



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, RECREATION AND THE ARTS

Reference: Funding of community sporting and recreational facilities

CANBERRA

Thursday, 29 May 1997

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT,
RECREATION AND THE ARTS

Members

Mr Truss (Chair)

Mr Anthony
Mr Robert Brown
Mr Billson
Mr Eoin Cameron
Mrs Crosio
Mr Entsch
Mr Hockey

Mr Harry Jenkins
Miss Jackie Kelly
Dr Lawrence
Mr Martin
Mr McDougall
Dr Southcott

The committee is to inquire into:

whether the Commonwealth Government should be involved actively in funding in full or in part local community sporting and recreational facilities and, if so, whether the Commonwealth Government should have a dedicated program to fund sporting and recreational infrastructure;

determine (as far as possible) existing and future requirements for national, regional and local community sporting and recreational facilities and inquire into ways in which better utilisation can be made of existing community and educational facilities for sporting and recreational pursuits;

inquire into alternative options which may exist for funding national, regional and local community sporting and recreational facilities including, but not limited to, private sector funding and funding via the Australian Sports Foundation; and

make recommendations to the Minister for Sport, Territories and Local Government on matters arising from the Terms of Reference

WITNESSES

CROSSWHITE, Mrs Janice Jean, Board Member, Womensport Australia, President, Womensport and Recreation, NSW, 26 Brigalow Street, O'Connor, Australian Capital Territory 2602	417
REID, Ms Heather, Executive Officer, Womensport Australia, 26 Brigalow Street, O'Connor, Australian Capital Territory 2602	417
RICHARDS, Dr Ralph, National Coaching and Development Coordinator, Australian Swimming Inc., PO Box 940, Dickson, Australian Capital Territory 2602	436

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Present

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Miss Jackie Kelly

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Dr Lawrence

Mrs Crosio

Mr Martin

Mr Entsch

Mr McDougall

Mr Jenkins

The committee met at 8.30 a.m.

Mr Truss took the chair.

CHAIR—Ladies and gentlemen, I will declare open this public hearing, the sixth hearing by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts for its inquiry into the funding of community sporting and recreational facilities. Since the inquiry was advertised in mid-November, the committee has received more than 270 submissions and has visited New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania for public hearings and inspections. At its public hearings, the committee has had before it state and local governments, sporting organisations and providers of facilities. Today the committee will hear from two more sporting organisations—Womensport Australia and Australian Swimming.

Committee hearings are recognised as proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of the House of Representatives. Evidence given before the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Witnesses will not be asked to take an oath or make an affirmation. However, they are reminded that false evidence given to a parliamentary committee may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament.

The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should witnesses at any stage wish to give evidence in private, they may ask to do so and the committee will give consideration to the request.

CROSSWHITE, Mrs Janice Jean, Board Member, Womensport Australia, President, Womensport and Recreation, NSW, 26 Brigalow Street, O'Connor, Australian Capital Territory 2602

REID, Ms Heather, Executive Officer, Womensport Australia, 26 Brigalow Street, O'Connor, Australian Capital Territory 2602

CHAIR—I welcome the representatives of Womensport Australia. We have received a submission from you and have authorised its publication. Do you propose any changes to the submission?

Ms Reid—No, we do not.

CHAIR—Before we ask questions, would you like to make some introductory comments?

Ms Reid—I will defer to Janice to make some statements about the Womensport Australia submission and a submission on behalf of Womensport and Recreation, NSW. I would also, if possible, like to make some comments about another submission that was put in by the Women's Electoral Lobby Sport Action Group because I think that there are some points in there that encapsulate some of the issues that we are on about.

CHAIR—But you are not representing that organisation?

Ms Reid—No. I understand that there was no opportunity for them to appear before the inquiry in Melbourne. So, on their behalf, if possible, I would just like to make a few comments. They are exactly the same sort of statements that we would probably make anyway.

CHAIR—You are welcome to make any comments you choose, but I was just trying to establish what status they might have. Would you like to make some comments?

Mrs Crosswhite—As an introductory comment, our organisation strongly believes that there is a need for the federal government to take a leadership role in the provision of local sport and recreation community facilities. We think that this is needed for planning reasons, and for coordination and strategic assistance, particularly with local government, with the resourcing aspects of local government providing facilities. We also think that there are equity issues involved with the local government provision of facilities and, maybe, we can talk about that in some detail.

CHAIR—Ms Reid?

Ms Reid—Certainly, from some research that has been carried out through local communities and, probably, as well, within the ACT—we are in a unique situation where the territory government is also a local government—it would be fair to say that there are far fewer facilities available for women and for female teams than there are for men's sport. For example, almost every country town has a football field, but there are far fewer netball courts. That is really just using a very general statement, I suppose, and suggesting that football is for men and netball is for women—although that is significantly changing, and Janice might refer to an example later.

If there are fewer facilities available for women, it basically means that they have to travel further distances to get to sporting competitions. It would also be fair to say that most municipal sporting facilities are actually designed for men, by men. In many cases, we find that there are few facilities that have child-care rooms, creches or whatever, and, similarly, few facilities that have separate toilets or change rooms for parents when taking young children to a swimming pool.

If a father takes his daughter to the swimming pool and the daughter has to get changed or use a toilet, then the father cannot accompany his daughter into the toilet, and the same for a mother with a young son. The eight-year-old son may not want to go into the boys toilet on his own, but equally he would not want to go into the women's change room area either. In terms of designing facilities, it is important that those facilities have some kind of parent or guardian change rooms or toilets, as well as some kind of child-care arrangements in place.

With some research that the WEL Sports Action Group carried out in councils in metropolitan Melbourne, as an example they discovered that there were significant gender imbalances in the provision of facilities. The city of Banyule has 76 football and cricket ovals and no netball courts. The city of Stonnington has 74 ovals and only two netball courts. Women and girls wishing to play netball—just to follow the same sort of scenario—in those areas have to travel to Royal Park or to Waverley.

Mr ROBERT BROWN—Does that mean that they do not play, or that when they go to those—

Ms Reid—They play, but they have to travel great distances in order to get the facilities.

Mr ROBERT BROWN—That means, in terms of the local demand, there is a surplus of women's facilities in adjoining areas?

Ms Reid—Possibly not, no. What it would mean is that—and Janice can highlight a similar case in Sydney—the netball players do not have the facilities within their local areas, and they actually have to go elsewhere. There certainly is the demand for the facilities, but it is—

CHAIR—I think we will let you complete your opening statement and then we will come back with some questions.

Ms Reid—The other situation is that often, where there are what are called dual-purpose facilities such as rugby league, rugby union and soccer ovals, those facilities tend to be monopolised and dominated by men at the weekends. If I can use a local example in Canberra, the soccer competitions for women are usually held at one particular venue on a rotating basis, and they use seven or eight fields over a Sunday. Those seven or eight fields would probably have over 500 women and girls in attendance, and yet there is one change room for all those women.

If there is a men's game on one of those fields, the men take the change rooms and the women are left to one public toilet, which essentially means that, apart from large queues outside that toilet, you also have very limited facilities for the girls and women to get changed. You find the girls and women getting changed on the sidelines, which is totally unacceptable, even though 13- and 14-year-old girls are quite adept

at getting into a shirt and out of a shirt without actually showing any flesh. Others do not care—it is off with the shirt and on with another one. That is a fairly unsatisfactory situation.

There is another issue about the construction and the design of facilities in terms of security and lighting and other aspects that might help make the facilities a little bit more user friendly to all men and women, but particularly to women and girls.

