always provide adequate cover from rain or sun. Sun glare can also affect the usage of skate parks. Appropriate shade structures can help to prevent extreme glare.⁷⁷
- 5.30. During the committee's site visits, committee members observed that some Canberra skate parks lacked shaded areas. The skate parks at Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Weston and Woden in particular were noted to be lacking in shaded areas.⁷⁸

Recommendation 15

The committee recommends that the ACT Government assess the weather protection offered at current skate parks and ensure skate facilities incorporate anti-glare designs.

Appropriate landscaping

- 5.31. The committee heard during the inquiry, and witnessed during its site visits, that natural debris and landscaping materials used in and around skate parks can create hazards for skaters.⁷⁹
- 5.32. The CSA explained:
- ...often debris at skate parks is quite an issue, and the construction and planning can help address that to some degree. For example, tanbark is a nightmare at a skate park for a skateboarder. Any small bits of debris can get stuck under your wheels and send you flying and cause quite significant injuries.⁸⁰
- 5.33. The issue of natural debris at skate parks should be considered during the planning process, particularly where trees are being considered to supply sources of shade.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 5.

⁷⁸ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 25.

⁷⁹ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 10; Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Submission 6*, p 5.

⁸⁰ Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 21.

⁸¹ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 25.

Recommendation 16

The committee recommends that the ACT Government consider landscape materials during the design of skate parks and surrounding areas to reduce natural debris on skate park surfaces.

6. Maintenance of skating infrastructure

- 6.1. The quality and frequency of maintenance at ACT skate parks was a major theme throughout this inquiry.⁸² In particular, the committee heard evidence speaking to the potentially serious consequences of ineffective repairs and maintenance:

I broke my arm at Belconnen a few years ago because there was a big hole in the concrete. I had put multiple Fix My Street requests in to have fixed. There was no action on it and eventually the debris started scattering all over the park. I am a pretty experienced skateboarder. I have been doing it for over 20 years. But I did not see a small rock that had spread out from this hole in the concrete: ran over it at speed, locked up, broke my arm. That would not have happened if that issue was addressed a little earlier. It was eventually fixed. Little things like that if they are routinely inspected and looked after can prevent injuries. Skateboarding is inherently dangerous and things like that will happen, but in that particular incidence it was avoidable.⁸³

- 6.2. The maintenance of the ACT's skate parks is the responsibility of Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS). TCCS carries out audit inspections of skate parks to determine their maintenance requirements and other issues affecting the safety of skate park users.⁸⁴

Audits and inspections

- 6.3. TCCS advised the committee that it carries out three levels of audit inspections across the ACT's skate parks, namely:
- a) Visual routine inspections. These are undertaken by TCCS staff. Their frequency varies. The aim is to identify obvious hazards resulting from visitor use, weathering or vandalism.
 - b) Operative inspections. These are undertaken by TCCS staff with the assistance of specialist contractors as needed and are carried out every one to three months. They focus particular attention on the areas of rolling surfaces and joints.
 - c) Annual main inspections. These are undertaken by suitably qualified contractors. They aim to 'identify the generally operationally safe condition of skate elements and rolling surfaces, e.g. conformity with the relevant standards, including any change as a result of the assessment of safety measures, repairs, parts replaced or added elements, weathering, presence of rotting, or corrosion.'⁸⁵
- 6.4. Reports generated from Annual main inspections feed into the TCCS asset management process which generates works programs for repairs. See further discussion of repairs at paragraph 6.8.

⁸² See for example evidence provided by the Canberra Skateboarding Association and ACT Government during the public hearing, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 15–27 and pp 34–48.

⁸³ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 21.

⁸⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 2.

⁸⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, pp 2–3.

- 6.5. The committee was advised that annual surface inspections of ACT skate parks were conducted in June 2021, May 2022 and January 2023, with ad-hoc inspections carried out prior to 2021.⁸⁶
- 6.6. Despite regular inspections, the committee received evidence that skate park surfaces were not cleared of litter and natural debris as frequently as they should be.⁸⁷ In its submission the Canberra Skateboarding Association (CSA) expressed concerns about the frequency and effectiveness of skate park cleaning and maintenance in the ACT, noting that the delays in maintaining skate park infrastructure or in clearing debris increased the risk of injury to skate park users.⁸⁸
- 6.7. The committee heard that regular routine inspections of skate parks can ensure that maintenance is carried out as needed, keeping skate parks in good condition and safe for users.⁸⁹

Recommendation 17

The committee recommends that the ACT Government review processes for maintenance to reduce debris on skate parks, such as litter and tree detritus.

