



GRRD Shed, Traralgon Showgrounds
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19/02/2020

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on Administration of Sports Grants
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: Submission regarding the award of funding under the Community Sports Infrastructure Grant Program

To the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry.

Background

Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby (GRRD) is a small social and competitive roller skating club in rural Victoria. We established Roller Derby as a sport in Gippsland ten years ago and have provided considerable leadership and organisation for Victoria's statewide roller derby competition since its inception. In the last 18 months our club has gone through significant growth and development (experiencing over 100 social skaters using our programs during 2019, when our previous membership had sat at around 30).

We are a club (and a sport) that has a focus on inclusion. We welcome people of all genders and ensure that LGBTQI+ people of all ages are included and valued in our club and activities. The majority of our members and all of our leadership committee identify as women, many are parents and we have a large number of skaters who are single parents or who are experiencing significant social or economic disadvantage. The majority of our skaters do not engage in other organised physical or social activities. Our club provides a home and a space to be welcomed for who you are.

Over a seven year period, Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby struggled to find a venue to operate our club and conduct our training from. We made 40+ separate enquiries each year since our inception and could not successfully secure a council or community provided space to train for reasons including; perceived harm to facilities by our skates/equipment which we have been able to refute and defend, as well as total unavailability across three separate Local Government areas. The costs of the professional skating rink near us became prohibitive and we were forced to seek another venue or fold.

We discovered a 'Sheep Shed' at the Traralgon Recreation Reserve: A very run down, aged, agricultural space full of chook cages and accumulated refuse. Over the past three years we have progressively cleaned and opened this space for our activities. However significant funds were required to bring the shed up to a safe, hygienic, fit for purpose and inclusive standard.

We sought funds from a number of avenues to achieve our goals of renovation for safety, hygiene and use. We aimed to leverage federal and state government grant applications off each other, as our club had no savings to meet grant application funding ratios.

On 14 September 2018, we submitted an application to the Sport Australia Community Infrastructure fund, with the following result.

<p>Fund: Sport Australia Community Sport Infrastructure Amount applied for: \$44,909 Project: Inclusion for all (Bathroom renovations at Traralgon 'Sheep Shed': Part of stage 2 renovation works)</p> <p>Redevelopment of existing aged male and female toilets into a unisex accessible toilet, gender neutral cubical and a gender neutral shower.</p>	<p>Application was ranked 98/100</p> <p>Not notified in Round 1 (Dec 2018)</p> <p>Not notified in round 2 (March 2019)</p> <p>24 April 2019 notified UNSUCCESSFUL</p>
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We had aimed to use the Sport Australia Federal Government funds to leverage the Latrobe Valley Authority State Government fund's requirement for 4:1 funding for a broader shed renovation project. GRRD had no savings to use as leverage so depended on external federal funding to gain sufficient funds to complete our full renovation project.

Because we did not receive the Sport Australia funds, our submission to the State Government had to be significantly reduced in scope, meaning a number of priority items could not be completed.

In this submission, we will respond to points (a) (c) (d) and (i) before making recommendations.

(a) program design and guidelines; and (c) management and assessment processes.

The published grant guidelines made available to all applicants did not flag the level of discretionary intervention by the Minister which occurred during this process, certainly not to the extent it was exercised in the case of our application.

The criteria as they exist mean that we cannot see a justifiable reason for the non-awarding of our grant, particularly for such a comparably insignificant amount. According to the criteria we applied against, we were judged as the most meritorious application, of the 2000 submitted.

There remains no explanation of why funds were awarded to applicants with considerably lower 'gradings' on applications, and for ten times the amount requested by our club. If the criteria and merit-based scoring are not relevant to the awarding of grants, it begs the question of why applicants need to perform against them.

We now understand 40% of those successful applicants have been found to be ineligible against the published grant criteria, for reasons including late submission, post-closure application revision or completion of the project before funds were received. How does one not take from this a discriminatory action when meritorious selection was not considered in successful awarding of funds?

When 'eligibility' is the excuse afforded by our political leadership, it seems this point is now also moot. We are left with no doubt that the action of denying our club the funds we were assessed as deserving was indeed discriminatory and politically motivated.

(d) adherence to published assessment processes and program criteria;

As with many of the other 2,000 applications received from across Australia, volunteers of our club spent significant hours around work, family, home duties and our commitment to our sport, completing the Sport Australia grant application. The application was lengthy and rigorous, but the design and guidelines were clear and adhering to them was achievable.

We knew that we had a strong application - our club and our sport met the program guidelines and priority areas around participation, inclusion, female leadership, body positivity, safety, accessibility, flexibility of offerings for women and many others.

