



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, RECREATION AND THE ARTS

Reference: Funding of community sporting and recreational facilities

BRISBANE

Wednesday, 23 April 1997

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

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

| | |
|---|------------|
| ARMSTRONG, Ms Pamela Fay, Manager, Infrastructure Development Section, Office of Sport and Recreation, Department of Emergency Services, Queensland Government, GPO Box 354, Brisbane, Queensland 4001 | 177 |
| BUCK, Ms Michele, President, Queensland Netball Association Inc. and President, Facilities Development and Management Corporation Ltd, 487 Vulture Street, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169 | 217 |
| COOPER, Mr James Gordon, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Netball Association Inc. and Company Secretary, Facilities Development and Management Corporation Ltd, 487 Vulture Street, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169 | 217 |
| GOLLEDGE, Councillor Roderick Warren, Mayor, Logan City Council, 150 Wembley Road, Logan Central, Queensland 4114 | 200 |
| GRAHAM, Ms Margaret, Director, Policy and Research, Local Government Association of Queensland, PO Box 2230, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, Queensland 4006 | 200 |
| HUMPHRIES, Mr Garry George, Manager, Recreation, Logan City Council, 150 Wembley Road, Logan Central, Queensland 4114 | 200 |
| HUNT, Mr Geoff, Honorary National Coach, Squash Australia Ltd, Office 9, Sports House, Cnr Castlemaine and Caxton Streets, Milton, Queensland | 234 |
| PEACOCK, Mr Harold, Executive Director, Queensland Basketball Association Inc. and Chief Executive Officer, Facilities Development and Management Corporation Ltd, 487 Vulture Street, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169 | 217 |
| PLASTOW, Mr Roger, Executive Director, Office of Sport and Recreation, Department of Emergency Services, Queensland Government, GPO Box 354, Brisbane, Queensland 4001 | 177 |
| TRENORDEN, Mr Phillip Edwin, National Executive Director, Squash Australia Ltd, Office 9, Sports House, Cnr Castlemaine and Caxton Streets, Milton, Queensland | 234 |
| WHITEHEAD, Mr Ian James, Director, Programs Directorate, Office of Sport and Recreation, Department of Emergency Services, Queensland Government, GPO Box 354, Brisbane, Queensland 4001 | 177 |

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Present

Mr Truss (Chair)

Mr Billson

Mr Jenkins

Mr Eoin Cameron

Mr Martin

Mr Hockey

Mr McDougall

The committee met at 9.02 a.m.

Mr Truss took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts inquiry into the funding of community sporting and recreational facilities. Since the inquiry was advertised in mid-November the committee has received more than 260 submissions. The committee is now holding public hearings in each of the state capital cities and visiting facilities in each of the states and territories.

The committee will hear today from representatives of local government, which is the nation's largest provider of sporting and recreational facilities; from the Queensland government, which also makes a substantial contribution to the funding of sporting and recreational facilities; from national sporting organisations across Australia; and from the Queensland Basketball Association and the Queensland Netball Association. The Facilities Development and Management Corporation, which was set up by the Queensland basketball and netball associations to provide needed facilities, will give the committee its perspective on the funding of sporting and recreational facilities.

Committee 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 you at any stage wish to give evidence in private you may ask to do so and the committee will consider such requests.

[9.04 a.m.]

ARMSTRONG, Ms Pamela Fay, Manager, Infrastructure Development Section, Office of Sport and Recreation, Department of Emergency Services, Queensland Government, GPO Box 354, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

PLASTOW, Mr Roger, Executive Director, Office of Sport and Recreation, Department of Emergency Services, Queensland Government, GPO Box 354, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

WHITEHEAD, Mr Ian James, Director, Programs Directorate, Office of Sport and Recreation, Department of Emergency Services, Queensland Government, GPO Box 354, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the Queensland government. We have received your submission and have authorised its publication. I compliment the Queensland government on being amongst the first to lodge a submission. We certainly appreciate the cooperation that we have received from you to date, and we are interested to further examine today some of the issues that you have raised in your submission. Are there any changes that you propose to the submission?