Repairs

Standards

- 6.8. Skate park audits rely on a number of national standards and codes relating to safety requirements, most of which are specific to skate parks.⁹⁰ However, there is no specific framework in place for undertaking repairs at skate parks.⁹¹ Instead, skate park maintenance falls under the same framework as playground maintenance.⁹²
- 6.9. The ACT Government advised while some maintenance issues ‘can be repaired immediately onsite by TCCS officers’ larger repairs require specialised contractors to complete the work. Examples of repairs undertaken by TCCS include ‘filling of surface cracks, smoothing rough edges, unblocking drain holes, rewelding of access doors and mesh fencing, general cleaning maintenance such as leaf blowing and picking up of rubbish, and rescheduling of timers for floodlights.’⁹³

⁸⁶ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Answer to Question Taken on Notice No. 1*, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, Public Hearing – Inquiry into Skateboarding and Skate Parks in the ACT – Thursday 9 November 2023, 22 November 2023.

⁸⁷ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 10; Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 18.

⁸⁸ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 10.

⁸⁹ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 21.

⁹⁰ See ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 2.

⁹¹ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 3; Ms Sophie Clement, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 42.

⁹² ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 3.

⁹³ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 3.

- 6.10. At the public hearing TCCS officials advised structural repairs, such as concrete repairs, 'would not be a permanent restoration. There may be some sort of interim repair put in place until the next round of major inspections and contracted repair work, depending entirely on the set of circumstances, of course.'⁹⁴ An example of a temporary repair shown to the committee during its site visit is at Image 3.



Image 3: Repair of a crack at Belconnen Skate Park. Source: ACT Legislative Assembly.

- 6.11. Concerns were raised with the committee that some temporary repairs did not meet the needs of skate park users. In its submission the CSA advised treating skate parks like other play and recreation spaces has 'led to the premature deterioration of some of the ACT Government's assets'. They called for ACT skate parks to have their own dedicated 'procedures to address their specific cleaning and maintenance needs'.⁹⁵
- 6.12. TCCS officials told the committee that skate park repairs were 'a specialised field,' with repairs undertaken as part of a maintenance package with specialised contractors using modern techniques.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Mr Ken Marshall, Executive Group Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 39–40.

⁹⁵ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 8.

⁹⁶ Ms Sophie Clement, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 37.

- 6.13. The Minister acknowledged instances where these techniques had not been used, resulting in premature deterioration:

We acknowledge that there has been a case in the past where some of the contracts that have been used to do some major repairs have not been successful because they used the wrong equipment to repair the concrete, and then it has failed and it has caused more damage and had to be repaired again. That is something that has been brought to my attention. Maintenance of the facilities is something that the government needs to address going forward, and also how we work with getting that sort of specialist knowledge into our own building and maintenance programs now that we have a growing population.⁹⁷

- 6.14. The committee considers there may be benefit in skate park maintenance being conducted by contractors who have been assessed in collaboration with skate park users and who, preferably, have specialised knowledge of skating infrastructure and the specific maintenance requirements of skate parks.

Recommendation 18

The committee recommends that the ACT Government implement specific standards for skate park repairs.

Recommendation 19

The committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure all maintenance contractors are proficient in modern techniques for the restoration and repair of skate park infrastructure.

Recommendation 20

The committee recommends that the ACT Government assess maintenance contractors in collaboration with skate park users to inform procurement decisions and ensure, where possible, contractors have specialised knowledge of skating infrastructure.

Frequency

- 6.15. TCCS undertakes permanent repairs and maintenance for ACT skate parks through annual work packages. Significant repairs are undertaken through the capital program, with works informed by the outcomes of the annual main inspections.⁹⁸
- 6.16. TCCS officials advised the committee that there was generally an annual program of work, and ‘might be a package every one or two years that we deliver.’⁹⁹ When questioned about

⁹⁷ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 36–37.

⁹⁸ Ms Sophie Clement, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 38.