Mrs Crosswhite—I would like to follow-up with access to facilities, which Heather has been talking about—the lack of facilities, so there is inequitable access. The executives of New South Wales Womensport and Recreation NSW, to get information for the inquiry, telephoned the councils on the North Shore of Sydney. With their cooperation, we used the example that had been started by the WEL Sports Action Group to look at the provision of football as to netball to see what the equity is. They are basically winter sports—football codes are predominantly played by males and netball is predominantly played by females—so it is as close a comparison as you can get.

The figures that we found from our research with, say, North Sydney—football fields, 10; and with football we looked at soccer, Aussie rules, rugby and league. So four codes come under that football heading. We also looked at the number of netball courts. So North Sydney has 10 football fields and two netball courts. The figures for Mosman are five and six; Lane Cove, seven and one; Manly, 10 and one; Warringah, 70 and 109; Pittwater, 20 and 16; Willoughby, 20 and 25; Ku-ring-gai, 46 and 29; Hornsby, 68 and 44; Ryde, 52 and 51.

So the total number of football fields is 308 and the total number of netball courts is 284. But of that 284, 106 are grass. So the figure for the provision of proper netball courts is only 166. The ratio is two football fields to one proper, all-weather netball court. This part of Sydney has three very strong netball associations that operate as regional netball associations. I think that is a good example of, firstly, getting access to facilities—that the facilities are actually there and are provided for.

Just last week I did a facilitation workshop for one of those associations, Manly-Warringah Netball Association, and worked with them over an evening to develop a forward plan for their association. The No. 1 issue from our surveys before we went into that workshop was the poor quality of their facilities. They have got 15 asphalt courts to cater to 5,500 members. That is a huge membership. As we know, netball is the most popular team sport in this country, male or female, and they have 15 netball courts. When it rains, they cannot run their competition because the 33 grass ones are unsafe.

I think that is strong supporting evidence that there is a role for federal government in their guidelines, if funding is made available to make sure that there is equity of supply for males and females.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for those comments. Before we get to questions about policy issues and the like, could you explain to us what Womensport Australia is and what your relationship is with organisations like Womensport West, Womensport and Recreation NSW, et cetera. You made a brief reference to the Women's Electoral Lobby's sporting group as well. Perhaps you could explain to us what cooperation or relationship you might have with one another.

Ms Reid—Womensport Australia is funded as a non-government women's organisation under the former national agenda for women's grants program, now the operational grants program administered by the Office of the Status of Women. Our mission is to facilitate opportunities in terms of access and equity for women and girls in sport and physical activity. Our key aims, I guess, are to assist with communication, networking, lobbying, support, advice, education and training.

We are only a relatively young organisation in that we were formed in 1991, initially based in Adelaide, but since early 1994, based in Canberra. We feel this is important so that we can have a greater role in terms of lobbying, support and advice with a whole range of groups. Organisations like Womensport West and Womensport and Recreation NSW are affiliates of our organisation, so we are the parent body for those state groups.

CHAIR—Is there a state group in every state?

Ms Reid—Yes, there is now. In fact, over the last two years in particular we have seen a number of organisations change their names to better reflect their relationship with the peak body. A classic case of that was the Consultative Committee of Women on Leisure and Recreation in Victoria, the CCWLR, which has recently changed its name to Womensport and Recreation Victoria.

CHAIR—I don't blame them!

Ms Reid—Yes, exactly. Even the Sportswomen's Association in Tasmania has changed its name to Womensport Tasmania, so it has a much more unified connection and a recognition that Womensport Australia is the national body.

We work extremely closely with the government arm of the women in sport unit at the Australian Sports Commission. We have a very cooperative relationship and most recently we have been working for them on a number of projects in an outsourced capacity.

The Women's Electoral Lobby Sports Action Group is also a member of Womensport Australia; that is an arm of the Women's Electoral Lobby that has been around for some time. I guess it has a much stronger role as a watchdog and a lobbying organisation.

CHAIR—But are organisations like, say, netball also affiliates?

Ms Reid—Yes. Our members are both individual and organisational, so Jackie Kelly could be a member of Womensport Australia, but so too could Australian women's hockey. In fact, our organisational members include Australian women's hockey, soccer, cricket, water polo, Tennis Australia, as well as state organisations such as the Victorian Canoe Association. Basically, anybody who believes in the aims and objectives of the organisation and particularly improving access and equity for women and girls can be a member of Womensport Australia.

CHAIR—I suppose the theme of your presentation, not unsurprisingly, has been the lack of facilities available for women's sport. You quoted figures relating to netball versus football fields. Do you think that is

a fair comparison? Are you comparing apples with oranges? Would it be fairer to compare the number of netball facilities with the number of, say, basketball facilities?

Mrs Crosswhite—There are even less if you do that.

CHAIR—Compared with basketball?

Mrs Crosswhite—Yes, absolutely.

CHAIR—There are more basketball facilities?

Mrs Crosswhite—No, there are less basketball facilities. Because basketball is an indoor sport that is another issue—the provision of indoor compared to outdoor. You will find, if you look at the equity of provision, that there are far more outdoor facilities. Each community needs, by law, to provide so much open space, which is usually used for football, cricket, maybe some tennis courts, some hockey fields, bowling clubs. There are certain local government requirements that you must meet, per head of population. I forget what the figure is; there is a planning figure to have so much open space per head of population. So local government areas do fairly well in supplying that, although it has tended always to be a more male orientated than female orientated provision.

When you look at indoor compared to outdoor, one of the points we have stressed is the comparative lack of provision of multipurpose indoor sports stadiums that can be used by both sexes. Here again, it is not just male or female, it is supply of an equitable provision to cater for the needs of males and females, families, young people through to old people.

CHAIR—What are the reasons for there being less facilities for women than men? What are the barriers to providing more women's facilities that do not apply to supplying men's facilities?

Ms Reid—I think it would be fair to say that it is a cultural and a community issue that, whenever there is a new community built or developed, there is going to be a football field which might be multipurpose for rugby union, rugby league and soccer, and perhaps an Aussie rules field. Then there might be some netball facilities, and there might be an indoor facility which would cater for volleyball, basketball and a whole range of other things. You would have some tennis courts and, as Janice mentioned, the bowling club.

If you look at the development or the construction of new suburbs in almost every Australian city as well as in country areas, what is it that is built first in terms of sporting facilities? It is usually the football field with a netball court beside it and perhaps a tennis court and a bowling green.

Mrs CROSIO—Unless you have got a woman there when the development is taking place.

Ms Reid—That is a barrier. That is why I made the point that most municipal facilities have pretty much been developed by men sitting around a table at local council level. It is not to say that women are not playing rugby league and rugby union or using those football fields; they are. But they are far fewer in

number. It is the construction of the support facilities that go with those—as I mentioned, the toilets, the change rooms, the child care. One of the barriers that prevents more women and girls from participating in sport and physical activity is the lack of child care at training venues as well as at playing venues. There is a whole lot of legislation associated with the proper provision of child care and some organisations just find it too difficult so they do not do it. But there are some successful models that can be used to show how relatively simple it could be to provide the child care.

CHAIR—Are there any questions?

Mr McDOUGALL—As an ex-local government councillor, I find your comments in relation to priorities a little surprising because certainly, in my experience, that has not been the case—particularly coming from a council that has 50 per cent of its members as women. There are cases in Australia, particularly in Brisbane, where women have had sporting facilities for a long time and will not let men play on them. What is the attitude of women's sport in relation to members of your association who would continue to take that attitude?