Mr Plastow—No, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—Would you like to make any introductory remarks?

Mr Plastow—Mr Chairman, we would just like to outline what is actually in the executive summary. We endeavoured to put this submission together, as you would realise, over a rather busy time, which is over the Christmas-New Year period. Trying to get submissions from all government departments at that time was a bit difficult, but we believe we have got together here a submission that covers most, if not all, aspects of the thinking of the various government departments.

We have outlined five major issues: a demand exists for the provision of local community sporting and recreation facilities; the government has a role in funding such facilities in cooperation with state governments, local authorities and other private sector providers; any such funding should be provided under the parameters of existing general revenue grants; funding should be based on comprehensive and quality planning at both a program and project level; and a cooperative, consultative and coordinated approach should be adopted incorporating all tiers of government and the private sector.

With those few words, Mr Chairman, because we would like to answer questions and also find out exactly what procedures you would like to follow, I will pass it over to you.

CHAIR—How much does the Queensland government spend each year on sporting facilities?

Mr Plastow—In a normal year, we put in at least \$10 million for major facilities and \$2 million for minor facilities. This particular year we are hoping that we will be able to add to that both through savings and through additional funding that the government will give us through the Office of Sport and Recreation.

So this particular year coming we may have close to \$20 million.

CHAIR—And that excludes funding on special projects like the redevelopment of the Gabba cricket ground or that sort of thing?

Mr Plastow—Yes. These are just projects that are funded through the Office of Sport and Recreation. That does not include special Treasury funding that might go to, say, Lang Park and the Gabba and those types of facilities.

CHAIR—Which would generally be at least that amount again, wouldn't it?

Mr Plastow—It would be way over our total budget, yes.

CHAIR—Are there any major facilities of that nature—Lang Park, Woolloongabba, et cetera—provided in centres other than Brisbane?

Mr Whitehead—We have given a commitment in regional centres. In Townsville, the Willowbank Centre has been developed through that process and the Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast has also been developed through funding provided by the Office of Sport and Recreation. They are considered to be not of state significance, as is Lang Park, but certainly they are major regional centres where national sporting competition can be held.

CHAIR—The state also provides funding through gambling revenue. In fact, the evidence that we received in Sydney two days ago showed that the sporting organisations there looked with some envy at the access to gambling funds in Queensland. Could you give the committee some indication of what money actually flows to sports developments through gambling revenue?

Mr Plastow—The Office of Sport and Recreation budget comes from that source. This year it is \$40 million.

CHAIR—Is that money actually hypothecated for your office?

Mr Plastow—It is in a trust fund, yes. It comes through the gambling fund directly to us—a percentage of the total.

CHAIR—So if the gambling revenue goes up, do you get more?

Mr Plastow—Yes.

CHAIR—And if it goes down?

Mr Plastow—We get less. So far, it has not gone down.

CHAIR—In addition to that, there is the Jupiter trust and the gaming machine money that local

organisations can apply to for funding.

Mr Plastow—That is right. They are usually in smaller amounts. They have a smaller limit on what they give. A lot of the time they are funding a different type of project whereby they might be funding equipment where we do not. So while there is a little bit of duplication in the funding given, most of the time there is not, and we try to look at different avenues to assist local and state organisations.

CHAIR—Going back briefly to major capital facilities, we had Tennis Australia giving evidence in Sydney and the availability of international standard tennis facilities was on the agenda. I am aware of newspaper reports that the tennis facility in Queensland has been sold, or that there is a contract of sale for it, largely to fund the debts of its particular organisation. What future plans are there for the provision of an international tennis facility in Queensland?

