

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT TO ACT SPORTS INQUIRY

- We are a group of independent supporters of community sport and together, we have a long involvement in sport:
 - Graham Carter OAM (Australian Sports Medal), over 30 years' experience as a volunteer and a former President ACTSPORT.
 - James Ferguson former Executive Director Australian Sports Commission,
 - Jim Roberts (Australian Sports Medal) former President ACTSPORT and former 3-time FIFA Futsal world cup coach and FIFA instructor, and
 - Glenys Beauchamp AO PSM former Secretary, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and Department of Health,
- We have provided a submission to the Committee and we will make a few introductory remarks and then we are happy to elaborate on any of our proposals.
- Community sport is important in developing community well-being, in promoting a healthy, productive life and in fostering social cohesion. While sport is also a big business it is important to realise that a successful elite sports system depends on a strong community sports system. There is hardly a family in the ACT which is not affected by these issues. A recent survey has clearly shown that about 25% of community clubs are at risk and this is a major threat to community sport participation and community cohesion and wellbeing
- Community sport is, facing several serious challenges with participation, volunteers, facilities and club viability, which are outlined in our submission.
- There are many stakeholders in the sports system, and we would argue that while much good work is occurring in a number of areas, the current approach remains too fragmented and ad hoc – there is no overarching strategy or road map to guide investment and ensure ongoing viability and sustainability of local sports clubs.
- For example, the evidence shows that sport clubs are under pressure with current economic conditions eg insurance premiums, maintenance costs, affiliation fees, lack of volunteers, and many have reached their ceiling in terms of the fees they can charge participants.
- The Government is also under pressure to meet costs and support families with cost-of-living pressures. We understand the pressures on budgets at all levels.
- Without an agreed community sports strategy and evidence base to provide certainty about priorities, many sports lobby governments for funds. Some sporting clubs do not necessarily have a strong voice or the capability to lobby. The result has been an imbalance in the development of effective facilities and programs and disparate voices across the sporting sector.

- In our view, these problems can best be addressed through the development of a 10 year strategic program focusing on the development of appropriate facilities across government, programs to encourage and support volunteers and enhance their effectiveness, improving access for families and participants and considering options to reduce the running costs on community sports organisations. These are outlined in our submission.
- Knowing the many challenges for sporting clubs, governments and families we have proposed a new investment model that provides for the business sector to also contribute to supporting community sports organisations and supporting the local community more broadly, acknowledging many local businesses already support their community in different ways.
- This investment model proposes a method to transform and leverage government procurement into a community investment program to encourage greater business input towards the funding of local sport by requiring tenderers for government projects to make contributions towards community well-being or “social value”, so reducing the burden on governments and enhancing community involvement. This proposal is based on UK legislation which requires tenderers for government projects to demonstrate a contribution to their local community.
- As we have said such an investment model needs to be underpinned by having a strategic approach to developing and managing sporting facilities, understanding priorities for investment, considering a model to give sporting clubs and organisations tools to reduce running costs and maintain viability eg pooling insurance, governance tools to assist organisations, options to improve maintenance and utility costs as examples.
- While this Inquiry is focussed on barriers and opportunities for participation in community sports in our local community, our proposal could be replicated across regions and indeed, at the national level and could include the arts, the environment and the charitable sector more broadly.
- It would encourage a strong partnership between business, governments, sporting organisations and participants, including the volunteer sector.
- We believe that the ACT could take the lead in promoting this idea nationally.
- We commend our submission to you, and we are happy to elaborate on it, and of course, we may not have all the answers, but we are happy to work with government and sporting organisations to address what needs to be put in place to make this happen.