When we were notified we were unsuccessful, we were incredibly disappointed, but assumed that we had not made a strong enough case to justify the small amount of funding we had requested. Our house of cards, which we had based our other grant applications on, folded in one corner but we reduced our scope, removed elements, scaled our project back and moved on.

In January 2020, we were informed via media investigations that not only had our project been assessed as meritorious based on the criteria within the grant application process we applied on, but we had received *the highest score of all 2,000 applications in the entire country*.

This news was heartbreaking. To know that all of that time, energy and emotional investment had been deemed worthy of the funding, to know that we had been assessed as the most deserving project in the entire country, but to be denied, was devastating.

The flow on effect of this decision to award funds based on politics, rather than adherence to the assessment criteria and merit-based scoring, was that our club missed out on not just \$45,000 from Sports Australia, but on another \$50,000+ those funds would have allowed us to leverage from State Government funding. *Our project has not been delivered in full and we currently have no ability to complete the remaining elements, due to the way these grants were awarded.*

This decision to act against the published assessment process and award based on politics rather than merit has had a very real and immediate negative impact on our entire club and our ability to operate.

(i) any related programs or matters.

The impact of withholding Sport Australia funding is:

1. GRRD could not complete the toilet project in full

One element of the initial Sport Australia Community Sport Infrastructure application has been completed via alternate Latrobe Valley Authority funding (reconfigure male toilet into accessible toilet and baby change facility).

However, the withholding of the Sport Australia funding has meant that the full toilet reconfiguration for accessibility, inclusion and compliance (female component) could not be completed. (See attachment 2: supporting images)

2. GRRD could not provide a sufficient co-funding contribution to Latrobe Valley Authority.

The withholding of Sport Australia funding meant we couldn't fully leverage State Government funding with a 4:1 ratio. With the Sport Australia grant, we could have leveraged up to \$150,000 from LVA, rather than the \$81,000 we received, which was insufficient to fully complete the full renovation project. (See attachment 1: impact of withholding funding and attachment 2: supporting images)

Recommendation

Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby believes two outcomes are required in order to move forward:

1. All projects from the 2018/19 Sport Australia Community Sports Infrastructure Grants that scored higher than the designated cutoff mark of 74, based on the advertised scoring criteria, should be retrospectively funded in full via the release of additional funds.

In the instance that projects have been progressed due to denial of funding, the Federal Government should work with applicants to assess whether all elements of the project have been delivered, or whether community benefit (in line with the initial application) can still be derived via funding additional elements of projects on site.

2. The Federal Government must ensure a transparent practice for grant application, assessment and awarding of all grants under its remit in the future. Our club, and I am sure many others, are very wary of spending valuable time and emotional energy preparing submissions that may be discarded not based on merit criteria, but based on political maneuvering. We believe there is a significant trust deficit that needs to be remedied.

We look forward to the outcomes of your inquiry and again, we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bodye Darvill
President
Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby Inc

ATTACHMENT 1: Impact on project scope of funds being withheld

The below outstanding items are required to make the Traralgon Shed safe, hygienic, secure and inclusive for all. Because Sport Australis funds were withheld, a State Government funding application had to be scaled back, meaning priority items could not be achieved

Outstanding works in Traralgon 'Sheep' Shed		Approximate cost
1.	Female toilet reconfiguration for compliance, modernisation and to meet gender neutral requirements. (From Sport Aus grant)	\$20,000
2.	Full vermin proofing to eliminate health and hygiene risks	\$8,200
3.	Treat roof rust and leaks	\$15,000
4.	Fix external cladding on front wall for security	\$5,000
5.	Install accessibility ramp	\$7,700
6.	Fix slip hazard at entry	\$2,000
	10% contingency	\$5,790
	10% GST	\$6,370
TOTAL		\$70,000

ATTACHMENT 2: Supporting images to show the items that have not been completed, due to the funding that Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby did not receive in Round 1 of the Sport Australia grant process, despite having the highest ranking application in the country.

1. Current female toilet that could not be configured to modern compliance requirements to allow it to be allocated as gender neutral.



2. Health risks from possum and rat urine and feces. From the floor this is transferred to members clothes, equipment and hands due to the nature of training and of the sport which requires 'falls'.



Urine dripping from the walls down onto the padded matting for the new kid space area. The new equipment for this space has not been installed due to health concerns.



3. Roof rust that could not be treated. Training was disrupted twice and cancelled once during 2019 due to leaks. The gear room, containing a significant 'library' of hire skates flooded during rain February 2020.



4. External cladding damage and deterioration that could not be replaced. This makes the shed vulnerable to break ins.



5. Inability to install ramp to meeting room



6. Inability to concrete entry to shed to remove slip hazards in winter season.



**Images of the full shed, for context
BEFORE the commencement of any funded projects (Jan 2018)**



AFTER LVA and DELWP funding (Jan 2020)

