



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Economics,
Industry and Recreation

Submission Cover Sheet

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

Submission number: 120

Submitter: Community Sport Alliance ACT - supplementary submission

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Introduction:

Further to our initial submission furnished on 25 September 2025. We wish to make a supplementary submission to help inform the consideration of the barriers and opportunities for participation in community sport in the ACT. This information addresses three specific issues:

- 1) volunteers in community sport; and
- 2) Overcoming personal and social barriers that inhibit young people getting involved in physical activity and community sport.
- 3) having a body that offers an ongoing broader and future perspective for the community sport sector.

1) Volunteers in community sport. (Terms of Reference Nos. 1, 4 & 6.)

Issue:

All members of our group have experienced increases in participant numbers, via comparing figures from 2019 to 2025. However, organisations' data indicates that there has not been a commensurate increase in the number of volunteers to support community sport activity.

Such an experience is an existing and ongoing barrier to participation in community sport. The effects of this are:

- restricting what a community club can reasonably offer to ensure participant experience is not devalued or diminished.
- minimising the risk exposure for volunteers and the club.
- having the requisite capability among volunteers to comply with the full range of legislative and administrative requirements.
- being able to attract new volunteers – who are seeking short-term or event based roles rather than ongoing roles that sustain community sport.
- an increasing number of salaried staff (to cover the shortfall created by fewer volunteers at SSO level) to ensure there are sufficient resources dedicated to maintaining the purpose and role of community sport. Noting that this has the flow-on effect of increased costs for participants.

Volunteers are essential contributors to ensuring community sport is provided to the community. In community sport clubs and sporting associations, volunteers fulfil a range of positions including:

- Club management committees.
- Coaching and managing of teams at club and junior representative levels.
- Club Fundraising, Canteen duties, and Safety marshals.
- Association Boards and committees (supporting paid staff).

The nature of these roles is primarily ongoing and often requiring week-to-week attention. This is dissonant with the contemporary desire of people interested in volunteering for micro-roles. It would take a considerable amount of time and effort to universally align these two issues.



Opportunities for the ACT:

- Formalise recognition of volunteer contributions through the vocational education certification for acquired skills and knowledge.
 - Noting that these skills benefit the cohesion of the community and the productivity of the economy through heightened skills and knowledge.
- A pilot project to identify volunteer roles that could be converted to shared arrangements with multiple job-holders and/or creation of micro roles to ensure continuity and co-ordination of service to participants.
- Enable the community sport sector to dovetail into the work being undertaken by the Australian Sports Commission.

2) Overcoming personal and social barriers that inhibit young people getting involved in physical activity and community sport. (Terms of Reference Nos. 4 & 5.)

Issue:

Some of the main impediments for participation in sport in Australia, as identified by the Australian Sports Commission, for children relates to **personal and social barriers** such as a lack of skill, confidence, or motivation.

Opportunities for the ACT:

Introduce a schools-based program to enable all children to have the opportunity to develop a level of physical literacy that enables for a healthier and more active way of life.

Australian Government research and international evidence highlights that sport has an important role in the physical and mental well-being of a community and its citizens that can be a lifelong lasting and cross-generational.

Some longstanding examples of similar programmes from other countries include:

1. Quality Daily Physical Education – Canada
 - Key feature: started in 2005 and mandated in provinces Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario.
 - Purpose: focus on physical and health literacy for school children daily activity and integrated into school schedules, leading towards long-term improvements in health and academic engagement.
2. Sport England’s “School Games”
 - Key feature: started in 2006, partnership between Sport England and Youth Trust, Multi-tiered participation/competition model, now with approx. 20,000 schools participating annually.
 - Purpose: addressing inequalities; empowering the voice of the youth; building physical literacy.
3. Finland’s “Schools on the Move”
 - Key feature: 2010 as a pilot research-based programme, now covers more than 90% of schools.
 - Purpose: Promotes activity breaks, active classrooms, and student-led movement projects.



To offer some similar opportunities in the ACT to bring about improvement would help enable:

- i. the ACT community having greater opportunities to lead healthier and balanced lives through participation in sporting activities.
- ii. gaining preparation to better access to and participation in physical activity and community sport.
- iii. a symbiotic relationship between education, health and sport sectors and improved outcomes for citizens of the ACT.

Such a programme could extend to encourage students to become volunteers in sport. This could include the provision of coaching and mentoring services, and co-ordinating after-school sports activities. Students who are involved to a requisite level could receive opportunities for academic credit, skill and knowledge development, and broader cultural immersion.

Key Components for Success

1. Importance of Consistency and Longevity — the longest-running programs have policy backing and/or receive recurrent funding.
2. Longitudinal Data and recognition — tracking of trends and improvements and celebrating participation rates to encourage schools to maintain continuity. This provides an opportunity to link to the health sector and the tracking of citizenry health and well-being.
3. Whole-school culture — the value of embedding physical activity into the daily routines of the school population to allow student participation to endure.
4. Teacher empowerment — offering teachers with professional learning and easy-to-implement tools that sustain delivery.
5. Partnerships and pathways — linking schools with community sporting clubs to maintain engagement beyond school-based participation.

3) Having an ongoing broader and future perspective on community sport. (Terms of Reference Nos. 1 & 8.)

Issue:

As the Assembly has agreed to this Inquiry being undertaken, it offers a recognition that community sport matters to the way of life in Canberra and, further, it impacts on the liveability of Canberra and the social, mental and physical well-being of citizens.

So how do we ensure that the community and the sector, as well as the Government, maintains watchful attention on the emerging and future trends of community sport in the ACT? Our answer would be - by establishing a body that offers an ongoing broader and future perspective for the community sport sector.



Possible Solution:

Establishing a representative body to advocate and develop community sport that is provided with ongoing government funding.

Our group of nine members has undertaken considerable work to develop a governance model for such a representative body. We would be happy to share this work with the Government at an appropriate point in time.

Opportunities for the ACT

Possible functions for a representative entity could cover:

• Advocacy & Policy Development	• Representations to government on behalf of ACT-based sporting organisations and participants. • Promoting supportive policies that strengthen social cohesion and wellbeing in the ACT communities. • Through advocacy, seek to increase opportunities for all citizens and groups to engage in sport.
• Volunteer & Capability Support	• Provides training and resources to develop volunteers.
• Standards & Safety	• Supports the sector in understanding and fulfilling governance and government compliance measures across ACT-based organisations.
• Networking & Collaboration	• Connects ACT-based organisations to share best practices and form partnerships.
• Funding & Resource Access	• Helps ACT-based organisations access grants, subsidies, equipment programs, and shared services.
• Promotion, Recognition and Events	• Advocates local achievements, volunteer contributions. • Organises conferences, awards, and public awareness campaigns for ACT-based organisations.
• Risk & Crisis Support	• Provides guidance at time of need, e.g. disputes, emergencies, or sector-wide challenges.

Such an entity could establish a stronger relationship between government services and the community sport sector in delivering community building services and facilities to the ACT communities.



Concluding statement:

We recognise that some of the comments in this paper reiterate our position stated in our initial submission. That's because these issues are important to all of our organisations.

We are willing to present to a public hearing session to explore the issues that we have raised and to listen to the Committee's views and questions.

Yours sincerely



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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
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