



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, RECREATION AND THE ARTS

Reference: Funding of community sporting and recreational facilities

ALICE SPRINGS

Thursday, 7 August 1997

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

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

Members

Mr Truss (Chair)

Mr Anthony	Mr Harry Jenkins
Mr Robert Brown	Miss Jackie Kelly
Mr Billson	Dr Lawrence
Mr Eoin Cameron	Mr Martin
Mrs Crosio	Mr McDougall
Mr Entsch	Dr Southcott
Mr Hockey	

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

**BRIMSON, Mr Francis William, Manager, Facilities, Department of Sport and Recreation,
Northern Territory Government, PO Box 1448, Darwin, Northern Territory 0801 670**

**COOK, Mr Alexander Kym, Chairman, Tennant Creek Sports Advisory Committee, PO Box
821, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory 0861 651**

**DUFFY, Mr Anthony James, Deputy Secretary, Department of Sport and Recreation, Northern
Territory Government, PO Box 1448, Darwin, Northern Territory 0801 670**

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

Funding of community sporting and recreational facilities

ALICE SPRINGS

Thursday, 7 August 1997

Present

Mr Truss (Chair)

Mr Billson

Mr McDougall

Mr Eoin Cameron

Dr Southcott

Mr Jenkins

The committee met at 9.50 a.m.

Mr Truss took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public 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 283 submissions and has visited New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia 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, in what we expect will be our last public hearings for this inquiry, will hear from the Northern Territory government and the Tennant Creek Sports Advisory Committee about their views on the provision of sporting and recreational facilities.

The committee's hearings are recognised as proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as 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 seek to do so and the committee will consider such a request. I call now the representative of the Tennant Creek Sports Advisory Committee.

[9.51 a.m.]

COOK, Mr Alexander Kym, Chairman, Tennant Creek Sports Advisory Committee, PO Box 821, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory 0861

CHAIR—We have received a submission from you and, indeed, some additional material as well. Do you wish to propose any changes to the submission?

Mr Cook—No.

CHAIR—Would you like to make any introductory comments?

Mr Cook—I would. I also have with me a video which runs for eight minutes. It will give you a brief understanding of the condition of our town's sporting facilities. After having given you a bit of background information, I will show that video and present it to you as a record.

The Tennant Creek Sports Advisory Committee is a subcommittee of the Tennant Creek town council. It was set up approximately 12 months ago on the basis that four of the sporting club presidents were elected to work with three of the town councillors to improve the sporting facilities and the administration of sport in the community; it was at a fairly low ebb. Our first basis was that we needed some statistical information or some sort of kick-off point to work from.

To that end, we applied to the NT government for a grant of \$10,000—which we have received—for the performance of a consultancy, its brief being to look at what needs to be done to the sports facilities to bring them up to scratch and put them in a state where they would be reasonably easy to maintain. The other main brief was to find out what would be the most appropriate method of administering sport in the town.

This consultancy was duly undertaken. We appointed a consultant, Mr Ray Norman. He used to be head of the Department of Sport and Recreation in the Northern Territory and is now retired. He also had been the head of the health department. He is a very experienced public servant, with a terrific track record in these areas. You have a copy of his consultancy there with all its recommendations.

The Sports Advisory Committee has since met and has framed a brief overview of what it thinks the priorities should be. That overview will go to the Tennant Creek town council on the 12th of this month. Hopefully, some actions then will occur. It was long before any of these steps had been taken that we made application to appear before this committee.

For those of you who do not know Tennant Creek, I will give you some background on it. I have managed to obtain this information from the last census. I can only vouch for its accuracy as it appeared in the *Tennant Creek Times*; when the census was published, it extracted all of the key information. I will just give you a few of the key factors.

The total population of Tennant Creek is 3,856, of which 1,517, or 39 per cent, is Aboriginal. I then went to the council and found out what its rate base is. The rate base only raises \$900,000 a year. That is

achieved from 977 properties. This is out of a total budget of \$3 million, the rest of which is made up from various grants from the Northern Territory government. Some other information that might be of interest is that 846 people attend some level of education in Tennant Creek. So you can see that there is quite a large youthful population, and they are the majority users of sporting facilities.

The Aboriginal population lives mainly in what they call 'town camps' which are communities that are built around the town proper. They contribute some \$50,000 in rates to the town council budget. I have some key figures on their expenditure on sporting facilities. These were broken down into general expenditure of \$144,000; additional expenditure of \$36,000 on improvements; and expenditure on the swimming pool, which is in the main sporting area, of \$101,000. So you can see that there is nearly \$300,000 worth of expenditure by the council.

I have managed to obtain figures from the NT government on expenditure on what it calls 'sporting sponsorships' over the last three financial years. I did this by extracting those figures from its annual reports. I do not know whether you have those reports available to you.

From my calculations, in 1994-95 the NT government spent \$175,000 on sponsorships in the Tennant Creek town; in 1995-96, it spent \$77,000; and in 1996-97, it spent \$225,000. That is made up of a combination of some capital items, and a wage subsidy for a recreation officer for the council. In 1994-95, that wage subsidy was \$29,500; in 1995-96, it was \$29,500; and in 1996-97, it went down to \$20,000. So they part pay one officer for the town. Those figures have varied over the various years. But out of a total budget of \$12 million, you can see that the town of Tennant Creek does not get a huge slice of the Department of Sport and Recreation's budget spent on it.

The Commonwealth government's figures are a bit harder to find. I have not been able to obtain that information. The only information on its expenditure I can find is that Warren Snowdon, when he was the member for the Northern Territory, gave \$50,000 to upgrade the basketball courts and build a roof over the top of them. That was matched by the Northern Territory government in 1994-95, when they also put in \$50,000 to build the roof over the basketball courts.

A couple of recommendations that came out of that report I think are absolutely important. One is the placement of a sport and recreation officer in Tennant Creek. That is a decision that belongs to the Northern Territory government. Tennant Creek is the fourth major population centre in the Northern Territory, and it is the only one of that level that does not have a sport and recreation officer.

There is funding for an Aboriginal sport and recreation officer whose job purely is to look after the town and bush Aboriginal communities. That traditionally has been funded out of the Aboriginal deaths in custody money. I do not know what has happened with all of that, but I see that the position has been advertised again recently. I have been advised that it is about to be filled.

I also draw your attention specifically to the council's expenditure of \$101,000 on the town's swimming pool. I have tried to find out what income was offset against that. Its income through gate receipts is \$20,000—this is advice from Mr Ali Khan, who is the town manager at Tennant Creek—and the swimming club pays \$1,200 in something like an annual fee. So you can see that there is a shortfall there in

the high \$70,000s—nearly \$80,000.

I have tried to get the unemployment rate for Tennant Creek, because it is fairly important. Because of the high Aboriginal population, the economy is not that strong. I am not saying that in any derogatory way; it is just a simple fact of life. Unfortunately, I could not find out what the unemployment rate is, but I did find out that there are 283 people registered in the town and 193 registered on the outskirts of Tennant Creek looking for employment.

As for the actual rate, I am waiting for Mr Tambling's office to find that information out for me. DEETYA would not give that information to me, as it considers it to be confidential. It is published at various times, so I do not know why it is confidential.

The really interesting statistic on Tennant Creek is that in the last census the average median earnings of the community was \$16,059. So you can see where that puts the community. I will now show the video.

A video was then shown—

Mr Cook—Most of the sporting facilities in Tennant Creek are on what they call Purkiss Reserve, which is right in the centre of town. That is the main town football oval. As you can see, in the cold weather the grass tends to dry off a little. It does have underground water reticulation. Basically, this area of land is not in the correct shape. This is used for Australian football.