Ms Reid—I would say that there is still a need for some special measures, and maybe those cases that you are talking about do refer to special measures. I know of a facility in Victoria that is a women's sport facility. I also know a little about some good moves from Brisbane to make sure that certain women's organisations have their own designated facilities.

Golf clubs have been dominated by men for a long time. There are still a lot of golf clubs around Australia where women do not have access to full membership, but the same can be applied to a whole range of organisations.

Mr McDOUGALL—We have a women's golf club in Brisbane that will not allow male members.

Ms Reid—And they took it to court.

Dr LAWRENCE—They are a minority. As is pointed out, with bowling clubs, golf clubs, a whole lot, women are associate members and they really do not get a look in on the management of those facilities to the same extent.

Mr McDOUGALL—I would like to challenge that.

CHAIR—We will have our debate later. Let us stick with the questions at this time.

Dr LAWRENCE—This is about the facilities and I think it is important to focus on them.

Mr McDOUGALL—That is exactly what I am talking about, that we actually had to develop—

Dr LAWRENCE—That is one example in the whole country.

Mr McDOUGALL—No, we had to develop a new softball area in Brisbane so that men could play

softball. The community had to develop that, both by the sport and by the local government. When that was developed, it was developed so that men and women could play on the field, including school kids.

Ms Reid—I think that is a very good example of one of a few sports in Australia that are predominantly female sports. Softball has probably 90 per cent female participation and 10 per cent male participation, which is not the same as New Zealand where softball is a sport predominantly for men. And I would like to see the situation where women who are now playing rugby union and rugby league actually get their designated football fields.

Mr McDUGALL—In your research in regard to the facilities, did you take into account education facilities?

Mrs Crosswhite—This survey was about local government provision only through what the councils supply and maintain in conjunction with sporting associations.

Mrs CROSIO—My question was concerned with that—I was waiting for my turn, Janice. Following through, when you were doing that particular survey, knowing those schools involved there and the grounds available, there is virtually no interchange of public facilities being utilised after school hours in those areas.

Mrs Crosswhite—Very little, and I think that is one of the points we stressed: there should be. There should be more cooperation between schools, departments of school education, sporting associations and their communities around them. Indeed, I am involved in a project to do that. One of the other hats I wear is that of Vice-President of the Manly-Warringah Basketball Association. We are working with other sports associations on a steering committee at Narrabeen Sports High School with Pittwater Council to locate on education department land, because only in the last 12 months has the New South Wales Department of Education allowed that to happen.

Mrs CROSIO—No, Westfield Sports paved the way.

Mrs Crosswhite—They did with sponsorship for that facility there.

Mrs CROSIO—We were the first sports high school in Australia and we provided the model.

Ms Crosswhite—Narrabeen Sports High School did not get any funding from the education department. They are the one that has not. They are looking at other ways of getting private enterprise and community groups to work with them to set up facilities. They are down the track with that. It is very hard to get the councils around us to work together, because this facility will be on the border between one council and another. As for Manly-Warringah basketball, we have got to the starting post twice with the Warringah council concerning a state government department grant of \$375,000 to purchase land and put in a multi-purpose sports facility, but we cannot get any equitable funding, or any funding at all, from that particular local council.

Mrs CROSIO—Who owns the land?

Mrs Crosswhite—It is CALM, the Department of Conservation and Land Management. We have a lease over that land. We have had it for a number of years. We have had a development application. This is where the role of local government is critical, because they believe that it is very hard for them at times to justify putting funding into a facility that sporting communities are going to run and have to charge to run them. They have some degree of difficulty sometimes looking at an indoor facility where there is going to be a user pays charge. But if you put in an outdoor park or open space facility, people can walk on that and use that at any time when it is not hired out to local users.

We are still breaking down some attitudinal changes re indoor and outdoor provision. You need both. If you are really going to cater to broad needs and have a healthy community, you need the provision of both and you need wet and dry facilities. I notice Australian Swimming is coming on after us. That balance of provisions at the local level is very important. You are catering to a wide range of interests, ages and to male and female.

Mrs CROSIO—There is no misconception is there within your associations that the federal government can direct local government on what they should or should not do?

Mrs Crosswhite—No. I have worked in federal government, in state government and at local government level. I think I understand how the bureaucracy and how the politics of it works as well.

Ms Reid—Certainly what could happen though is that the federal government could either resurrect some funding program or develop a new funding program.

Mrs CROSIO—As a tied grant with a direction with it?

Ms Reid—Yes.

Mrs Crosswhite—It is the carrot approach.

Ms Reid—Yes, with quite strict criteria that have to be followed in the construction of new facilities and also in the refurbishment of existing facilities. There have to be certain things provided for.

Mr ROBERT BROWN—Janice referred to the importance of sport and sporting facilities to national health and Heather and Janice both referred to the question of funding. It is not surprising, of course, that people who are involved in sport as participants or administrators or just with an interest in sport and who make any submissions to the committee support the proposition that the federal government should be involved financially.

If the present government or any government was to increase its contribution towards sport, it either has to increase its revenue, cut down elsewhere or increase the deficit. One of our primary tasks would be to identify—if the Commonwealth government was to become involved—how it can be funded. We have a Medicare levy for health. We have a levy to buy back guns. We have had charges built into petrol prices to provide roads. You represent 50 per cent of Australia's population in the area of sport.

Would the women of Australia support a proposition that any government impose, for example, a \$1 per week levy on all taxpayers? Let us assume there are 10 million taxpayers. That would provide \$50 per head per year, or \$500 million, or half a billion dollars every year, or \$5 billion over 10 years to do what you are suggesting we should do, which is provide new facilities and upgrade those deteriorated facilities that are a blight on sport right across Australia. Would Australian women support any government doing that?

Mrs Crosswhite—It is a difficult question.

Ms Reid—It is very complex.

Mr ROBERT BROWN—One dollar a week?

Ms Reid—What has happened in terms of changing trends in the provision of sport—and we are talking also about recreational facilities in Australia—particularly in the last 10 years, from what I have observed and I do not have the research to support this, is that there is a move away from organised, structured and regulated sport, particularly for women. There is a move away from that competitive, structured, regulated environment to much more social and recreational sport and you participate when you can at the price you can pay.

Hence we have an increase in the number of women particularly who are into aerobics and using gymnasiums, because they can do it when it suits them for as long as it suits them and at the price that they can pay. In addition, they are walking, riding a bike and using our national parks and other sorts of outdoor recreation facilities.

A user pays system is probably one way that you could approach the problem of funding by imposing fees on using national parks and by imposing a levy on a swimming pool, et cetera. Rather than hitting the nine million women in Australia, it is the people who actually want to participate that you actually charge that fee to. But there are other ways you can do it, such as through syphoning off some funding from major events that are being held in the country—not just the one in 2000—but many other events that are held in this country where the government has a direct input.

Mrs CROSIO—Build one less submarine.

Ms Reid—Build less submarines. There are all sorts of things that you can do.

CHAIR—That is an issue that we have raised with other groups. Obviously Tennis Australia are not very keen about us taking a dollar a ticket off the Australian Open. Is that what you are actually advocating, that there will be a loading on tickets to major events?

Ms Reid—It could be one thing that you do.

CHAIR—Are there any women's sports that would be volunteering to have a loading on their sales?

Mrs Crosswhite—Most of them.

Ms Reid—When you are talking about women's sports, you are actually talking about sports that women participate in. There are really only six women's sports in this country. There are six organisations that have separate women's organisations. They are hockey, soccer, golf, lacrosse, bowls and cricket. All of the other organisations—the 103 of them—are responsible for men's and women's. The situation that develops though is a prioritising of what comes first—men's programs or women's programs? Facilities and international opportunities, competition training, et cetera for men or for women? Just using a basketball scenario, we have gold medallists in the women's national basketball team, but we hear more about the Boomers than we do about the Opals.