⁹⁹ Ms Sophie Clement, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 38.

what action would be taken if a defect was reported after the annual inspection, officials advised it would be dependent on the assessed risk posed by the defect. For lower risk defects, interim repairs may be put in place until the next annual works package, whereas for defects posing a more immediate risk, a more immediate response would be provided.¹⁰⁰

- 6.17. Given the risk of injury when skating and the evidence received regarding the potential danger posed by deteriorating surfaces at skate parks,¹⁰¹ the committee is concerned that an annual program for permanent repairs may not be sufficient.

Recommendation 21

The committee recommends that the ACT Government increase the frequency of skate park infrastructure audits and maintenance packages to update and repair defects and safety concerns.

Recommendation 22

The committee recommends that the ACT Government implement a monitoring system for skate park infrastructure that frequently and proactively assesses damage and defects.

Requests

- 6.18. In addition to the maintenance audits outlined at paragraph 6.3, members of the public can also report general maintenance issues. The ACT Government advised ‘Fix My Street is the recommended channel for raising skatepark maintenance requests’ with urgent matters being reported via the Access Canberra contact centre.¹⁰²
- 6.19. The committee understands Fix My Street reports are prioritised based on urgency, with urgent requests responded to ‘within a week’ and non-urgent requests ‘as soon as practicable’.¹⁰³
- 6.20. Despite being the recommended channel for members of the public to report defects and maintenance issues, the committee was advised there is no signage at skate parks advising people to submit a request through Fix My Street.¹⁰⁴ The committee also explored whether the requirement to register to use Fix My Street would deter individuals from using that channel.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Mr Ken Marshall, Executive Group Manager, City Operations, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 40.

¹⁰¹ See experience of Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 21.

¹⁰² ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 3.

¹⁰³ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 3

¹⁰⁴ Mr Ken Marshall, Executive Group Manager, City Operations, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 41.

¹⁰⁵ See *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 48, for a discussion of barriers to raising Fix My Street requests.

- 6.21. The committee is aware of local councils in other jurisdictions using QR codes to report local issues via an app. For example, Glen Eira, Ipswich and Hume City Councils support residents to report issues to Council using QR codes on popular community assets through the Snap Send Solve app.¹⁰⁶
- 6.22. A similar system of location-specific QR codes at ACT skate parks may enable users to raise requests for skate park maintenance quicker and more easily.

Recommendation 23

The committee recommends that the ACT Government install location-specific QR codes at each skate park to support people to easily report maintenance and repair issues on site.

Upgrade or replace

- 6.23. At a certain point it becomes necessary to decide whether an ageing skate park should be upgraded or replaced completely. Whether or not a skate park is at the end of its life is determined via the skate park inspections regime outlined above:

If, over a period of time, those inspections are identifying deterioration that is progressing at a rate that is clearly not going to be reversed by the maintenance regime that we discussed earlier, then the assessment would turn to replacement of that asset or an assessment of its remaining useful life, and then that information would feed into the infrastructure program to contemplate the replacement.¹⁰⁷

- 6.24. The replacement of the Belconnen Skate Park approximately 20 years after it was originally built is one example provided to the committee of an ACT skate park reaching this point.¹⁰⁸
- 6.25. Having defined criteria in place to determine when a skate park has reached the end of its life and requires replacement may result in clearer and more equitable outcomes when decisions are made regarding replacing or upgrading ACT skate parks.

Recommendation 24

The committee recommends that the ACT Government publish the criteria used to determine whether skating facilities are at end of life.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, Glen Eira City Council (Vic.), 'Calling out local issues just got snappier', <https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/about-council/news/latest-news/calling-out-local-issues-just-got-snappier>; Hume City Council, 'Snap Send Solve', <https://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Your-Council/Contact-Us/Snap-Send-Solve>; Ipswich City Council 'Report an Issue', https://www.ipswich.qld.gov.au/about_council/report-an-issue (all accessed 10 April 2024).

¹⁰⁷ Mr Ken Marshall, Executive Group Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 46–47.

¹⁰⁸ Ms Sophie Clement, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 48.

7. Promoting skateboarding in the ACT

- 7.1. During its inquiry the committee examined initiatives and activities to better promote skateboarding tourism in the ACT. These initiatives are outlined below.