Mr Plastow—In this financial year we have given \$450,000 to Tennis Queensland for the development of a five-court complex at Hope Island. That was in an effort to ensure that we maintained our one and only major tournament, which is the equivalent of the old women's hard court championships. Tennis Queensland—you are right—has got major financial difficulties. Milton is being sold. I don't think any contract has yet been signed, but it is being sold. The main stadium at Milton is run down. I understand the Tennis Queensland plans are to try to develop an area of land over the road from the current site, but in the interim period the complex at Hope Island has been developed to take any tournaments that we may be able to attract. We believe that if we can maintain that one tournament per year we will be lucky.

CHAIR—And it will only have five courts?

Mr Plastow—At this stage, yes.

CHAIR—Which is below what is normally required for an international tournament?

Mr Plastow—Yes. It could not be put into any international class.

CHAIR—So there is no prospect of there being a Davis Cup match held in Queensland in the foreseeable future?

Mr Plastow—No.

CHAIR—I know you cannot talk about government policy, but is there a desire to have an international standard tennis facility in Queensland, or has it just been assessed that tennis is a dead sport and that it has no future?

Mr Plastow—Strangely enough, in our minor facility funding this year there were more projects for tennis than any other particular sport, right through the state, but they were on a regional level and a local level. At a grass roots level, tennis in Queensland is probably going very well. At a state level, it is not and the prospects of its going well are pretty limited. I think that is mainly because of the ability to attract sponsors and major tournaments, and at this stage I do not think Queensland can.

CHAIR—Tennis Australia said that they have provided funding assistance to Milton in the past and also to a facility in Western Australia. Have they adopted an attitude towards the situation in Queensland?

Mr Plastow—I could not answer that Mr Chairman. I do not know.

CHAIR—In this morning's papers I read that Athletics Queensland may be bankrupt, and that the treasurer has resigned overnight. Is there a similar difficulty there?

Mr Plastow—There is a difficulty in the financial situation for Athletics Queensland. I spoke to the chairman yesterday afternoon. He alerted me to the fact that the treasurer had resigned. He assured me that there was no truth in the rumour that they are bankrupt. They do have a cash flow problem every year at this time, but I think Athletics Queensland's problems are not just confined to financial problems. I think what is contributing to that is the fact that there is dissension in the regional areas and they are not affiliating with Queensland Athletics, so they have got an internal problem that they are trying to sort out at the present time.

Mr MARTIN—Isn't the solution to something like that that the state based associations give up control to the nationally based Athletics Australia where, as I understand it, if you take all the people that are employed on a state by state basis together with those that are in the national office in Melbourne, there are something like 72 administrators in the sport of athletics in this country? If they were all together and if some genuine direction were given, probably the problems in Queensland and, dare I say, New South Wales might in fact be resolved.

Mr Plastow—That is a possibility, but I would tend to think that administrators in Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa would feel a little bit remote from Melbourne. They would be looking for a little bit closer direction than Melbourne could give but, having said that, they are not really happy with what is coming from Brisbane either.

Mr MARTIN—So I believe. On the issue of this inquiry's terms of reference—and I think we should always try to come back to what they actually are—that is, whether the Commonwealth government has a role in the provision of sporting facilities in Australia and, if we do have a role, should there be a financial commitment to that, and where should the money come from? In terms of all the facilities with which the Queensland government is involved, and given that you have a quasi-guaranteed source of funding through gambling revenue, do you see that there is still a role for the Commonwealth government in funding sports facilities in this state? At what level should that be? Should it be at the community based level or should it be directed towards state, international and national type facilities? If you believe that the Commonwealth has a role, why is that the case? What justification can you offer?

Mr Plastow—That is a rather multi-pronged question. Certainly, from the state of Queensland's point of view and given the size of the state and the remoteness of some of our areas, we believe that there is a real need for Commonwealth financial assistance if we are to try to maintain the populations that we still have in some of the more remote areas. Sporting facilities are just one avenue of doing this, but it is a very important avenue of maintaining a lifestyle and some sort of independence in some of these rural areas. A lot of the time sport is the one social aspect of life that keeps a community together or maintains some continuity within the community.