Dr LAWRENCE—They do well at the Olympics.

Ms Reid—It is always with a qualification, 'The women's team.'

CHAIR—That is not the point I was arguing. The real issue is the question of how we are going to find this extra money. You have actually put up some innovative suggestions that we will certainly want to ask you questions about. But we have not found much warmth in the sporting community for the idea of ticket loadings on major events.

Mrs Crosswhite—I do not think people react very well to direct taxation. When it is more indirect, like most of our taxation system, you are paying for things you do not think and know you are paying for. That seems to be the culture of how we operate.

The direction you are going in is trying to get sport to pay for more things that sport is going to use. There is the sales tax on sporting goods, which is already very high in this country. But if it is indirect taxation and some percentage goes to the federal government that then supplies regional facilities, it is not as obvious. It is going to a good cause.

CHAIR—Would you favour an increase in sales tax on sporting goods to provide a fund for facilities?

Mrs Crosswhite—Yes.

Ms Reid—There is sales tax on an awful lot of things that sporting organisations that are predominantly volunteer organisations actually have to pay. I recently bought a new filing cabinet. I have to pay sales tax on that. Anything that I get printed, I have to pay 15 per cent sales tax on it, whether it is letterhead, business cards, newsletters or whatever. Where you can identify that it is the sporting organisations that are paying for that, perhaps you could take something out of the sales tax or add to the sales tax.

CHAIR—You would even accept an addition to sales tax?

Ms Reid—I cannot say that on behalf of my organisation. Personally, I would not like it. There are some other ways. If you are going to be able to provide some funding to sport or recreation organisations to develop their own facilities, there is quite a good model in the ACT called the sports loan interest subsidy scheme, SLISS, that is managed by the ACT Bureau of Sport, Recreation and Racing. Essentially, that means

that if the ACT touch footy association wants to build a brand new facility at Deakin Oval and it is going to cost them \$100,000 odd, they can raise the loan from the bank, get that \$100,000, and the sports loan interest subsidy scheme from the government provides them with the money to pay the interest on that loan. That works very well.

There is a pool of maybe \$300,000 a year that currently supports the hockey centre and its facilities. It is an incentive but it also means that organisations are a bit more pro-active about building their facilities. So the hockey centre at Lyneham, the new softball complex at Hawker, the Deakin touch venue, basketball and other indoor sports have been able to capitalise on that as well. They are paying the loan but the interest is being covered by the government through a grant.

CHAIR—You have also suggested sports bonds as a method of funding. How would they work?

Mrs Crosswhite—I got this idea from my husband, actually. He felt that because we have bank bonds that seem to be quite popular that we could create sports bonds and have them operate in the same way. The other idea that a lot of members—

CHAIR—But that would be a loan that people would have to pay off if it was going to be commercially viable?

Mrs Crosswhite—Yes, but it would be available for sporting associations.

CHAIR—For individual members to invest in and earmark for a particular project?

Mrs Crosswhite—Yes. It is a little bit similar to the Australian Sports Foundation that is run through the Australian Sports Commission where you can donate money through the Australian Sports Foundation but name a particular sport, and it is tax deductible—

Ms Reid—It is 100 per cent tax deductible.

Mrs Crosswhite—That makes it very attractive for sporting groups.

Mr McDOUGALL—Has Womensport used that, and if not, why not?

Ms Reid—I think some have used that. If you put that particular Sports Foundation in context, it was actually developed just prior to an America's Cup challenge, I think, back in the 1980s. Yachting, in particular, was quite keen on putting its money through the tax deductible scheme.

You have to actually show also that you are not getting any advertising or any promotional benefit from it. If you have a son or a daughter in a national team you could donate some money to the sport that they are participating in through the Sports Foundation and you get the 100 per cent tax deductibility.

Mr McDOUGALL—Do you think it is working?

Ms Reid—I think it has worked for some sports but I think they have also tightened up on some of those loopholes where, perhaps, parents or athletes have donated money to the Sports Foundation and it has come back as a 100 per cent tax deduction.

The other option is a sports lottery. We have the Pools in Britain and we have numerous lotteries in this country. We are all pretty mad in terms of Scratchies and gambling and whatever else and they tell us Australians are a gambling nation, but a sports lottery, where a certain percentage of that comes directly into the provision of sport and recreation facilities would be very good.

The other area is casinos and what is coming out of tax or revenue from casinos, although we probably should not mention that with the Australian Olympic Committee—

CHAIR—In some states casinos are obligated to put some money aside for sporting and recreation facilities. Is that satisfactory?

Ms Reid—It is happening.

Mrs Crosswhite—I am not sure what the percentages are but that was one of our member's ideas, and not only casinos, even the large sporting clubs contribute a percentage from their funds. That is done voluntarily and most of them do that now. But to have some of that money put into facilities is a change because usually it goes to the local clubs or local associations and it is not put into facilities, it is used for operating costs and getting teams out onto the field. For some of that to be channelled into a state facility fund or regional facility fund would be a good idea.

The other thing I would like to ask is how to get regional councils to work together. With our present funding structure, this is where we need something like a carrot from the federal government so there is an incentive to get regional councils to work together. We want it so that they are not fighting each other to put this facility in first and there is proper planning and coordination and the schools are brought in as well. We want it so that it is not just done as a local government thing. There should be proper cooperation with health departments as well. There should be more collaboration between all the groups that need to work together so that it is not done in the ad hoc way that it has been in the past.

Dr LAWRENCE—You mention the idea of contributions from lotteries and casinos. Are you familiar with the operations with the allocations of funds from the local lotteries in Western Australia? I am not sure to what extent this occurs in other states. There is one that goes directly into sport, some goes to arts and some goes to broadly defined community organisations and facilities. That seems to have provided a steady stream. It is not huge, but it is a substantial stream of funding to sports organisations. I am not 100 per cent sure what the situation is, but I am pretty confident they can use it for facilities as well as for operations. That has maintained a standard of sports facilities in Western Australia which is pretty reasonable. It is not ideal in every case, but it is a steady stream. One of the arguments against privatisation of lotteries is you would lose that direct link.

Mrs Crosswhite—No, I was not aware of that.

Ms Reid—We are mainly familiar with the taxation that is imposed on tobacco products and how that is then distributed through Healthways, through Sport SA and through Vic Sport.

Mrs Crosswhite—It does not go for facilities. It is for special project funding mainly. It is not for the normal operating running costs, so it does not get into facilities.

Ms Reid—Realistically, if the anti-tobacco lobby was strong enough, that money would be phased out anyway if we had a situation where everybody gave up smoking.

Mr McDOUGALL—Exactly.

Ms Crosswhite—That will take a long time.

Ms Reid—You can keep hitting the smokers.

Dr LAWRENCE—So long as they do it. The other issue that I think worthy of our attention, as a committee, is the sort of model that requires the cooperation between levels of government if the funding is to be applied. You have a contribution from the school or the education system, a contribution from a state or federal government, for that matter, and a local community and local government contribution. In order to get the facility, they have to work together. That was a model that worked very well for 10 years in Western Australia and a lot of facilities were built that way. It was not onerous for any one level and it also meant that the schools got involved in a very direct way and owned the new facilities and were contributing to them. I do not mean ‘owned’ physically, but ‘owned’ in the sense of management and willingness to cooperate because they got a benefit and a lot of the community got a big benefit, especially with indoor facilities.