Skating events

- 7.2. One of the main drivers of skating tourism in the ACT is the Belco Bowl Jam. The Belco Bowl Jam, held at the Belconnen Skate Park, is hosted by the Canberra Skateboarding Association (CSA) each year. It is named for the distinctive bowl at the Belconnen (Belco) Skate Park, which features a distinctive keyhole shape and a spiderweb pattern painted on its surface, and its informal 'jam' format.¹⁰⁹

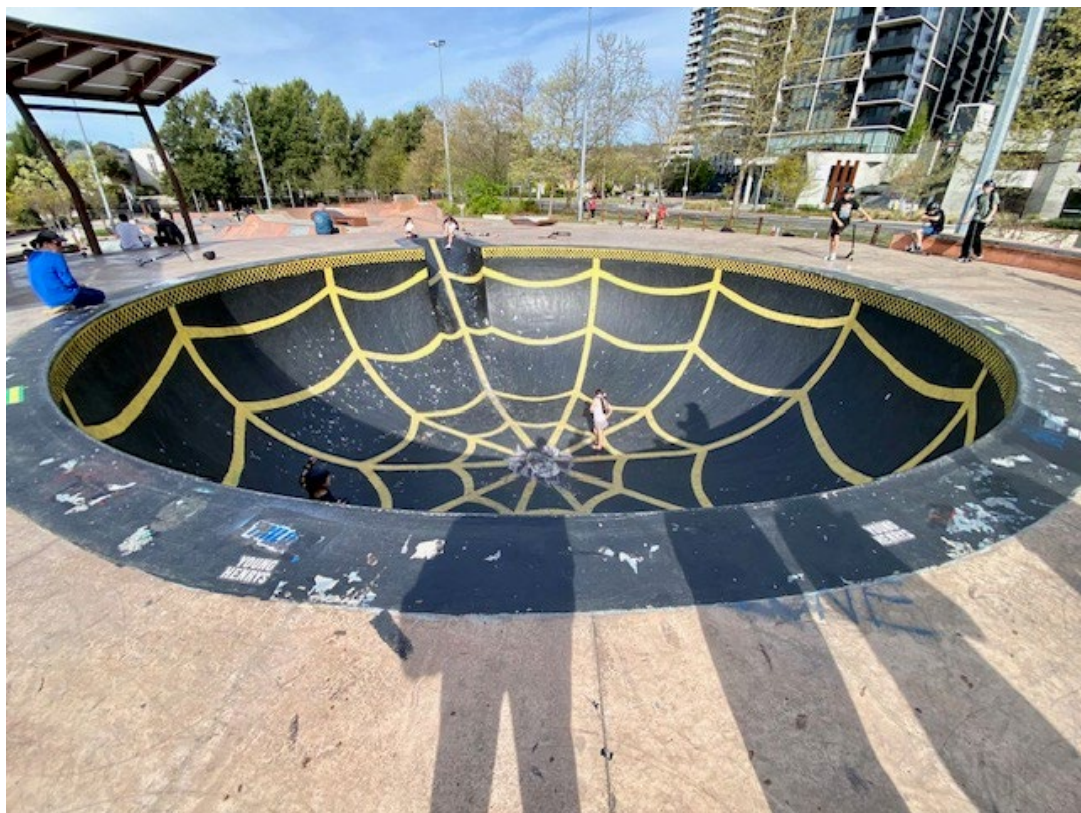


Image 4: The 'spider' bowl at Belconnen Skate Park. Image source: ACT Legislative Assembly.

- 7.3. Run by volunteers, the Belco Bowl Jam attracts hundreds of domestic and international visitors to the ACT, contributing to the ACT economy, and promoting the ACT to younger audiences around the world:¹¹⁰

It is getting international coverage. I have personally experienced travelling overseas and telling people, other skateboarders, I am from Canberra and them not knowing where Canberra is. Then you mention, "Where the Belco Bowl Jam

¹⁰⁹ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, pp 12–13.

¹¹⁰ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 3 and p 12.

happens,” and they go, “Great. Yes, I know that. Belco with the spider bowl, where the big event happens.”¹¹¹

- 7.4. The event has been running for over 20 years and has become ‘a prominent fixture in the Australian and international skateboarding community’, attracting renowned professional Australian and international skateboarders.¹¹² The committee heard the number of spectators at the event has increased in recent years.¹¹³
- 7.5. The Belco Bowl Jam received significant coverage in skateboarding circles, with thousands of people reading or watching videos about the event. This coverage is largely generated by volunteers promoting the event and other skating activities (such as learn to skate sessions) through social media and word of mouth at skating shops around Canberra.¹¹⁴
- 7.6. The ACT Government supported the Belco Bowl Jam in 2023 through a one-off grant of \$6,000 and temporary seating for spectators.¹¹⁵ The committee is of the view ongoing support and promotion opportunities would continue to drive skating tourism moving forward.