Various Commonwealth governments have maintained that there is a need to keep the rural communities as prosperous as possible, with as many people in those communities as possible. So, if there is going to be some assistance given, and we certainly believe there should be, we have got to look at the rural/remote areas as one particular area. They may need a totally different type of facility, and any facility should be done in any community on an individual basis. I believe that if we come to think that all we have got to do is put in a gigantic hall with a few courts in the middle of it and we have got a community facility and that is all we need to do, well we are going to be wrong because some communities do not need that and will not use that while other communities will.

Just from a social point of view the Commonwealth has a responsibility to maintain some of the rural areas as we have got them now. There is a trend of populations going away from the rural areas. I think everybody believes we have got to maintain populations in those areas and, as I said, one way of doing that is by providing some sort of basic structures that can give some people in those areas a quality of life.

Mr MARTIN—How do you assess what is required in each of those areas, taking your point about rural and remote communities in Queensland for a start?

Mr Plastow—Well, one of the things we are doing in Queensland is working very closely with local government and with local and regional sporting organisations to judge what they believe they need. Now, it cannot only be done on a sport basis. By that I mean that if you go to rugby league, they will tell you they need rugby league fields. If you go to basketball, they will tell you they need basketball courts. If you go to local government, hopefully they are the best people to say what a community as a whole will need. We are working very closely to identify needs in each area. We are spending a lot of money each year with local government on open area planning for recreation and sport.

Mr MARTIN—So those plans would identify whether a community needed a swimming pool, for example, or an indoor sports complex or a few netball courts or lighting to be supplied to an existing facility.

Mr Plastow—Hopefully. We are also putting together a facilities plan that will take into account all facilities from a local level to a state level and from a national standard right down to a local level. When that plan is finally completed during the next financial year, we should have a very good picture right throughout the state of what each community will need at least on a regional basis and, in some cases, right down to a local basis.

Mr MARTIN—That is community assessment. As part of that, are you also talking to the sports organisations to see what they want?

Mr Plastow—Yes, on both a state and regional basis and, as I said, with local government.

Mr MARTIN—You gave an example a minute ago of athletics. In those discussions across broad Queensland, are you getting some opinion that is universal? For example, if the people in Cairns are not happy with the administration of athletics in Brisbane, how do you reconcile those sorts of concerns in regional parts of Queensland?

Mr Plastow—You have to take into account that everybody will be parochial in some shape or form. It is reasonable for some state organisations to look at their needs. They will base their major facilities around the major resources that they have as far as accommodation, travel and their own headquarters are concerned. I think that is reasonable. As a state government, we will be putting a bias on regional areas as much as possible to try to take sports and major facilities out of the south-east corner.

For example, there is a representative here this morning from rowing. At the current time, we are looking at a facility for rowing in Bundaberg. I believe that facility, if developed, will be used not only by Queenslanders but also by Australian teams for both training and competition at some stage. That is the only way we should go. If we base all our rowing facilities in south-east Queensland, the rest of the state will suffer.

Mr MARTIN—It has been put to us by a number of representatives so far that, if there were a third Commonwealth, third state, third local government contribution in the provision of facilities—not defining whether they be regional facilities or simply the construction of lights on a netball court somewhere—that would be an appropriate breakdown in terms of contribution. Does the state government have a view on that?

Mr Plastow—It would be fair to local government areas that have a good rate base. But, again, once you get out into some of the rural areas where the rate base is very low, and if the facility is governed by the amount of money that the local authority can put in, you will finish up with a second-rate facility compared with what could be put in in a major provincial area. A little bias has to be given to those areas that are rate base poor to make sure that the facilities we put in are suitable and not based purely and simply on what that community can put in.

Mr MARTIN—Would the state have a problem picking up that additional contribution if necessary because the rate base would not be as good for local government?

Mr Plastow—Not at all. We are doing that now where necessary.