Part of our submission is to get that oval shifted and brought into some sort of shape. It has had some recent repairs done. Money has been put into repairing underground irrigation. That has all been done by a contractor to a variety of levels. You will see that the goalposts are not quite straight. The fence is very close to the oval ground. If you were to compare this oval with the sporting ovals, say, in Darwin, Alice Springs or Katherine, it would be considered a Z-grade facility. The school ovals in the other major centres are of a better standard.

Large patches of bindies are one of the problems on this oval. Sometimes when the players fall over, they come up covered in them. Bindies are mind-bending stuff. For a variety of reasons this has never been addressed. They tried to poison it; they killed the grass, but they did not kill the bindies. Bindies are similar to three-cornered jacks. The perimeter fence at the northern end of the oval comes right up here.

My wife and I own a motel. We have been here for five years, and we have done reasonably well out of it. My kids have just started playing sport; hence my involvement in it. I have had a long-term involvement with sport in the Territory. I played football in Alice Springs; I was on the board of directors of the Northern Territory footy league when I went to Darwin. I have only just really got back into it in the last couple of years.

These are the main change room facilities, which were acquired under a grant from the Northern Territory. You cannot see it, but they have mesh on the windows to stop them getting vandalised. There are the change boxes. As you can see, they need to have a bit of work done on them. At the back of that is a licensed club, called the Tennant Creek Sporties Club.

We have now moved on to the baseball diamond. As it says in the report, Tennant Creek has had a long history in the voluntary provision of sporting facilities. Here I am trying to show you the stands and the baseball diamond. They are about 30 years old. The actual facilities are not too bad. It is just that they are in a rather run-down state. Back in the 1960s, when mining and so on was very strong, Tennant Creek probably had the best of facilities. That is the state of the baseball diamond now. As you can see, it is in a very run-down condition. That is the scoreboard, and that has been vandalised, smashed in. One problem with the Purkiss Reserve is that the town drains are right at the back, and it is a very popular drinking position for itinerants.

Now we move on to the softball diamond. We have a separate softball facility. That is the softball canteen. They have bricked the windows up to prevent vandalism. As you can see, it is in a fairly old, run-down state. The roof of the stand has started to come off. The softball diamond is in pretty poor shape.

The main problem is that the council at the moment has a high debt—a very large debt—to the tune of about \$1½ million; it is having difficulty servicing that. Also, the cost of water is high. I suppose you really need to get the figures on the water from the Northern Territory Power and Water Authority. Water is very expensive. I think it is \$49,000, or something. It is very hard because Tennant Creek is very dry. It has an average rainfall in the region of 14 inches a year. Some years we do not get that; in others, we do.

These are the tennis courts and netball courts; they are the old sand-grit, carpet type courts. The tennis courts have just about had it. In the report, it says that these should be ripped up and replaced. But the basic facility is not too bad. The netball courts are okay and usable.

This is the roof built by the grant to the basketball association—and the courts. It took about \$100,000 to build that roof; it was built just to get some protection. Kids play basketball there just about all day every day. It does not seem to have been organised.

That is the TC Raiders. The Raiders is a social club for kids; it is where they go to watch videos or play pool. It has been a big help in trying to address juvenile problems. As you can see, they still lack the money to finish it off. All the windows are covered with mesh to keep the vandals out.

This is the Tennant Creek town pool, which was built back in 1969 by community effort. There was a lot of community effort back in those days. That pool has since been relined with a fibreglass lining. It is quite a good little pool; it is only 25 metres. Last year the whole filtration plant collapsed, and it will cost \$160,000 to replace it. The council says that it has not got the money to do it, but it is doing it because it knows the town needs it. Life in summer in Tennant Creek, when you get temperatures of 40 degrees and over for up to three or four months, would be pretty unbearable without the pool.

This is the Tennant Creek Bowling Club, and this is its manager. It has two carpets. The club tried for years to keep grass growing, but that was just breaking it, so it put down carpet. The trouble is that carpets cost about \$85,000 or \$90,000. This is the main green, which is not in too bad a shape. You can only play one way. The club has had some money from the NT Department of Sport and Recreation for repairs. This is the other green, green No. 2, which has completely had it. It has bare patches all over it; it is unplayable. To fix it the club would be looking at \$85,000, which I think would be beyond its capability.

This part of the video was taken from inside the bowling club. It is quite a nice little club. As you can see, down at the end there are pokies, which have probably helped the club to survive.

I do not know how many committee members have been to Tennant Creek, but like any other bush community in the north—and probably in western New South Wales and the north of Western Australia—it has unique problems. There used to be two primary schools in Tennant Creek but, because the population declined two years ago, they closed down the second primary school.

That second primary school is where NTETA, the Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority, now operate out of. It had a very nice school oval, which has largely become a bit of a drinking place for itinerants; they smash their bottles and get glass all over the place. That is the only oval which is suitable for senior cricket in the town. The only other oval is at the primary school, where the grass is all dead. Actually, we had rather big rains of 20 inches in February, and the oval just somehow leapt back to life again; it was just amazing. It is all couch.

A lot of community work has been put into a lot of facilities over the years, some of which is not now sustainable. I think Ray Norman, in his report, recommends that the way to go is the joint use of facilities and that we work towards getting some good quality, common user type facilities and try to maintain them. However, the council's dollar just does not seem to stretch to doing the whole task.

The reason for our wanting to appear before you was that we were not sure whether the government had a policy of funding in rural areas. We are trying to demonstrate to you that there is still a need for a lot of small communities to get some assistance. The community needs to help itself.

As is pointed out in that report, we desperately need to get into a capitation arrangement where the clubs and the sports people pay into the funds to use facilities. That has not happened to any large degree. As I have said, the swimming club pays \$1,200. I think the BAFL, the Barkly Australian Football League, has some 400 competitors, would you believe, with up to nine teams competing at various times; I think they pay in the region of a couple of thousand dollars a year, and that really is the limit of their ability to contribute to the upkeep of facilities.

CHAIR—Certainly the purpose of this inquiry is to examine whether or not the Commonwealth should be involved in funding community sporting facilities. You rightly assume that there is no organised program and has not been for some years. So that is the reason for our being interested in talking to organisations such as yours—to learn something of your practical experience. I suppose what we really want to know from you is why the Commonwealth should be involved. You have indicated that there has been a flow of funds to you from the Northern Territory government.

Mr Cook—Yes.

CHAIR—Is it not appropriate for the Territory government to provide sporting facilities rather than to have Canberra getting involved?

Mr Cook—I have told you the average wage of a member of the community of Tennant Creek. The

wealthier communities, like Katherine, Alice Springs and Darwin, and to an extent Nhulunbuy, have been able to provide their own facilities; there have been more dollars out there in the community. We are not in that position. When you have a large proportion of your population who do not earn a lot of money, and a significant proportion of them are unemployed, it is very hard to keep your facilities up to scratch.

The other problem has been an ongoing one with vandalism. As you can see, the Purkiss Reserve is a very compact area. At the moment, a lot of the itinerants just move through the main shopping area to their drinking positions down at the drain, and it is very hard to keep it up to scratch.

CHAIR—So your argument basically is that the Commonwealth should get involved to assist those communities who are unable, for various reasons, to help themselves?

Mr Cook—That is right.

CHAIR—It is a redistribution of wealth role.

Mr Cook—Probably for it to be more keenly targeted. I am a conservative by nature.

CHAIR—Do you think the Commonwealth should be involved in making many little grants to various organisations, or should it restrict itself to providing regional standard facilities?