Recommendation 25

The committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support Canberra skating events, such as the Belco Bowl Jam.

Recommendation 26

The committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate opportunities to promote Canberra as a skating tourism destination.

Skate park design

- 7.7. During the inquiry, the committee heard that ‘skate tourists’ in Australia are drawn to other destinations which have newer skate parks with innovative designs.¹¹⁶ Building modern skate parks in the ACT, with exciting features, is therefore likely to encourage skate tourists to visit Canberra.
- 7.8. One option put to the committee was to add skateboarding-specific infrastructure to the existing mountain biking, road cycling and BMX freestyle infrastructure at Stromlo Forest Park, with a view to making Canberra the ‘extreme sports capital’ of Australia.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 18.

¹¹² Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, pp 12–13.

¹¹³ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 16; Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Sport and Recreation, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 47.

¹¹⁴ Mr Brenden Wood, Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 20.

¹¹⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 5.

¹¹⁶ Name withheld, *Submission 3*, p 1.

¹¹⁷ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 8–9.

7.9. One submitter suggested some innovative ideas for encouraging skate tourists to visit the ACT, such as building ‘a state of the art skatepark’ in ‘Haig Park in Braddon’, near Lonsdale Street, adding that:

...a modern, architectural, sculptural, multi-use, colourful, and inspiring skatepark (including features made from Canberra red bricks and themes inspired by Canberra’s cultural institutions) would be AMAZING as part of the Acton Waterfront redevelopment, with a nearby light rail station!¹¹⁸

7.10. The Canberra Region Old School Skaters (CROSS) recommended consulting with the peak body (CSA) to determine what the current and predicted trends may be for skate park design.¹¹⁹

7.11. During its visits to ACT skate parks, the committee saw a number of smaller skate park features at various parks that were not part of the original builds but had been added later by skate park users. An example is provided at Image 5.



Image 5: An example of a small skate park feature at Tuggeranong Skate Park that was added unofficially by skate park users.

7.12. The ACT Government could encourage the creativity and community-mindedness of skateboarders by providing micro-grants to encourage users to add new and unique features to Canberra skate parks.

¹¹⁸ Name withheld, *Submission 3*, p 3.

¹¹⁹ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 10.

Recommendation 27

The committee recommends that the ACT Government explore opportunities to build unique skating infrastructure to encourage skating tourism to Canberra.

Recommendation 28

The committee recommends that the ACT Government establish a micro-grant scheme for skate park users to add new functionality to existing skate parks.

8. Encouraging community participation in skating

- 8.1. During this inquiry, the committee heard from a range of stakeholders about activities to encourage greater community participation in skating, including community-run programs and considerations to enhance gender sensitive design and greater accessibility and inclusion.¹²⁰

Learn to skate programs

- 8.2. The Canberra Skateboarding Association (CSA) runs regular free Learn to Skateboard sessions at different skate parks in Canberra. The sessions are led by experienced volunteer skateboard coaches and welcome people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Boards and helmets are available to borrow, and attendees are taught basic skateboarding skills and skate park safety and etiquette.¹²¹
- 8.3. The committee heard that some alumni of these Learn to Skateboard sessions have gone on to compete in international skateboarding competitions.¹²²
- 8.4. Free courses, such as the Learn to Skateboard sessions run by the CSA, help to remove barriers for people and contribute to an inclusive skate park culture. The committee understands that these types of programs are currently run without government funding or assistance.¹²³

Recommendation 29

The committee recommends that the ACT Government provide assistance to community groups who run learn to skate programs.

Gender diversity

- 8.5. The Canberra skateboarding community is made up of ‘people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities.’¹²⁴
- 8.6. During the inquiry, the committee heard that while skate parks are designed as a ‘space for all youth’, girls represented a smaller percentage of skaters.¹²⁵ This premise also appeared in the findings of the ACT *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Framework*. The framework, released in 2023 as an action in the *ACT Women’s Plan 2016–26*, sets out expectations and guides the approach to best-practice urban design outcomes through a gender lens.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 3; Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, pp 4 and 8.