Mr MARTIN—If a fund existed at the Commonwealth level, should there be an upper limit imposed on how much money people could apply for? Should those applications come from individual communities or individual sports or be coordinated by local government? Or should there be a role for the state government?

Mr Plastow—It is going to be very difficult. If you have a fund that is going to fund everything from a set of lights on a basketball court right through to a fairly major stadium, it is going to be a very difficult program to control and to administer. I would think it would tend to lead to some sort of duplication. I do not believe any funding should go directly from the Commonwealth to the local club level into a community. If those same people are applying for funds to the state government, the local government and the federal government, you will finish up with a situation where duplication is rife. You have to have a bottom limit, because I do not believe any fund that is going to cover Australia can look at projects that are worth \$2,000 or \$3,000. I do not know what upper limit there should be, but I do not think you would want to put in \$30 million or \$40 million for an upgrade of Suncorp stadium.

Mr MARTIN—That is probably true. Should there be community involvement in the contribution to

projects that come forward for funding? Should the community and the relevant sporting organisation have to contribute something as well?

Mr Plastow—I do not think it would matter whether it came from the community or local government, as long as you could get a contribution. There should be some sort of contribution at the local level. The level of that contribution may be governed by where it is coming from, by the remoteness or by the ability to pay. If the local authority is prepared to put in all the money, or if the money comes from a local sporting body or a group of sporting bodies or a combination of all of them, I do not think it would really matter, as long as there is some sort of ownership at a local level.

Mr BILLSON—We have heard evidence which suggested that, if the Commonwealth were able to see its way clear to find some resources for these recreational facilities, it should focus on regional facilities to try to service a broader catchment of people. Are you saying that ‘regional’ needs to be stretched a bit further to include remote and rural and that we should apply the regional framework in the more urban areas of our nation?

Mr Plastow—That depends on what you mean by rural?

Mr BILLSON—I was inviting you to tell me what you think.

Mr Plastow—Some of the areas which I would class as regional are very remote. If you go to Longreach and further west, you could group together 11 local authorities in one group which would certainly be regional, but it is also very remote. If you take big parts of Queensland, they still come under the regional heading and the remote heading. It is only the coastal strip that does not.

Mr BILLSON—Part of the argument behind those submissions is that the ongoing viability of the venue is an essential test. I see some tension between the rural and the remote criteria and ongoing viability so that the venue can sustain itself over time. Do you have any thoughts on that subject?

Mr Whitehead—I think that will always be the case in regard to the catchment areas for these types of facilities and as to whether the local authorities have the rate base to underpin that from the community service or cultural point of view. Some facilities may be provided and subsidised through local government purely on the basis that they are not viable, but they are a much needed facility within that area. I think any assistance they could get in capital expenditure that would offset their cost in capital infrastructure—and they would then use their resources to look at subsidising access to that—would be welcomed by those communities.

Mr BILLSON—So you would not imagine that the Commonwealth would be asked to contribute recurrent funding. You would see that quite clearly being left with the local authorities and your own programs.

Mr Whitehead—Certainly the stance that we have taken is that we would invest in one-off capital costs, and any operating deficit would be picked up by the local authority in regard to the operation of the facility.

Mr BILLSON—I hate to use some infrastructure jargon, but what about renewals, where you need to reinvest in the capital fabric of the facility? Does your program presently provide for that? Would you advocate that the Commonwealth should consider that?

Mr Whitehead—Our programs certainly provide for the upgraded facilities. What we would look at in assessing any facility application is the business plan that they would submit with that facility. One of the key aspects that we would be looking for in the business plan is an in-built mechanism for maintenance. I think that is one of the key issues that need to be brought about if we are operating facilities as viable businesses. Maintenance must be included in those business plans. I think we have learnt lessons from the past where maintenance has not been included and we have had reapplications for basically the duplication of the facility, but only because that sort of maintenance vote was not built into their budgets or their costing or pricing charges.

Mr BILLSON—In terms of the facilities themselves and your program, what breadth of recreational activity do you embrace?