Mr Cook—I do not know whether I told you this previously, but I am also on the Sports Advisory Council to Steve Hatton, which is the Territory advisory body. Steve Hatton is the Minister for Sports and Recreation in the Northern Territory. We have already put that we believe the Territory should work to a recognised regional standard of facilities. If Tennant Creek is capable of holding Territory titles—and it used to be, and it traditionally has—its facilities should be of an appropriate level. If Darwin is to hold national or international titles, the facilities should be funded to that level. It is impossible for a community like us to come up with the money to achieve that.

CHAIR—You have indicated that you feel Tennant Creek should have a sports and recreation officer, but you have also said that the Territory government provides \$29,500 as a subsidy towards a community and recreation officer.

Mr Cook—The council had their own recreation officer, yes.

CHAIR—So, in other words, the Territory is contributing towards that officer?

Mr Cook—Yes.

CHAIR—So what is your argument about a lack of—

Mr Cook—The NT Department of Sport and Recreation has a representative in all the other major communities in the Territory; Tennant Creek does not. I am talking about departmental people. Those people can get out there and help to run training programs and assist you—and the NT government tries to tell you

about that—in the administration of the sporting clubs. They really are struggling at the moment.

CHAIR—Isn't the person the council employs doing that sort of task?

Mr Cook—Not really, no.

CHAIR—What is he or she doing?

Mr Cook—That is a question you really have to direct to the council, because I cannot entirely answer it.

CHAIR—You are on the sports committee; you ought to be able to see the benefits of her work.

Mr Cook—All right, I will tell you. The person is not qualified, from my understanding. The previous person in the job now has gone off to have a baby, and they have just grabbed another one of their staff members and put them in the job. This is a fact of life in small rural communities: how do you get the appropriately skilled people do all these things?

There seems to be a heavier slant on the recreation side. They run things like Desert Harmony and they assist with the Go-cart Grand Prix, which is an annual event, and things like that. But I have not seen a lot of assistance being given to the sporting community; in fact, I have not seen any of it. All that lady has done so far is provide some secretarial service to our sports committee. That is the entire commitment I have seen from her.

CHAIR—Yet she is a full-time officer?

Mr Cook—That total package is in the region of \$40,000. The council pays half of it, and it obviously decides what that person's duties will be.

Mr BILLSON—Do the other communities that have sport and recreation officers in them also get financial assistance towards an officer, or is it an either/or situation?

Mr Cook—I am not sure. Maybe Mr Duffy could tell you that.

Mr BILLSON—I am glad you covered the licensed club in your video. How is that aspect of it going? Is that contributing? Is that putting resources back into the facilities, or is it battling to keep its head above water?

Mr Cook—The sporties club, until recently, was battling. The only other really big licensed club is what is called the Memorial Club, which is very strong. It is the main social club in town. The only other small club is the bowls club, and that has a significant membership. That has only been able to service its own members.

I do not know whether you are aware of the advent of pokies in the Northern Territory. That seems to

have improved the financial performance of clubs. I have a personal view on the value of pokies, and I do not think there is any. But they have sucked a lot of money out of all the other things, such as chook raffles. They are that much harder to hold because people now just do not have the disposable income.

If you are interested in my personal view, I think with pokies it could be a terrible situation in the future. But they are helping. They have a charter that some of their money will be spent on supporting sports. It is not a statutory requirement of the NT government. They have to demonstrate, I think, to the NT government that there is a community benefit in where they spend their money. There is no statutory requirement, but they will put money into it.

I produced a document some six months ago in which I suggested that there should be a statutory requirement; I said that some of the profits from the poker machine revenue should go to funding bodies like the sports committee to provide the administration, to provide an administrator and a basic level coach to help run sport in the town. That idea I have put to Mr Hatton, and I do not know where it sits at the moment. I think it is a decision the NT government is still wrestling with.

Mr BILLSON—So the casino revenue and the poker machine revenues go into general revenue—

Mr Cook—No. Mr Duffy could explain that to you. My understanding is that it goes into a fund, and then community bodies have to apply for it. One of our problems is that we have not had the structure or the organisation to effectively do that at this stage.

Mr BILLSON—Suppose that the Commonwealth could be persuaded that it had a role; that we saw that, on equity grounds, isolated and remote communities were missing out on opportunities and urbanites were gaining more readily; and that perhaps the test of accessing that money could be through business planning of the facility. Is it feasible? That does not mean it has to pay a profit, but someone would have to put their hand up and say, 'We'll make up the difference'—and that that was purely capital. With the sort of evidence you have shown, how would you turn around the vandalism and the deteriorating facilities in such a way as to convince the Commonwealth that the same thing would not happen again?

Mr Cook—We have covered that in Ray Norman's report. The first priority of Ray's report was to secure the facility: to build a six-foot high galvanised fence along the drain and on the northern side—which is where most of the itinerants tend to come from; to secure the rest of the chain mesh fence and divide it up into three sections, all lockable; and to employ a ground keeper. I do not know how we will find the money to employ a ground keeper, but the ground keeper would perform the dual role of security and ground keeping. Unless we can secure the facility, my advice to anyone would be: do not spend one zack there because it will not survive.

Mr BILLSON—So Ray is saying you should put a fence around the whole reserve?

Mr Cook—The whole place. It has a fence around it, but it has been repaired constantly.

Mr BILLSON—I misread that; I thought he was saying around the playing surfaces.

Mr Cook—No.

Mr BILLSON—In the Norman report there is a recommendation that the council become more user friendly towards sport. What does that mean, given that the terms under which the facilities are made available seem, by standards with which we are familiar, very generous? Is there more to it than that?

Mr Cook—Local politics. The council is not held in very high esteem by a lot of the sporting organisations. Nearly all of them have had dramas with the council at some stage. It gets back to, in a poor and struggling community, everybody having high expectations and the council not having the money to meet them. It has been a long-running feud, really.

CHAIR—Do people pay any fees for using the ovals?

Mr Cook—Some. As I have pointed out, the swimming club contributes, Australian Rules contributes and I think the rugby league contribute. The council also maintains the showgrounds, but I did not have a chance to take a video of those facilities. They are further out but in good condition. It is not all a one-way street. It is not meant to be a council bashing exercise. The council is trying really hard but with limited resources.

Mr McDOUGALL—I am interested in the plan and the layout, and I understand your problems. I am interested in the number of sports that you have in relation to the total complex and your population base. You have mentioned a population base of 3,856. Does that include outside the town at all, or is it just simply in the town?

Mr Cook—It is simply in the town. My understanding is that in the Barkly region—which is an area probably of greater Europe, a huge area—out in the bush in a variety of Aboriginal communities and on cattle stations, there are another 3,500 people.

Mr McDOUGALL—Would any of those people outside the area of town use any of those sports facilities?

Mr Cook—I will give you an example. With BAFL, the Australian Rules football league, there are three town teams, and at the moment there are three bush teams. One team is from near Barrow Creek; another team is from Elliot, a community of about 1,000 people about 250 kilometres up the road—there were two teams from Elliot, until there was a death in one of the teams and they stopped playing—and the third team is from Canteen Creek, another Aboriginal community which is 190 kilometres out in the bush. They are very keen on their sport. I do not know whether you understand the dynamics of Aboriginal communities, but sport is the absolute key to their lives. They will travel to kingdom come to play sport.

Mr McDOUGALL—Out of this total population, you have said that about 400 play Australian Rules football?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Mr McDOUGALL—Is one of the problems that there are too many sporting facilities and not enough participants in each of the sports and that you are trying to hang on to some facilities that you do not need? If you were to put effort into building up a couple of the others, would you get a better end result or a better commitment?