¹²¹ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 6.

¹²² Mr Tony Caruana and Mr Brenden Wood, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 16–17.

¹²³ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 15.

¹²⁴ Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 15.

¹²⁵ Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, p 8.

¹²⁶ ACT Government, *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Framework*, July 2023, p 11.

- 8.7. During consultation, a ‘Walkshop’ was held at the Belconnen Skate Park, which specifically targeted girls and young women to better understand their experiences at this public space.¹²⁷ The Implementation toolkits states research shows ‘girls stop using parks around the age of 12 years’ and includes the experience of one interviewee, Annie, who said ‘I’ve had a few experiences with some men in skateboarding that shame you for learning and encourage you to do more feminine activities, like roller skating.’¹²⁸
- 8.8. The Implementation Toolkit lists a range of challenges for girls using multi-purpose spaces, including skate parks.¹²⁹

Recommendation 30

The committee recommends the ACT Government establish a plan to increase participation of women and girls in the Canberra skating community, including:

- investigating any current gender barriers to participation; and
- ensuring skate parks have facilities for women and girls.

Accessibility and inclusion

- 8.9. The committee heard during its inquiry that the number of people with disabilities using skate parks is increasing. This is reflected in the recognition of WCMX (Wheelchair + BMX) as a ‘distinct skatepark discipline.’¹³⁰
- 8.10. Dr Dan Johnston advised that while little research has been completed focusing on how people with a disability access and interact with skate parks, his personal interactions with people who use wheelchairs and people with sight impairments suggested several design considerations to improve accessibility.¹³¹ These include:

For the sight impaired:

- a) Ramps and obstacles that use areas of coloured concrete to mark transition areas; and
- b) painted markings to indicate flow lines through skate parks.

For wheelchair users:

- a) obstacles to promote flow and carving;
- b) exit points from bowl areas; and
- c) wheelchair access from parking areas.¹³²

¹²⁷ ACT Government, *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Framework*, July 2023, p 13.

¹²⁸ ACT Government, *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Implementation Toolkit*, July 2023, p 14.

¹²⁹ ACT Government, *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Implementation Toolkit*, July 2023, p 14.

¹³⁰ Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, p 4.

¹³¹ Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, p 4.

¹³² Dr Dan Johnston, *Submission 5*, p 4.

Recommendation 31

The committee recommends that the ACT Government review skating infrastructure in the ACT to assess accessibility, and upgrade facilities to provide designated areas that are accessible and encourage participation by people with a disability.

9. Preserving the ACT's skateboarding heritage

- 9.1. The Territory has a rich and interesting skateboarding history, with a strong culture that has 'a large public following.'¹³³ The committee heard during its inquiry of the importance of preserving the history of both ACT skate parks and skating culture.

Skate park heritage infrastructure

- 9.2. The Canberra Skateboarding Association (CSA) advised specific elements of Canberra skate parks offer 'historical significance to the Australian and international skateboarding community,' in particular the Charnwood Bowl, Erindale Banks, Kambah U-pipe and Fadden Pines.¹³⁴ The Canberra Region Old School Skaters (CROSS) agreed, noting innovative skating infrastructure in the 1970s and 1980s had resulted in the ACT becoming 'iconic across Australia and around the world.'¹³⁵
- 9.3. Built in 1978, Charnwood Bowl was one of Australia's first skate parks, the first being Albany Skatepark in Western Australia, which was constructed in 1976.¹³⁶
- 9.4. The committee heard that the Kambah U-pipe is 'a unique facility unlike any other in Australia.' Its unusual construction means it does not have a 'flat bottom', making it particularly challenging to ride. The ACT Government installed fencing and other safety measures around the U-pipe over a decade ago (see Image 6).¹³⁷
- 9.5. The Erindale Brick Banks are the last remaining curved brick embankment structures built around the Erindale College and Library in the 1980s. Due to their popularity with skateboarders, the Erindale Brick Banks were converted into a skate park in the early 1990s, with the addition of concrete skate park features. They have been skated by many Australian and international professional skateboarders, including Tony Hawk in 1988.¹³⁸

¹³³ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 4.

¹³⁴ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 10.

¹³⁵ Mr David Pang, Canberra Region Old School Skaters, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 7.