Mrs Crosswhite—Particularly with daytime use, which is the down time with indoor facilities. The shoulder time is your after school time and your peak time is your night times. That is when most of the community wants it. For operating costs and equity of funding, it just makes sense that you collocate as much as you can within the school confines.

Ms Reid—That is certainly the model that has been used in the development of the Gungahlin area in Canberra. There is a cluster of predominantly outdoor facilities around the development of new schools.

Mr McDOUGALL—That comes back to exactly what I said when I asked whether you had used education facilities as part of your research.

Ms Reid—Not in this sense.

Mr McDOUGALL—We have found so far in the states that not even a state government knows what facilities they have. They have not done an audit. Where they have done an audit, they sat up and said, ‘Yes, but we did not count in the educational facilities.’ We need to know what we have. What have we got? Is there an opportunity for your organisation to go back and say, ‘We are going to refine those figures that we did on availability of facilities for women with local government, and we are going to add schools to that’? It

would be very, very handy if somebody could do it, because the states do not seem to want to do it.

Mrs Crosswhite—It is a huge job.

Mr McDOUGALL—That is the impression I have. I know it is a huge job. But if we are really going to know what we have to look at and make a recommendation in the future, then we have to know what we have.

Mrs Crosswhite—I have actually done that as a recreation planner with local government. One of my first jobs when I came to Sydney was doing a recreation needs plan for a North Shore local government. I surveyed schools and the community as well. It was interesting to find how little the schools had in this regard. So it is very regional. This is a middle ring Sydney suburb on the North Shore, which you would think is fairly well-to-do. I was amazed that some primary schools had absolutely nothing. In this locality the schools had very little that the community could use.

Mr McDOUGALL—We have experienced exactly that in what we have looked at so far, but we have also seen that a lot of the private schools have very good facilities. We have also seen that a lot of the private schools have very good community interaction and use. In some cases they even do it for free. That is part of the audit as well. If you take the North Shore, I am sure you will find—

Ms Crosswhite—I am going to give another example that Manly-Warringah basketball had. We do not have an indoor sports stadium. We hire up to eight school gymnasiums around the North Shore to run our local competitions. Any week night we are using three or four school gyms, as well as the Sydney Academy of Sport, where there are actually two courts together. Our offices are in your community centre in another part.

So on any night we have eight different facilities running, which are all school gymnasiums, that we pay between \$16 and \$25 an hour to hire. Our biggest cost in running our association is our rental of school gymnasiums. We put a heap of money in. Willoughby Girls High School gets about \$22,000 a year. Other schools are getting more than that. If we had a proper indoor sports stadium, we would still be using them for training. But to run our competitions, it would really be good to get a centre.

Where they are available, as in this case with basketball, it is certainly what we are using, because there is nothing else to use.

Ms Reid—If I can just add to that, in terms of the audit, I think it is important to do an audit of existing facilities. As was also pointed out in the submissions, we need to identify the levels of participation—who is actually using those facilities, sport by sport, and also the participation by gender. Research clearly shows that women's participation in sport is far less than men's, but when it comes to actually adding a new program or a new competition, sporting organisations are reluctant to have a new women's competition or a new junior competition or whatever because they just do not have the facilities to do it. In a sport like basketball, one of its strengths is that it has huge numbers, but it is also a weakness because they do not have the facilities to provide them with competition.

Mr MARTIN—I refer to the issue of access to supporting finance for women's sport in Australia, but more specifically in New South Wales. There is an issue running in New South Wales at the moment about registered club associations threatening to withdraw any formal support for sporting organisations because of the New South Wales government's decision to increase an existing poker machine tax. We have been talking about a methodology of finding money to support sport and to perhaps increase funding for facilities development.

Do you have any views or any knowledge of just what effect that particular tax increase in New South Wales may have? The New South Wales government is arguing that the increase in that poker machine tax will provide it with funding to improve facilities for New South Wales residents in terms of the provision of hospitals, roads and all the rest of it. Of course, the vast majority of people in New South Wales probably think that getting those facilities is a great idea. But the clubs have consequently said that, in order to meet that commitment for tax liability, they will now scale back their support for community organisations' donations to sports groups and so on. Do you have any views at this stage as to whether that is likely? What effect might that have in women's sport? That is the first issue.

Secondly, tied to it, to pick up some of your suggestions on how we might raise funds as a Commonwealth government to provide the wherewithal to improve the infrastructure of Australia, surely this example in New South Wales shows where there is going to be some resistance.

Mrs Crosswhite—There always is some resistance when you take away what people have had in the past. I think there is always going to be that reaction. I can only comment on what I have read in the papers, being a New South Wales resident. In our local papers there has been that comment—particularly from the leagues clubs, et cetera—that they will scale back their funding to junior sport. I do not think there has been a question of male or female in their responses. It has been a question of, in giving the money back to the community, it will be sporting type groups that will get less funding than they have had in the past.

Mr MARTIN—How many of the registered clubs give to women's sport in New South Wales?

Mrs Crosswhite—I do not think there are a whole lot, frankly.

Mr MARTIN—So you are not going to miss much? What you have not got you are not going to miss?

Mrs Crosswhite—I do not think so.

Ms Reid—I guess you are talking about registered clubs, predominantly the leagues clubs and golf clubs.

Mr MARTIN—So do you think we might see some realistic money being paid to footballers who are overpaid at the minute?

Ms Reid—Maybe it goes back to the junior development.

Miss JACKIE KELLY—It seems that we are addressing facilities which are put in by local

government education departments, health departments, et cetera. They tend to be in flux all of the time. Squash is a sport that ran hot and then faded. With respect to basketball, I think the reason they are not heavily investing in basketball is that they do not know whether that is still a fad or not, whether it is something similar.

If the federal government wants to get involved in something, would it be better to fund actual advisory positions in local government, education departments and health departments in terms of running a policy line in all of those? So, where you do not have a female mayor, you will have someone in a position to be promoting those ideas and that equity.

Mrs Crosswhite—Local government today tends to bring in consultants and expertise when they need it for a particular project. I am about to do some work on bowling clubs in a local government area and how to cater to the excess of bowling clubs in this particular region. I think there are recreation planners, strategic planners and leisure planners. Every local government area has that. The need is in facilities. Somehow we have to get money to where it is needed. I think more advisers would not be a priority at this time.

Mrs CROSIO—In the instance you provided, you said, ‘regional councils’, did you mean just one local council talking to another and they have common dividing lines between them?

Mrs Crosswhite—Yes. There is that trend to the regional grouping of counsellors. I know around Sydney there is NSROC and—

Mrs CROSIO—Westroc and—

Mrs Crosswhite—Yes. They are starting to work and plan together regionally. I think we still need the carrot or the big stick to make it work, though, with actual provision of services that are cooperatively planned and worked on together and physically supplied. That has not happened yet. I think it is a good idea and it seems to be commonsense, but I think the committee needs to address how we can get that to work.

Ms Reid—I heard a case yesterday involving Newcastle and the Hunter region, where the 13 or more local councils cannot come up with a decision as to where a new athletics facility will be built.

Mrs CROSIO—Is it all parochial even though they are part of a region?

Ms Reid—Yes. I think that is a very good case of how they are fighting to get it. But, in the end, nothing will happen. Hence, Newcastle and the Hunter region could very well miss out on a whole range of opportunities—leading up to, and including, 2000 and beyond—if they do not have a better international facility. Perhaps they will miss out.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming. We have gone a bit over time, but it is obvious that the subjects and information you have supplied to the committee have been of great interest. We very much appreciate the submissions that have been provided on behalf of Womensport Australia.