Mr Cook—Option No. 3 in the Norman report does just that: it contracts all the facilities back into two main playing areas in the one area. It is very difficult to get sporting groups to agree on who will train when and who will play when, especially when you have so many teams trying to use the same facilities. We would have to have some sort of agreement. What would be needed would be the all-powerful mediator or administrator saying, ‘Yes, you will play that day, you will not play that day and you will train.’ The only sustainable option is to reduce it into two main facilities of good condition, to secure the whole thing and to make sure that it is maintained.

Mr McDOUGALL—So that would mean that you would not need to use the old oval belonging to the school that has been closed down. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Cook—I think we would, because all those teams have to train. As I have said, there are three Aussie Rules teams in the town; then two of those Aussie rules teams have junior sides, under-16s; then we have Auskick, which I also run, which is the junior primary school Aussie Rules program; and then we have a rugby league team which plays in the Alice Springs competition. How can they all train on the one ground? It just does not fit. We really do need another training area at least. Also there is no senior cricket facility. They are playing at the moment on a primary school oval which is not suitable.

Mr McDOUGALL—Does the education department own that primary school land?

Mr Cook—No.

Mr McDOUGALL—Who owns it?

Mr Cook—I think the NT government gave it back to the council.

Mr JENKINS—I have some questions on the history of that primary school ground. I took the implication that, whilst there was a primary school there, that ground was well kept.

Mr Cook—Are you talking about the Tennant Creek primary school, which is a separate facility, and its grounds being okay?

Mr JENKINS—The primary school that has been closed down, which you showed on the videotape.

Mr Cook—The grounds are not looked after there.

Mr JENKINS—They have gone off since the school was closed down?

Mr Cook—Yes. The closing of that school occurred with the ERC cuts in the Northern Territory.

Mr JENKINS—How many years ago was that?

Mr Cook—Five or six years ago; I think it was 1992.

Mr JENKINS—But whilst the school was still there, that ground was maintained?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Mr JENKINS—And it was in relatively good condition?

Mr Cook—Yes. I do not think it showed in the video, but there are goalposts only at one end; there are no goalposts at the other end.

Mr JENKINS—Was there a formal joint use agreement, or was this something that, because you were a small township, just worked?

Mr Cook—It just happened.

Mr JENKINS—Are there playing facilities at the existing primary school?

Mr Cook—Yes. There is a cricket pitch and a set of nets. I also run the junior cricket. We use that to play our games on Saturday mornings in the summer. There are two large grassed areas there, which are used by a variety of clubs to train on because they are in reasonably good condition.

Mr JENKINS—There is no problem with the way in which those playing areas are conducted? There is no tension between the school and the users?

Mr Cook—There is, but I think the school bends over backwards to accommodate the sporting community.

Mr McDUGALL—I am just looking at the total facilities you have and your population. I am trying to find what percentage of that population plays sport in each of the sports. You have this enormous cost problem in front of you, and I just do not know whether that is achievable or viable for the number of people who actually participate in sport. Do not get me wrong, but you have mentioned \$85,000 for a carpet on a bowling green. I can understand the cost. The club looked fairly comfortable and it looked as though they had spent a fair bit of money on the club premises themselves. What is more important to them: the bowling or the club? From what I saw on the video, I thought it was the club rather than the bowling.

Mr Cook—If you did not have a club with a bar that operated, the club would not survive. That is just a simple fact. I think you can draw that line right around Australia. If the bar does not work, where does the money come from to operate? I do not know how many members they have in the bowls club, but it is not a lot.

Mr BILLSON—There is a problem in local footy down my way. We pay about \$300 per week for a

brilliant centre half-forward, but the facilities are falling down around our ears. Is this an issue in this community? Is money going away from the facilities into attracting players?

Mr Cook—I do not know of any players getting paid in Tennant Creek.

CHAIR—Has ATSIC provided any sporting facilities in Tennant Creek?

Mr Cook—That is a different issue and one I am not totally au fait with. They have provided money for a gymnasium, which is owned by the Aboriginal health service, Anyinginyi, and they have provided a person to operate it; it is run by the Aborigines. They have announced that it is available for the general community to use. I know of some community groups that are taking advantage of it.

CHAIR—Is that a good facility?

Mr Cook—It is an old industrial shed. It was used as an indoor cricket centre, and now it has been turned into a gymnasium. I think it is in quite good condition.

CHAIR—Is that the rehabilitation centre?

Mr Cook—Yes.

CHAIR—So it was built for physical rehabilitation?

Mr Cook—Yes.

CHAIR—But it is available, say, for sporting groups to use?

Mr Cook—Yes. They have a manager there who is a physical education type person.

CHAIR—Is that going well?

Mr Cook—I do not know. They say that it is, but I do not know.

Mr McDougall—If after this inquiry the Commonwealth found that it could supply money to community groups and you were to decide in what way that would be done, would it be more important for the Commonwealth to be in recurrent funding, thus allowing you to maintain the area? Would it be more important for the Commonwealth to be involved in capital development? What is your greatest need?

Mr Cook—I would say recurrent funding. I do not know whether you are aware of what happens in the Aboriginal communities; I only have limited experience with them. Once they get facilities built, they have great difficulty in maintaining them. We are in exactly the same situation. That is why I stand by what Ray says: if you cannot secure the facility and you cannot maintain it, do not spend the money; do not do it. That puts me out of step with some other people in the sporting community, but that is my belief.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—How much would it cost to maintain something like a football oval?

Mr Cook—It is very hard to break it up. From what I was led to believe, the total expenditure on Purkiss Reserve was \$144,000, of which \$40,000 was the cost of water alone. So there has been a lot of other labour and council workers who go and shift sprinklers and mow lawns and do all that sort of stuff at various times?

Dr SOUTHCOTT—How will you decide what facilities should be in each remote and regional town? Do you think a regional group of councils, the local council, the state or territory government, the Commonwealth government or, say, a sporting body like the Northern Territory league should decide whether the ovals are up to scratch?

Mr Cook—It really needs to be a cooperative arrangement. You really need to come to some sort of agreed standards, as you mentioned before, as to what is appropriate and affordable. From my understanding, the department is still working on what the appropriate levels of facilities should be. You really need to look at whether the community is happy with it, that it is what they want and that that is how they want to run it. I do not really like sitting here, cap in hand. It really embarrasses me. I am a very proud Australian, and it distresses me to see the situation that we are in. I do not know really how you can address it. I believe that Australia is at a crossroads in a lot of areas, and I just think we have to earn more money as a community. If we had plenty of the money, we would not have these problems. We have to be more productive.

Mr EOIN CAMERON—Did you mention what the council debt was?

Mr Cook—It is supposed to be \$1½ million. They have restructured it and done various things. I will tender the Tennant Creek annual report. Whether that spells it out in there, I am not sure, because I cannot understand it. But I am not an accountant, and perhaps you could get an accountant to decipher it for you.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—The Northern Territory Sports Advisory Council has recommended benchmarks for small communities. They have said ‘for greater than 2,000’. How do you feel about that?

Mr Cook—Benchmarks for the standards of facilities?

Dr SOUTHCOTT—Yes.

Mr Cook—That was a proposal I put up at the Sports Advisory Council.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—So for 2,000 people, there would be one oval, two basketball courts, change rooms and—

Mr Cook—I do not know what the benchmarks are; they have not told me yet.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—We have the submission from the Northern Territory government. For over 2,000 people, they suggest one oval.

Mr Cook—Is that in there?

Dr SOUTHCOTT—It is in the submission, yes.

Mr Cook—I had not seen that until I walked in here.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—It is one oval, two basketball courts, change rooms and a recreation centre. What is your opinion of that?