¹³⁶ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 10.

¹³⁷ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 11.

¹³⁸ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 11.



Image 6: Kambah U-Pipe.
Source: Legislative Assembly of the ACT



Image 7: Erindale Brick Banks.
Source: Legislative Assembly of the ACT

- 9.6. In 2017 the CSA nominated the Erindale Brick Banks for entry in the ACT Heritage Register amid concerns about its possible demolition due to the expansion of the nearby shopping centre. The CSA is yet to receive a final response in relation to the heritage nomination.¹³⁹
- 9.7. Dr Dan Johnston advised the committee of a similar example in South London, United Kingdom, where an ‘unofficial skate spot’ was ‘sanctioned by the council as being heritage listed for skateboarding.’¹⁴⁰

Recommendation 32

The committee recommends that the ACT Government, in consultation with the Canberra skating community, assess and place key Canberra skating locations on the heritage register.

Community history

- 9.8. In addition to preserving key skating infrastructure, the committee appreciates the importance of preserving the history of the ACT skating community.
- 9.9. Skating events in Canberra continue to shape the culture and experience of past and future generations of skaters. This was particularly evident through the stories and experiences shared by witnesses throughout the inquiry.¹⁴¹ These stories relate to both the unique

¹³⁹ Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Submission 1*, p 11.

¹⁴⁰ Dr Dan Johnston, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 3.

¹⁴¹ See, for example comments from representatives of the Canberra Region Old School Skaters and Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, pp 6 and 16.

infrastructure in the ACT, but also Canberra skating events and people who attended them.¹⁴²

- 9.10. The committee considers it is important to preserve these stories and experiences to capture the culture and history of Canberra’s skating community.

Recommendation 33

The committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake an oral history of skateboarding in the ACT to appropriately capture the local skating culture and development of global skating infrastructure in Canberra.

¹⁴² Mr Tony Caruana, President, Canberra Skateboarding Association, *Committee Hansard*, 9 November 2023, p 16.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1. The committee thanks everyone who contributed to this inquiry by attending the public hearing and making submissions.
- 10.2. In particular, the committee thanks Mr Tony Caruana (President, Canberra Skateboarding Association), Mr Brenden Wood (Vice President, Canberra Skateboarding Association), Mr Bernie Whalan (Designer, VFG Skateparks) and Mr Ethan Copeland (competitive skateboarder), who generously provided informative tours of ACT skate parks during the committee's site visits.
- 10.3. The committee makes 33 recommendations.



Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

18 June 2024

Appendix A: Submissions

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
1	Canberra Skateboarding Association	15/06/2023	21/06/2023
2	ACT Government	21/06/2023	21/06/2023
3	Name Withheld	22/06/2023	11/07/2023
4	AusCycling	26/06/2023	30/06/2023
5	Dr Dan Johnston	27/06/2023	05/07/2023
6	Canberra Region Old School Skaters (CROSS)	23/06/2023	03/08/2023

Appendix B: Witnesses

9 November 2023

Dr Dan Johnston, Western Sydney University

Canberra Region Old School Skaters (CROSS)

- **Mr David Floyd Pang**
- **Ms Ayesha Pang**
- **Mr Scott Taylor**
- **Mr James Raymer**
- **Ms Imogen McMillan**

Canberra Skateboarding Association

- **Mr Anthony Caruana**, President and Presiding Officer
- **Mr Brenden Wood**, Vice President

AusCycling

- **Mr Nick Hannan**, Executive General Manager, Government Strategy

ACT Government

- **Ms Yvette Berry MLA**, Minister for Sport and Recreation
- **Mr Ken Marshall**, Executive Group Manager, City Operations, Transport Canberra and City Services
- **Ms Sophie Clement**, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra and City Services

Appendix C: 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	4
Male	8
Non-binary	0
Gender neutral	0
No data	0

Appendix D: Questions Taken on Notice

Questions Taken on Notice

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
1	09/11/23	Minister Berry	Inspections at the completion of works	22/11/2023
2	09/11/23	Minister Berry	Fencing off of hazards at skate parks	22/11/2023
3	09/11/23	Minister Berry	Length of time to address safety concerns in Belconnen skate park	22/11/2023
4	09/11/23	Minister Berry	Skate park inspections for the past five years	22/11/2023