We have met many women as witnesses for other sports organisations. As you rightly point out, most

women's sport is actually covered by organisations that cover both men and women. It has been particularly good to hear a women's perspective on this issue. As you may have noticed from the questioning, we have been particularly interested to pursue ideas about where funding might come from, so your submission is of particular interest to us in that regard. Thank you for appearing before us today and for the evidence you have given.

Ms Reid—Thank you for that opportunity.

[9.25 a.m.]

RICHARDS, Dr Ralph, National Coaching and Development Coordinator, Australian Swimming Inc., PO Box 940, Dickson, Australian Capital Territory 2602

CHAIR—I welcome the representative from Australian Swimming Inc. We have received a submission from Australian Swimming Inc. Do you propose any changes to the submission?

Dr Richards—There are no substantial changes, although we would like to clarify a few points.

CHAIR—You are certainly welcome to make some opening comments.

Dr Richards—Australian Swimming is the national sporting organisation for swimming. We are affiliated to the international swimming federation. Our primary role is to provide comprehensive delivery of competitive swimming programs from novice through to elite international levels. However, within the aquatics industry there are numerous factors which affect the delivery of quality recreational, sporting and instructional programs for all Australians. Examples of this are first public perception. A good public perception is developed by having access to swimming facilities in a pleasant and well-equipped environment and availability of these facilities to all segments of the population.

Quality recreational facilities, particularly for swimming, should be available to all Australians and are essential. They are essential because the aquatic skills that people develop are essential for their public safety. Indeed, Australia's population demographics almost dictate this. Almost every Australian has easy access to the water for recreation and sporting purposes. Basic swimming and water safety skills are therefore essential for all Australians to have and are best taught in the controlled environment of a swimming pool.

Australians have also achieved a very high level of international recognition in the sport of swimming. At the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, swimming has traditionally been our strongest sport. Australian Swimming feels that the success at elite international levels of competition relies on a strong base of support from many sources. Quality swimming facilities contribute to this.

In our submission we have made five recommendations that we feel the federal government can be involved in, in helping to develop better facilities. First, forward planning, we feel is essential. Australia has diverse aquatic facilities based on regional and geographic matters and demographics. For example, we have very little knowledge of the distribution of pools—whether they suit our population distribution, whether pools are heated or unheated, covered or uncovered or whether they run year-round or just seasonally. Many of our pools which were built post-Olympics in 1956 are now outdated and in need of repair or update.

These are a few questions which need to be resolved. Our first recommendation, therefore, was that the Commonwealth government should establish a comprehensive database of existing sporting facilities. This information could then be easily accessed by local, state and national sporting organisations to help plan for their future needs. A national facilities plan should be established which identifies the national requirements and to help support our operational objectives.

Swimming facilities, by their nature, have a fairly high fixed cost when they are first established and then fairly high running costs in comparison to other sporting facilities. This is necessary because our swimming facilities must maintain the highest health and safety standards.

Our second recommendation is that the Commonwealth government should be in a position to assist state and local governments with funding for facilities which fit within the framework of an overall sport and recreation facility plan.

Swimming pools are also located at schools. We feel that schools are perhaps the best site to service the general population for instruction, recreation and competitive use. It is desirable to promote partnerships between schools having swimming facilities and community sport and recreation authorities. We would encourage the use of these facilities in out-of-school hours. There are many advantages in also promoting partnerships between private enterprise and schools to develop and maintain facilities.

Our third recommendation is that the Commonwealth government should encourage the state and territory governments' departments of education to adopt policies which allow school-based sporting facilities to be accessed by sports clubs and training groups for competition. An initiative is already under way. Mr Quinn, the education minister for Queensland, has announced that Queensland's school facilities will now be more widely open to public recreation and sporting groups, and indeed he has encouraged partnerships with private enterprise to develop sporting facilities at school sites.

Access to swimming facilities should be available to all Australians. Local governments are increasingly under pressure to operate sport and recreational facilities in a privatised nature. However, we should feel that there is a public conscience that all Australians have the right to learn to swim and to develop aquatic skills for their own safety and public wellbeing.

Our fourth recommendation, therefore, is that the Commonwealth government should encourage local government to develop policies regarding public swimming pool facilities which include a wide range of objectives, including equitable access to local sporting clubs. The development of facilities in each state and territory which are suitable for international competition must also be addressed.

We have facilities that are a bit old; for example, the Chandler Sports Complex that was built for the 1982 Commonwealth Games is in need of repair and update. The Northern Territory runs a very successful international sports festival called the Arafura Games where their swimming facility just is not of an international standard. Therefore, our fifth recommendation is that the Commonwealth government should include swimming facilities of an international standard as part of our national facilities plan.

In summary, sporting facilities, particularly swimming pools, represent significant financial investment at state and local government levels. We would like to see the federal government devise a strategy where they are supportive to developing better facilities within a total framework to adequately address our needs. Having adequate aquatic facilities for the current population and future populations will involve planning.

Facilities should be planned around a combination of health, safety, public welfare, recreation and sporting interests. All these groups must be served by the swimming facilities which are developed and used

by the Australian community. The Commonwealth government, we feel, is well positioned to provide information, leadership and support, both policy and financial, for these outcomes. It is perhaps the only level of government to have the overall picture of our national and international needs for swimming facilities.

Existing swimming pools must be utilised to their maximum capacity, and this includes more cooperative efforts to integrate school swimming facilities into the community use. New facilities should be planned with a wide range of community user groups in mind. This includes access for the disabled. Amateur swimming clubs, we feel, should be given access to community facilities, not for free but on an equitable basis, understanding that they are amateur bodies and have these facilities available to them at reasonable cost and allocate time and space in a reasonable nature.

CHAIR—Can you tell us something about Australian swimming, organisationally? Do you have state affiliates? Who are your members, et cetera?

Dr Richards—Yes. We are affiliated with FINA, which is our international organisation and they are part of the IOC. Below us, we have state and territory affiliates and our club structure is affiliated to the state. We feel that that is an equitable structure for us so that local needs can be more adequately addressed.

Members of the public join swim clubs. Swim clubs range in their scope from providing learn to swim services, social and recreational facilities to the community. In many cases, they help run local facilities, particularly in country areas, by fundraising activities and so on. Swimming in Australia is not just for the elite, although that is perhaps most visible. In our club structure, we have over 1,000 registered swimming clubs which are affiliated through our states and then ultimately to Australian Swimming.

CHAIR—How are you funded?

Dr Richards—We are funded basically through the Sports Commission, although we have corporate sponsorship through Telstra, Cannon, Qantas and Tip Top.

CHAIR—The profile of swimming is very much for teenagers and young people—

Dr Richards—That is a major misconception, if I might interrupt. Australian Swimming has to work in partnership with many other groups. We are not the primary organisation in the learn to swim area. There are other organisations that we work in partnership with to develop strategies so that adequate educational programs are developed, virtually from infants to adults. There are many subusers in those populations.

Adult swimming, as a recreational and fitness activity, is very important. Swimming is one of the few sports that can be fully integrated in all areas. We have a disabled competitive coordinator, but that person also addresses many of the needs of giving specialist instruction and certification of teachers of swimming to the disabled.

We are a sport where there are not very many gender equity issues, aside from the fact that women's water polo—and our team is ranked number one in the world—has not been admitted as an Olympic sport, which we all feel badly about. Swimming and aquatic events are universal. We feel that it is one sport where

gender equity is certainly always in our conscious mind but is not a major issue in terms of our population base.