Mr Cook—I have not had time to digest that. I would say it probably would not be enough.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—It would not be enough?

Mr Cook—No.

CHAIR—It would not be too good if you happened to be a softball player, would it?

Mr Cook—Why is that?

CHAIR—They are only offering basketball courts and ovals.

Mr Cook—Look at sports in Tennant Creek. Women's softball is quite strong and viable. A chief complaint they had about this is that one of the viable organisations that is operating quite well in competition is going to lose its ground and have to share with baseball.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—What are the strongest sports in Tennant Creek? There is Australian Rules.

Mr Cook—It is Australian Rules by a mile.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—And after Australian Rules?

Mr Cook—There is no organised basketball competition. There is a senior cricket competition. There is junior cricket. There is junior baseball. There is no senior baseball. Netball is very strong.

CHAIR—Do they use that covered facility?

Mr Cook—No. They use the better two of those carpet courts that I showed you in the video.

CHAIR—So you have this lovely roof with nobody actually playing under it?

Mr Cook—No. There are kids who play there all the time. The Aboriginal kids just play endless pick-up games of basketball. All they want to do is be like Michael Jordan.

Mr McDOUGALL—Is basketball a recreation rather than a sport?

Mr Cook—Yes. They do play social competitions.

CHAIR—But there is no organised competition?

Mr Cook—Not that I know of. But they do have basketball nights on Thursday where the kids just turn up, they put them in teams and away they go.

Mr BILLSON—Who supervises it?

Mr Cook—The guy who manages the TC Raiders; he is partly funded to do that job. He is called Nigel Rush, and he does pretty well. The Raiders clubhouse is built alongside the basketball courts. It is like a drop-in centre for the kids. He organises it.

Mr JENKINS—He is part funded by whom?

Mr Cook—I do not know.

Mr JENKINS—I notice in the Norman report that ‘a high priority be given to providing facilities for non-structured recreational activities’. Your description of the activities under the basketball shelter gives me an idea of what that is about.

Mr Cook—Yes.

Mr JENKINS—So that really relies on somebody being there to manage the use of the facilities?

Mr Cook—Not with basketball, no. You can just turn up and play basketball at any time you like. You do not have to manage that. You just need a basketball and you just shoot hoops and so on. I would not agree with that.

Mr JENKINS—So the totally unstructured use of facilities in that case works?

Mr Cook—Yes.

Mr JENKINS—I suppose that could extend to netball and tennis, if you wanted it to.

Mr Cook—Tennis has not got an organised competition, but netball has organised competition.

Mr JENKINS—Is the softball competition from outlying areas as well?

Mr Cook—No. They are all town teams with the softball.

Mr JENKINS—From the video, it looked as though it is something that is used.

Mr Cook—It is. I thought I had made it clear that there is an organised softball competition and that

it is quite well used. I will expand on the point put by Norman. Unstructured sporting facilities should be made more available. We have a high level of juvenile violence and delinquency and a high level of alcohol abuse in the community. It is not just in Tennant Creek; it occurs right across the Territory. How you address all those things is the subject of other inquiries.

CHAIR—I do not think Mr Jenkins is being critical of unstructured sport; it is a very important part of recreation.

Mr JENKINS—I hope I did not give that impression. I was just trying to work out the dynamics of it. The dynamics of it appear to be that the TC Raiders club is very important in it.

Mr Cook—Yes.

Mr JENKINS—Whilst it is unstructured, there still has to be something that encourages it. That is what I was trying to get to.

Mr Cook—There has to be somewhere kids can go. It greatly reduces vandalism and all that sort of stuff.

Mr JENKINS—How do they get a sense of ownership?

Mr Cook—What do you mean?

Mr JENKINS—Part of the success of unstructured things is reflected in the way that people respect the facility in the sense that it is theirs; so appropriate levels of discipline and things like that go with the use. Do they have that sense? Is there a sense of community amongst those unstructured users?

Mr Cook—I do not think so. When they were building the Raiders, they broke in and ripped all the wiring out and smashed all the windows. This was a facility that was virtually being built for these street kids. So you can form your own conclusions from that.

CHAIR—You commented before that the council is up for a lot of money to, say, move sprinklers around. If football means so much to the community—and I know that it does—are there any footballers who are unemployed during the rest of the week who might be motivated to, say, shift the sprinklers? It is a pretty basic thing, isn't it?

Mr Cook—You would think so, wouldn't you.

CHAIR—I appreciate the problems you have. Ironically, yesterday we were hearing from a council that has problems because there have only been 35 days this year when it has not rained and they need shelters to keep the rain off their sportsmen.

Mr Cook—That is not a problem we suffer from in Tennant Creek.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Cook. I know it has been a lot of trouble for you to come down from Tennant Creek, and we do appreciate the fact that you have done that. You certainly have helped us to appreciate more the particular difficulties of a rural community. It is very important for us in the context of this inquiry. Thank you very much for the evidence that you have given.

Mr Cook—Thank you for giving me the time to have my say.

CHAIR—There being no objection, the Tennant Creek annual report will be received as exhibit No. 8.

Short adjournment

[10.50 a.m.]

BRIMSON, Mr Francis William, Manager, Facilities, Department of Sport and Recreation, Northern Territory Government, PO Box 1448, Darwin, Northern Territory 0801

DUFFY, Mr Anthony James, Deputy Secretary, Department of Sport and Recreation, Northern Territory Government, PO Box 1448, Darwin, Northern Territory 0801

CHAIR—Welcome. We have received a submission from the government and have authorised its publication. Do you propose any changes to the submission?

Mr Duffy—I will update you with attachment A, which is a program for the development of the Marrara sporting complex. Since that was submitted, our capital works program for the 1997-98 financial year has been finalised. Of those four items specified there, the last two will be going forward this financial year; that is, the second hockey field and the associated car parking. The multipurpose hall has been placed on the design list for 1997-98 and will be considered for the capital works program in 1998-99.

CHAIR—Would you like to make any opening comments?

Mr Duffy—The only opening comment I will make is that, in a nutshell, the Territory is saying that the Commonwealth should be involved in funding sporting and recreation facilities but in a consultative and coordinated way. Particular attention ought to be given to disadvantaged people, particularly Aboriginal people in remote communities. There are a whole host of ways in which that could be done. We have simply suggested one such means. It would perhaps involve a sports advisory council type body in the distribution of it. In a nutshell, that is what we are saying.

CHAIR—Perhaps you could tell us something about the way in which the Northern Territory government provides funds and what ongoing programs you have in place to support facilities development.

Mr Duffy—The Northern Territory government provides per capita more funding than any other state or territory by far in respect of sport and recreation across the board. It includes not only facilities but also attendance at national championships and the annual general meetings of sporting bodies, which is a fairly important element given the distances involved.

The government distributes \$4 million to \$5 million every year. That comes, by and large, out of proceeds of lotteries such as Lotto and that sort of thing. There is an ongoing funding base there. Applications are called for once each year in November for the ensuing financial year. This current financial year, we have started to seek from sporting organisations as a prerequisite to funding, or sponsorship as we call it, a development plan for their organisation, which must cover at least three to five years. We are only in the early stages of that. Many organisations have had difficulties coming to grips with that. We help them as we can. We provide training courses for officials of sporting organisations on how to prepare these things.

I suppose the direction we are moving in is that funding will be granted against specific objectives of organisations, as determined in their development plans, rather than for specific items of expenditure. So the

responsibility is moving towards sporting organisations as to how they can spend that money.

CHAIR—At a territory level or a local level?

Mr Duffy—We fund wherever possible, be it at the territory or peak body level. An example is the Northern Territory Football League.

CHAIR—So the Territory Basketball Association would identify projects around the Territory that they feel should be funded?

Mr Duffy—In theory that is so, yes. In practice, unquestionably, more goes to the bigger centres because they are more active and their numbers are larger. They would be Darwin and Alice Springs. As you get out, particularly in the remote areas, there is a different kind of problem. In remote communities, Aboriginal organisations tend not to be affiliated with major peak sporting organisations. For example, the Northern Territory Football League would have very little in their program that would promote communities other than perhaps development officers visiting different areas.

CHAIR—I have a little trouble understanding how much money you spend. Your submission mentions \$1.2 million per year on facilities. You have now mentioned \$5 million being available through lotteries and casino taxes. Could you give me a bit more of an explanation of that. Are only sporting organisations eligible?

Mr Duffy—And recreational organisations, such as the YMCA and the Red Cross.

CHAIR—Is that \$4 million to \$5 million a fixed percentage of casino taxes?

Mr Duffy—I know that it is fixed by legislation; I could not tell you the exact formula for it.

CHAIR—But it is dependent upon there being a turnover in the casino?

Mr Duffy—It is not so much that. It is more lotteries, such as Tattslotto, Pools and that sort of thing. Separate funding comes from the proceeds of poker machines.

CHAIR—So that \$4 million to \$5 million is in addition to the \$1.2 million?

Mr Duffy—No. The \$1.2 million for facilities is part of that.

CHAIR—The total expenditure on facilities, development officers and travel amounts to about \$5 million?

Mr Duffy—It varies, but it is about that.

Mr BILLSON—Given that explanation, how does the Northern Territory government's approach to funding facilities in remote and isolated areas reflect the sort of things you are asking the Commonwealth to

pick up? How do you seek to deliver those outcomes that you are asking of the Commonwealth?

Mr Duffy—Inevitably, a fixed amount of money is available. You cannot give everybody everything that they ask for. We have to set priorities. We do not try to determine priorities in a vacuum. If we are funding a recreation officer position in a particular community, we try to take into account what is happening on the facility side and vice versa and what other organisations might be doing. For example, if there is a law and order strategy to be put in place, we try to work with other agencies so that there is a combined input. There is not much point in funding a recreation officer in the community if there are no means of getting young people together. There are problems like that.

Mr BILLSON—So at the recurrent end of things, the government has the capacity, if it chooses, to skew resources towards isolated and remote communities? As I understood your explanation, in the infrastructure area, the institutional processes of relying on peak bodies tend to have the opposite effect.

Mr Duffy—It works both ways. Indeed, there are facilities and projects—Mr Brimson could explain this better than me—on remote communities that are developed on a regular basis. There may not be an affiliated sporting organisation set up there.

Mr BILLSON—But you would need a Mr Cook, effectively, for the smaller communities to be successful? You would need someone who would put their heart and soul into it and work very hard. Otherwise the competition would see you left out, perhaps.

Mr Duffy—It makes it difficult. What tends to happen is that communities will ask for money to employ a recreation officer. In reality, there are limits to what that person can do. They are normally unqualified; they are normally people from the community with no physical education qualifications. There is normally a fairly high turnover. So there are limits to what can be done and what they can do.

Last year, we funded 28 different communities to the tune of anything between \$10,000 and \$30,000 per annum each to employ recreation officers. We are starting to think that, instead of spreading a bit of money over a lot of areas, it might be better to cut back on some and concentrate on others. This financial year, we are putting \$80,000 into Port Keats and surrounding communities. We have had long discussions with the community council, which proposes to employ recreation officers under the CDEP program. We would put somebody in who would help them to coordinate things, arrange intercommunity competitions and that sort of thing. That is the strategy. Theory is fine. In practice, we have just advertised. We are having some difficulty trying to get the right sort of person to do that.

Mr BILLSON—If the Commonwealth were to see its way clear in making some resources available—I note your recommendation about emphasising the remote and isolated communities—to the established facilities, is the NT government, in conjunction with the local communities and councils, in a position to see that they are maintained, managed and programmed? Is that a big ask of you?

Mr Duffy—In some instances, it is a big ask. History is littered with examples of just that. Facilities are put in and within a relatively short time they are ruined.

Mr BILLSON—You would be looking for an ongoing capacity to—

Mr Duffy—I do not think anybody should be funding that sort of facility unless there is some reasonable certainty that it is viable to maintain it and that programs are able to be run there.

CHAIR—In your submission, you have been critical of the way in which ATSIC has managed its sporting funds. Could you be more specific?

Mr Duffy—Our criticism was directed to previous Commonwealth funding going back some years. Funding was directed to particular communities without much consultation. The inevitable result, as we were just saying, was that within a short time the facilities were unusable or not able to be maintained.

CHAIR—I appreciate that there was no consultation. What was done wrong?

Mr Duffy—I do not know for certain, but I suspect that somebody's priorities were different to the community's priorities, perhaps.

Mr McDOUGALL—You have outlined to us how you spend your money. What happens with major facilities, particularly for Darwin and Alice Springs and where you are dealing with the Arafura Games or the Central Australian Masters Games? Do they come out of the budget or are they one-line items in the overall Territory budget?

Mr Duffy—They are funded separately through the Department of Sport and Recreation. They do not come out of that funding from Tattslotto, et cetera, at all.

Mr McDOUGALL—When they are designed and when you go ahead with those sorts of projects, is that part of your overall planning with regard to what community and sporting club use will be after the games? The ones in Alice Springs are once every two years. Are the Arafura Games once every year?

Mr Duffy—Once every two years.

Mr McDOUGALL—The other year?

Mr Duffy—Yes. I may have misunderstood. The building and development of facilities does come out of that funding, but it is not specifically for the Arafura Games.

Mr BILLSON—Do the major facilities in Darwin come out of this budget?

Mr Duffy—Yes.

Mr BILLSON—In some states, the Treasury or the Premier seems to have a little nest egg that builds \$30 million stadiums. How does it operate in the Northern Territory?

Mr Duffy—It comes out of that funding, normally. Sometimes there may be additional funding

available from government. Normally it would come out of that money. The items listed in attachment A under our capital works program would come out of that funding.

Mr McDOUGALL—Obviously the Arafura Games and the Central Australian Masters Games generate a fair bit of income for the Northern Territory government through tourism in either Alice Springs or Darwin. I know that a lot of that comes into the business community. Is there any financial benefit to the department or the NT government that can be hypothecated back for use in facilities?

Mr Duffy—Not in a direct way. The Masters Games in Alice Springs were put on to stimulate the local economy at a time when it was pretty quiet. Whilst there is a lot of money spent in the town, it goes into hotels and restaurants et cetera. Sporting organisations pick up a little. The Arafura Games is a different kettle of fish. That is primarily an event for developing athletes in the region. The only benefit that the government or the department would get out of it would be in the way of perhaps a minor sponsorship in airfares, hotel rooms and that sort of thing. No, there is no major revenue.

Mr McDOUGALL—How well do you work with the education department?

Mr Duffy—It probably varies from place to place.

Mr McDOUGALL—Do you have agreements with them in relation to the development of facilities? Are they open to community use? Can sporting clubs use them? Is there a proper management structure there? Alternatively, is it all at the whim of the principal: if he or she is all right, it works; and if you get a new principal, it does not work?

Mr Duffy—There are certainly examples of where sporting groups use school facilities on a regular basis. I think it depends on the particular school. I think there is a fair degree of autonomy now; the school councils are running their own affairs. I think there would be an agreement reached between the club and the school for the use of the oval and change rooms, and presumably fees are paid.