CHAIR—You have not said much in your submission, it seems, about where the money should come from that you suggest the Commonwealth should provide. Have you got any ideas for the committee?

Dr Richards—I think that the Commonwealth government is in the best position to show more leadership than funding. One of the items in the original brief that we were asked to comment on was whether the Commonwealth government should provide funding support for other levels of government, and certainly we would support that. We do not say that the Commonwealth government should be the banker and supply all of the needs. I think partnerships have to be developed.

The Commonwealth government is in an ideal position, with the infrastructure that exists through the Australian Sports Commission, to give us a very good planning base. For example, we are the national sporting organisation and we have no idea of how many pools are out there, what their state of repair is, whether they are covered or uncovered, heated or unheated, and who controls them—schools or private enterprise?

CHAIR—If that was so important to you, why have you not done it?

Dr Richards—There is no way of gaining that information. We have tried through our state networks to get a hold of the various types of reports, surveys and so on. There is no comprehensive database of what exists in terms of sport and recreational facilities.

CHAIR—But if you cannot do it, how can the Commonwealth government do it?

Dr Richards—I think the Commonwealth government, through the Sports Commission, is better placed to access regional and state sport and recreational organisations but also through the school networks to find out what is available in that regard and in the public health area—because all pools must meet public health requirements—to find the existing condition of virtually every aquatics facility in this country.

Mr McDOUGALL—I was going to ask you a question in relation to the database. I thought Australian Swimming would have, through its affiliates, contacts with every local government and school swimming pool that exists and I thought you could have developed a database.

Dr Richards—No, we do not, unfortunately.

Mr McDOUGALL—You made reference to the fact that the education minister in Queensland has now come up with a new beaut scheme of how he is going to make access available to education facilities. We have taken evidence from all states except South Australia and Western Australia. Some people have told us that they have some relationships that are very good. When other people come in to give us evidence, that kind of gets blown apart because there may be one or two instances.

I have probably spent the best part of 15 years through ministers of both colours in the Queensland

government, with about three lord mayors of the city. Nobody has successfully put the education department and sport together yet. What has the minister done this time that is going to make it work?

Dr Richards—The announcement is fairly recent. The announcement came on either the last day of April or towards the first week of May. It is a fairly recent announcement. Mr Quinn has announced that there is now scope for both private enterprise as well as amateur sporting organisations to work in partnerships with schools.

There are a number of issues here which are very important. The first is the legal liability issue. We are talking about swimming facilities, public safety and so on. The education department does not want to assume that risk, but I think there is now scope for a partnership to be developed in terms of how facilities are used, both within school hours and out of school hours.

Basically, Mr Quinn has just opened the door with public statements. It remains to be seen. It is early days yet in terms of how this will be addressed. It was a topic of discussion at a recent national convention of swimming coaches and teachers of swimming, where this issue has been explored and more people are now aware of it. Certainly, we are asking our affiliates—we have a coaches and teachers association, which is affiliated to Australian swimming—to lobby through state representatives to put pressure on state governments to open up educational facilities for wider use.

Mr McDOUGALL—There is a standards facility set by the international body of swimming in relation to competition pools.

Dr Richards—Only for international competition, yes.

Mr McDOUGALL—There are also some general standards set within the same program. One of the difficulties is that some of the states have different standards which do not marry up to those standards. You talked about standards. There is one difficulty in particular that I see and I just wonder how you overcome this. Are you saying that the Commonwealth has a role to set standards in relation to facilities? If not, who is going to set the standards so that both local government and the education department can conform to a common standard? I think it is fair to say that there is not a common standard in Australia at the moment.

Dr Richards—No, there is not. This might seem a little bit inconsistent, but I am not advocating common standards. I am advocating a unified policy in terms of what our needs are. I am not sure that I used the word ‘standards’ earlier. Standards of facilities in terms of their construction and design are really necessitated by how that facility is going to be used. If it is going to be used as an international competitive facility, there are a set of standards that have to be complied with for various competitive reasons to assure that there is uniformity. However, the bulk of our facilities are multi-purpose facilities. They must be shared by the recreational user and they must be shared for education and primary instruction, which by itself dictates that water has to be shallow or has to be heated to a certain temperature and so on.

What we are asking the Commonwealth government to do is to provide policy leadership in terms of developing multiple use facilities and developing a rationale for intelligent development of facilities. For example, with the 2000 Olympics just on the doorstep, many local governments, particularly in New South

Wales, have decided to put in recreational and sporting facilities, but without a long-term view of how that facility is going to be used. Now we have the same thing as we had in 1956, when there was a proliferation of facilities. We have outdoor pools that are unheated that are really only suitable for use perhaps eight to nine months of the year.

We have sometimes looked for a grandiose solution to what is a fairly simple problem—that is, facilities have to be structured for multi-purpose use. We are not advocating that Olympic standard pools be built around the country. What we are advocating is that we address the demographic and the user needs. For example, in some of the Sydney suburbs there just are not adequate public facilities for basic instruction. We have to address those needs.

Mr McDOUGALL—That is what I am getting at. Who addresses them? You are going to have to have a minimum standard for each particular multiple use of an aquatic facility. Who is going to set those standards? Let us take one aspect; it is called a starting block. There is an international standard for depth of water for a starting block, but there is also a Queensland works department standard which is far greater. Who sets that standard? How can the Commonwealth government do that when the state governments and local governments have control over planning and building by-laws?

Dr Richards—I think we are confusing some of the issues. When you are talking about starting blocks and depth of water, all those things are very important for competitive use but if a facility is designated primarily for recreational and instructional use, those become moot points.

Mr McDOUGALL—But if you are going to have competition and equity across the community for multiple use, they are going to have to have those standards.

Dr Richards—But what we are saying is that every pool does not have to be built as a competitive pool. Right now there is this mind set that every pool has to be an Olympic standard pool and has to be this or that. We are not saying that that is true. We have not really addressed the long-term planning needs of basic instruction and recreation. That is why we would prefer to have better entree with the education departments because their pools are primarily constructed as basic educational facilities.

The future strength of competitive swimming is good skill and instructional programs and good safety programs—and if you bring someone in from the Royal Lifesaving Society, they will certainly advocate those same things. A better awareness of our aquatics needs is much broader based than just competitive facilities. Certainly, one of our recommendations was that we have to look at competitive facilities in terms of planning because we do not have international standard facilities in all of our states and territories and I think we would like to. We have international facilities that are now getting quite old and we have to address whether we are going to replace them, upgrade them or whatever.

We are not advocating that the Commonwealth government do anything in terms of standards. What we are saying is that the Commonwealth government, through leadership and planning, can develop a plan whereby local governments can be given sound advice about the needs of their communities. When we say the needs, we are talking about the instructional needs, the recreational needs as well as the competitive needs in the aquatics area. That may mean, in some communities, that we build an Olympic standard pool with

proper depth and so on. It may mean, in other communities, that we build indoor, 25 metre, shallow pools that can be heated at a certain level to cater for the elderly, to cater for the disabled, to do infant aquatics work or do a range of things. What we are looking at is a strategy—and I think the leadership really has to come from the top—in terms of helping people address their needs so that pools are built with some rationale for the needs of the community.

Mr McDOUGALL—That sounds very feasible in a large urban sense but it does not sound terribly feasible when it gets to a small regional or rural area. It says that, because of the conflict of use in the multi-use of an aquatic centre, you are going to have to end up with two centres to be able to cater for the community use in a regional or rural area.