Mr McDOUGALL—Has your department ever done an audit right across the Northern Territory of all facilities that are currently in the Territory, irrespective of whether those facilities are public and owned by local government, the state or education or are private? Have you ever done an audit to find out what you have?

Mr Duffy—We have done an audit; I am not sure that it is complete. Mr Brimson has been involved in that and can comment on the details of that better than I can.

Mr Brimson—We have just commenced an audit of all the facilities that we currently have in the Territory. At this point, it encompasses all regions except the Darwin region. I have been compiling this as I go around. I trip off every year and go to every community. This is a compilation of what is at major communities and at the Aboriginal communities. We would hope that, by the end of this year, this would be a complete document. It will not entail facilities, for example, on any defence establishment or any facility that is owned by private schools.

In most cases in the communities, it will involve facilities at the school. In fact, probably in the majority of Aboriginal communities, the sport and recreation facility is part of a school. We try to work in with the school to ensure that, for example, if there is a basketball court at the school, we would assist with that rather than build another down the road. There is cooperation in that respect. It certainly is not complete by any means in covering the whole of the Northern Territory.

Mr McDOUGALL—At the end of the day, you are hoping that you will be able to put in a strategic plan for a future development program or an upgrade program to make sure that you are getting the end result?

Mr Duffy—Yes.

Mr McDOUGALL—Do you believe that you will be able to get maintenance funding shared between the Department of Sport and Recreation, the community or the Education Department—whoever is the owner—to overcome what appears to be in some of the remote areas a really big problem with maintenance and so get better economies of scale? Is that one of the objectives you are looking for; and would the Education Department be party to such an agreement?

Mr Duffy—I would be surprised if they would not be. But it would depend on the particular relationships within communities. In some places they would be excellent and there would not be a problem; in other places there may well be problems. Certainly that would be our objective, yes.

CHAIR—With reference to the better use of school facilities, what do you mean in your submission when you say:

. . . in many cases such use would be deemed culturally inappropriate . . . ?

Mr Duffy—There may well be instances where something is identified as a children's or women's facility and you may get a situation where adult men, for example, would not use it.

CHAIR—Can you expand on that?

Mr Duffy—If there were a building or a room that clearly, in the eyes of the community, was a children's or women's centre and it was desired to be used for some purpose that involved adult men, there may be instances where adult men would simply not enter it.

CHAIR—That is an element of Aboriginal culture, you are saying?

Mr Duffy—Yes, that is what I meant.

CHAIR—Would it apply to a sporting oval or something like that?

Mr Duffy—I doubt that it would apply to an oval; I think it would be more likely to be a school facility or an enclosed area. But I am not an expert on that.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—Since last year we have now got the indigenous sports program. I would be interested in your ideas as to how, if that sports program does end up funding facilities, it can avoid the problems that the ATSIC funding program has had.

Mr Duffy—We get money through the Australian Sports Commission to fund, I think, four officers in the indigenous sports program. Those officers, by and large, are very good at visiting communities and helping recreational officers organise things. They are stretched pretty thinly. They cover a lot of ground. A lot is expected of them. I am not sure that any facility funding comes through there.

Mr Brimson—No.

Mr Duffy—It is more a people thing, an organising thing. Again, if you get a good one, you really have a good one and they can produce results. But if you do not, you have problems. So much depends on the individual involved.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—You mentioned before some of the problems with ATSIC's funding of sports facilities and how it should be safeguarded in the future.

Mr Duffy—I think we have to do a lot more talking with them. My understanding is that ATSIC money comes through regional councils. I am not sure whether regional councils consult with us or vice versa as much as would be ideal. Indeed, their priorities are probably different from ours.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—If there is Commonwealth expenditure on local facilities, what do you think is the best option: direct expenditure by the Commonwealth, specific purpose payments, or general purpose payments?

Mr Duffy—I think there is a whole range of options. One that we have suggested in our submission is based on some instances in the education field where we would call for applications and there are consultative groups available. The one we have mentioned is the Sports Advisory Council, of which Mr Cook is a member. They represent the community, by and large. That is just one way it could happen. As I said, I know there are examples in the education field where similar funding is made available in that way.

Dr SOUTHCOTT—Do you favour tied or general grants?

Mr Duffy—The Territory does not favour tied grants.

CHAIR—However, if we were to give the Territory an extra \$30 million, how much of it would be spent on sport and recreation, and how much would be wasted on hospitals and schools?

Dr SOUTHCOTT—Not wasted.

Mr Duffy—Can I pass?

CHAIR—So, in other words, the only way it will be guaranteed to be spent on sport and recreation is

for it to be tied. Is your rejection of the concept of tied grants so substantial that you would refuse the money if it were tied?

Mr Duffy—I would have to take advice from my Treasury colleagues.

Mr McDOUGALL—If we are to find money and make it available, how does the Commonwealth set up an organisational structure to distribute the funds and make judgments across Australia as to what should get the nod and what should not? And at what sort of level should the states and territories be involved in this process? Have you got some ideas on how we can make this work? We know the history; how do we make it work?

Mr Duffy—I think that is why we suggested the model that we did where you have a representative group of community people and you add to that a Territory representative and a Commonwealth representative. Then you have a system whereby, theoretically at least, everybody is getting a fair say in it. You could criticise almost any model that people come up with, I guess.

Mr McDOUGALL—At the end of the day, someone has to make a decision. Let us say there is \$50 million in the Commonwealth pool. Should it be divided so that X per cent goes to each state and then, within the state, it makes a decision between the state and the community? Where should the division of the \$50 million come from, if we are using that figure?

Mr Duffy—It should go where it is most needed. If there are particularly disadvantaged people, that is where it should go.

CHAIR—There is also a fairly solid and consistent record that, when the Commonwealth provides funding in a particular area, the states cut back their funding in that same area. I use the word 'states' because I am not making any judgments about the Territory; I am sure that you behave much more honourably than the states. If the Commonwealth were to make a commitment in relation to sports funding, would you be confident that you could retain the existing Territory commitment?

Mr Duffy—It is quite transparent with money; the source that it comes from is quite transparent and its legislative base is quite clear. I would imagine that, unless that were changed, it would have to be spent on sport and recreation.

Mr JENKINS—It appears that here in the Territory there has been an emphasis on sporting associations taking some of the responsibility for planning what is being provided for with their sports. The submission quite clearly also indicates that that leads to a problem with some of the Aboriginal communities; perhaps they do not affiliate. Is that the approach that you have taken? Should the advisory committee, the council, the sports associations or whatever take some of the responsibility for planning what is required in their sport?

Mr Duffy—Our view would be that they should, and we would encourage them to do that. But at the end of the day, by and large, they are made up of people who are doing it on a voluntary basis. Sure, there may be some paid employee. But I guess it is a problem that we need to address in terms of trying to

improve sporting organisations management and development. There are enormous pressures on sporting organisations these days from the national level down. There are rapid changes. Sport is becoming a business rather more than perhaps it used to be. It is very difficult for a sporting organisation in lots of ways just to keep pace.

Mr JENKINS—What about the example we were given from the study of Tennant Creek with an emphasis on non-structured sporting activities, therefore falling out of associations and the like? How would the Territory government assist in the provision of facilities to enable that to occur?

Mr Duffy—To some extent we do that now, particularly in remote communities. So there would be some sort of facility provided which would not just be for formal competition; it would be for non-structured sport and recreation. I think the impetus is about to come from Active Australia. If that has done one thing, it has forced sport and recreation and health into the same consideration. It recognises that they need to work together; there are benefits from one to the other. I would expect in due course that that will have a marked effect in terms of non-structured facilities. We do not have any specific funding proposal at this point in time for that. But I think that framework will drive things in that direction.