Dr Richards—Not necessarily. A good example of this would be around the 1956 Olympics. In Canberra, if you travel up the road to Yass you find that it has a beautiful 50-metre Olympic pool, but it is outdoors. It is only used about seven months of the year because they cannot heat it in the winter. A more sensible strategy for rural Australia would be that in some areas covered pools are required and in some areas heated, covered pools are required.

Certainly, the needs would be much different in central Australia where indigenous populations can be introduced to aquatic activities in a much more structured fashion. We are just now beginning to grapple with that problem because it has not been a culturally relevant issue until now. We are trying to provide a better aquatic experience for all Australians and yet, in some areas of Australia, those facilities do not exist. Certainly, they would not need covered facilities, they would not need heated facilities, but their needs would be different.

Mr ROBERT BROWN—That discussion has already answered the essence of the question I was going to ask. But, Dr Richards, when you refer to the great variety of environmental factors, population levels, recreational as against competitive type requirements and the fact that we do not need an Olympic standard pool in every community in Australia, has there been any strategic framework developed which specifies what type and what standard of swimming facility is necessary or desirable for various population thresholds?

Dr Richards—Unfortunately—and this probably is a real tick mark against Australian Swimming—we have not developed those types of frameworks. I have been in my position for about three years. I am the development officer. I have a large agenda of issues to deal with in terms of dealing with the public perception of our sport, dealing with schools, dealing with a lot of community areas, but we really have not addressed those. Perhaps the outgrowth of this committee and some of the things that you may decide to do will assist us in that regard. Certainly having a comprehensive database of what exists is a good starting point because we do not want to reinvent the wheel. We want to find what is out there. We want to see what facilities are accessible, usable or can be upgraded, changed or modified and where there are gaps in our facilities. We really have not addressed that overall strategy.

Mr McDOUGALL—Do you think that Australian Swimming should do something like that?

Dr Richards—I think we should. We are constrained by a lot of financial considerations. We are also

constrained in that Australian Swimming's primary objective is on the competitive side. One half of my job description is development officer on a national level. The other half is coaching development—coordinating the education program for coaches. As a half-time position, it is just untenable that I could do that. However, maybe there is scope for improving our position to put on the people within our own sport that can do the job.

Dr LAWRENCE—I want to follow up on that. It will probably answer some of what Graeme is wanting to know. I do not actually believe that individual sports can reasonably do that—even a relatively well supported sports organisation like yours. I think, comparatively speaking, you probably are reasonably well heeled. Some sports would not even have the capacity to do what you are doing. Yet it is very clear to us from submissions so far—not that I have been to many of the meetings, but I have read all the submissions—and from what you are saying that individual sports really do not have that capacity. But it also raises the question of whether it would be desirable for each individual sporting organisation to look at their needs or whether what you are recommending is something broader than that, not just swimming but other sport and recreation needs that may be part of an integrated planning process, and that is where the Commonwealth could get involved.

Dr Richards—Our first recommendation is really directed in a more global sense that a database of recreational and sporting facilities would include swimming pools, but it would also include a lot of multipurpose facilities. One of the things that we have perhaps missed out on is integrating different sporting facilities for common usage. Obviously, if you are going to have change rooms and showers and things like that, it does not matter whether you are going off into the pool or out onto the oval. But yet we are duplicating a lot of facilities perhaps needlessly. Public planning is also involved. How do you allocate public land for the building of these? Currently, in the ACT, we are in a quandary whether there should be a pool built in Belconnen and where it should be built and all those kinds of issues.

So at local level, there are numerous problems. But I think the leadership that the Commonwealth government can provide is perhaps a checklist or a series of steps that local governments can go through to assess adequately what their needs are. Currently, needs assessment is very slack. Needs assessment might be something as simple as one of the local councillors saying, 'There is this plot of land over there and that would be good for a recreational facility.' Something is built there and it has no relevance to where the population base is or no relevance to how it is going to be serviced and so forth. Therefore, we are wasting a lot of our facilities in that nature.

Mr McDOUGALL—The classic example is Newcastle University. Were you contacted as an organisation about the \$15 million sports complex that Newcastle University has built? On the completion of that complex, they are now going to do their business plan and find out what the community around it could use it for. The complex includes an aquatic centre which, from looking at it, is only good for lap swimming. So there has been no community consultation.

Is the Commonwealth government going to have to be responsible? How do we set up this go-between that says, 'Before you do anything, you have to go to a central point to set up a process'? How is that process going to operate to ensure that we get the best outcomes?

Dr Richards—The Commonwealth government already has some infrastructure in place with the Australian Sports Commission. It has policy and planning departments and it has a lot of people who are very much aware. To answer your question specifically, no, that university did not approach us. They might have called into our office for one of our secretaries to send a photocopy of the international standards or something like that, but there was no consultation.

The Commonwealth government is really in a position to provide pathways and steps by which people can reasonably follow those steps, plan adequately, go through the consultation processes which are needed and do the proper assessments. When the planning is put in place, then the user groups such as Australian Swimming, Austswim—which certifies the teachers of swimming—the Royal Life Saving Society and the Surf Life Saving Society will be drawn into the planning process. But right now, because there is no process, there is no plan. These user groups and these so-called experts—and we consider Australian Swimming an expert—are not drawn into all that.

Miss JACKIE KELLY—The Royal Life Saving Society of Queensland said that they are using an education facility. The common theme has been to stop the duplication and start using the facilities schools have got a bit better. They described that model as ‘the most disastrous result of promoting community sport hand in hand with a school’. Can you give us a bit more on that?

Dr Richards—First of all, the Royal Life Saving Society is a lot like us. They have a national body and state affiliates. Their state affiliates work with some autonomy so that the conditions which exist in one state may not be representative of another state. The Royal Life Saving Society is a non-profit organisation, but it has an entrepreneurial style and is now engaged in leasing of pools and management of pools in various parts of the country.

This of itself may put them in conflict with education departments, which control facilities. I am not quite familiar with the exact background of that. I would ask you to investigate what their relationship is in terms of how that pool is used—whether they are in a controlling managerial role or whether they are in a lessee position where they are paying for space to run their programs or whatever. I am not aware of what the condition exactly is.

CHAIR—Going back to this national planning idea again. It has been a fairly common theme in submissions, as Dr Lawrence said. Do you feel that, even if we had a national plan with all the facilities mapped right across the country—a monumental task—that local pressure would still result in new sports facilities being provided somewhere that might not fit the national plan?

Dr Richards—That is always a possibility. We cannot discount that possibility. What we are saying is, unless you have a direction, unless you have a plan, you are really at the whim of chance anyway. We are going to try to control more of that chance factor by having a common direction and a unified goal in terms of where we are headed.

The bottom line is that Australian Swimming, like many of the other aquatic organisations, will have similar long-term interests and similar themes in terms of their mission statement, which includes things like every Australian should have the right to adequate aquatics instruction and access to recreational facilities

which are well maintained, well managed and accessible to a large population base—in fact, to every Australian, whether they are aged, disabled, youth or there for competitive reasons, recreational reasons, instructional reasons or whatever.

We feel so strongly that this is part of not only our public consciousness—in other words, we feel as Australians that we are one of the best swimming nations in the world—but also public health and safety—all those issues overlap.

CHAIR—There being no further questions, I thank Dr Richards for coming in and for the evidence he has provided. The committee has had the opportunity to see a number of swimming complexes in its hearings, not just Newcastle but also Chandler and the new facility in Hobart. Of course, they are much grander than what most local communities have at their disposal. It is the local facilities as well that we need to look at from a committee perspective.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr McDougall**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by paragraph (o) of standing order 28B, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 10.01 a.m.