Mr McDOUGALL—We may decide that we have to make some funds available. I am sure the Treasurer will not be interested in finding some money out of his other existing programs. Some people we have talked to have come up with all sorts of ways we should raise money. How do you think we should raise the money if the Commonwealth finds that it should dole it out? What is a positive way of doing that?

Something such as a lottery has been suggested. Perhaps the states will not be too keen for us to get into the lottery business and pinch some of their revenue base, particularly in light of the High Court decision that has been handed down in the last couple of days. Others have suggested another tax on cigarettes. What do you think is a good idea for us to look at?

Mr Duffy—I think there is still some scope to explore the concept of the Sports Foundation. The last we heard, it was about to be reviewed. There is probably a fair way that could go. In a place like the Territory, seeking corporate sponsorship is very difficult because it is so small and the market is not here so the money is not here. So that particularly impacts on us differently from the big cities. The Sports Foundation, I think, could do a lot more.

CHAIR—Are you aware of any examples in the Territory where Sports Foundation is being used to fund projects?

Mr Duffy—I am not.

Mr McDOUGALL—The Sports Foundation has been around for quite a while. The biggest projects I can find that it has funded are those in the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Institute of Sport. Maybe that is because the foundation is locked up in the commission. I think that is what the review is going to come out with in regard to where the foundation should be. So it has capacity. But from evidence I have heard, one of the problems is that very few people know about the foundation. Would that be fair to say in the Northern Territory? Do the sporting organisations even know it exists?

Mr Duffy—I very much doubt it in a lot of cases.

CHAIR—Have you made any effort to tell them about it?

Mr Duffy—We have been waiting to see what happens with this review.

Mr McDOUGALL—Have you promoted it in its last five years?

Mr Duffy—I do not believe it has been. I seem to recall that we did have some legal advice that there may have been some issues there that perhaps prevented us from promoting it. There were questions raised by our Attorney-General's Department in relation to it.

Mr McDOUGALL—That is you as a promoter, not as a user?

Mr Duffy—Yes.

Mr BILLSON—Is there much private sector sport in the Territory—that is, the sort of sport which is often referred to as fast food sport: indoor volleyball, indoor cricket and indoor basketball?

Mr Duffy—There is some. There is certainly a deal in Darwin. There is some in Alice Springs, although I understand that the indoor cricket centre has closed in the last 12 months or so. There is some.

Mr BILLSON—In the part of the world where I come from, governments of different levels just love seeing a private sector investor set up a facility and get a market going and then have taxpayer money come in to blow them out from that area. We have had evidence of that happening. Does your grants arrangement take into account existing private sector operators and avoid displacing those with taxpayer funded facilities?

Mr Duffy—The best one I can think of off the top of my head is tenpin bowling. Whilst there is a tenpin bowling association, obviously they operate in a private commercial centre. Whilst we do not give facility funding to those people, we still support them in terms of teams travelling and that sort of thing. The Territory government is particularly conscious of cutting across private enterprise.

Mr BILLSON—There is recognition of that?

Mr Duffy—Yes.

Mr BILLSON—A similar theme is user contributions. I suppose the people of Darwin do not think twice about paying \$6 a game for basketball. However, if you asked a cricket team to pay \$6 a player for a game, they would just about lynch you. Is that the experience you are having up here?

Mr Duffy—Yes. It is very expensive for parents to fund children's sport. There has been something of a discussion in the community about that. In terms of people contributing, I think that varies from sport to sport. People are always whingeing about having to put their hand in their pocket to pay for sport.

Mr BILLSON—Is the work you are doing aiming to level out those user or participant contributions?

Mr Duffy—Not in a direct sense. We are trying to encourage sporting organisations to be more efficient. Hopefully, that could be a spin-off from it.

Mr McDOUGALL—But if a person pays \$6 or \$7 to go to the movies—and let us say probably the bulk of the young community would—why should they not pay \$6 or \$7 to play a game of hockey?

Mr Duffy—That is a very good question.

Mr McDOUGALL—What you are saying is that they will not.

Mr Duffy—There seem to be people who object to that.

CHAIR—I suspect a culture has developed where people quite expect to pay when playing tenpin bowls but, when using another facility, for some reason or another they do not expect to pay. I am not sure why that culture has become entrenched, but clearly it is there. You have indicated in your submission that the Northern Territory Sports Advisory Council has recommended that baseline facilities be established according to the size of population: up to 1,000 for one oval and two basketball courts; up to 2,000-plus, one oval, two basketball courts and a recreation centre. Could you tell the committee how those standards or benchmarks were determined?

Mr Duffy—After some discussion, they were the minimum standards that this group thought applicable and something to aim for, given that in most communities basketball, Aussie rules and perhaps softball seem to be the favoured sports.

CHAIR—Basketball is very strong in the Northern Territory.

Mr Duffy—It seems to be, yes.

CHAIR—I suspect that, if you were looking at prioritising sporting facilities in a town, basketball would not always come in second in some other states. It was not that they were all basket-ballers on this committee but that that was a reasonable assessment of Northern Territory values?

Mr Duffy—A lot of kids just get a lot of fun out of it. All they need is a basketball ring and they will just play, particularly in the communities.

Mr McDOUGALL—Did you obtain figures from registrations of who belongs to what sport? How did you find out how many people played a sport? I presume that you came up with the priorities by finding out the participation rates. How did you find out those participation rates? We heard from Mr Cook that there is a lot of unstructured, recreational sport across the Territory and, being unstructured, there is no way of finding out what the participation rate is. How do you weigh those two things?

Mr Duffy—I would imagine that it is more anecdotal than sourcing actual participation rates.

CHAIR—Attachment B has a whole list of expenditure items. I had some trouble understanding it. I wonder how you are going to build a recreation centre for \$50,000—or are there noughts missing? How did you come at those sorts of figures? The most expensive recreation centre you have on the entire list seems to be \$250,000. Our experience seems to be that an indoor recreation centre costs a minimum of \$1 million and, if they are to be successful, \$3 million or \$4 million.

Mr Brimson—These all refer to Aboriginal communities. In the majority of cases in Aboriginal communities, they do not need a \$2 million or \$3 million facility. Basically, they are after a facility that has a concrete floor, usually a roof over it and some sort of staging area where they can have a band, play basketball and play netball and that sort of thing.

In other areas, we have built recreation halls for \$50,000, believe it or not, by adapting some portable frame sheds, putting some louvres in them and a concrete floor and that sort of thing. All they want it for is a meeting place. It can be a place where a band can play and kids can chuck a basketball around and the women meet. We are not looking at building fully-blown airconditioned halls that, in a lot of cases, get trashed anyway. We are looking at building something that is more functional.

CHAIR—That sounds like a very practical set of options, if that would satisfy those sorts of communities, for more modest prices.

Mr Brimson—Most of them at the moment have nothing, or what they have is in very poor condition. Again, this is not down to the finest detail. This is a lot of guesswork based on previous experience.

CHAIR—As there are no other questions, we thank the representatives of the Northern Territory government for their participation in today's hearings. We are looking forward to visiting an Aboriginal community this afternoon. It will help us gain an additional perspective on the recreational needs of that community and, presumably, other parts of the Territory. We have appreciated the advice you have given us. As I mentioned at the beginning of today's hearings, we have now heard from all the state and territory governments. There are some common themes. There are also some differences in their views on the issues. This makes our task as a committee in coming to conclusions somewhat more complex. Nonetheless, it is our hope to make recommendations to the federal parliament in October or November or thereabouts. It is then a matter for the government to respond to the committee's recommendations as it sees fit.

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 11.35 a.m.