Ms Armstrong—We embrace a full range of recreation pursuits from outdoor recreation right through to elite level sport. The recreational side is a little more difficult to define than the sporting side, particularly regarding what constitutes outdoor recreation and where it crosses into tourism. Certainly the needs at the local level for passive recreation are often met by the community itself without our assistance.

Mr BILLSON—How is that travelling with your own program? There is another program that seems to have fallen over—that is, the community recreation centres program. Broadly, what was that about and why has it been discontinued?

Ms Armstrong—The community recreation centres program was a previous government initiative and allocated \$10 million to facilities in areas of need for youth and youth unemployment, areas of youth crime, plus areas of growth and areas of social disadvantage. When that program came about we put together some research and some basic planning within the state to have a look at the areas in the state that were in need. I have brought that basic planning document with me today.

The program itself was run by an external body called the Clem Jones Committee. That committee was answerable to the government. However, there were no guidelines put together for the funding of grants under that program. Because of that, with the change in government, the program was slashed.

Mr Plastow—The funding for that program has been tied up now under the national standards. It is not as if the total funding has been wiped from that plan—

Mr BILLSON—It has been repackaged?

Mr Plastow—The money has been allocated in other areas.

Mr BILLSON—My last question relates to the very needs driven approach that seems to be coming through from what you are saying. In a state just to our south, they appear to allocate a chunk of money per

electorate and then sort out some local issues. I found that extraordinary, but it certainly has some appeal depending where you are sitting in the equation. That is not something that you would think would be a help—it would only exaggerate the servicing and under-servicing that you alluded to earlier, is that right?

Mr Plastow—What we tend to do is call for applications for funding and we try to look at those as objectively as possible in terms of the quality of each application. It is very difficult to say, ‘We will put them in a priority list of which area needs what.’ We also do give a weighting to rural areas and remote and the needs of those particular areas. This is particularly so with our minor facilities funding.

This year, for example, we got a number of extremely good applications and then instead of the \$2 million that was allocated the minister gave approval for an additional \$1.5 million to be allocated so that we could try to provide as many facilities as possible in as many areas as possible. We have an upper limit for those minor facilities projects of \$50,000.

We do not try to spread it too thinly so that everybody gets a little. We try to make sure that the projects we put in are quality projects that will service the community well. We would rather restrict the numbers, if necessary, to make sure that we are doing quality work. It is very difficult to know how to allocate that, but it is done totally impartially as far as the areas of the state are concerned, apart from the weighting that we would give to some of the really remote areas where we would say, ‘There is a special need for a special project there.’ It might not rate as highly as some of the others, but because of the weighting we put on it, they would get approval.

Mr McDOUGALL—Can I go back to the way in which a funding structure might work. I noticed in your remarks earlier on that you said that the funds from the federal government should flow through in general revenue grants and then it should be left to the state to make the decisions on where that money was to go. Following on from Mr Martin’s comments about a third, a third and a third, are you saying in that that you do not agree to a system where you would have a joint management program and that grants approved would be tied to specific projects if they had a multiple level of funding?

Mr Plastow—I do not believe that any state should say to the Commonwealth, ‘You just give us the money and let us do what we want to do with it.’ I also do not agree with the fact that there should be a separate stream of funding coming in from the Commonwealth bypassing the state and going directly to a source. So it has to be a joint partnership and it would have to be a program that was agreed on—and I believe each project should be something that should be agreed on between all three parties.

Mr McDOUGALL—What structure should be put in place to be able to select those projects and to be able to manage the finance?

Mr Plastow—I think the recommendations would have to come from the states to the Commonwealth for final approval, but the recommendations should definitely be done on a state basis.

Mr McDOUGALL—Do you see the Commonwealth as having a role in that assessment panel?

Mr Plastow—It could slow down the process a fair bit if initially the Commonwealth had a role.

Certainly before the final decision is made, consultation could be taken between the states, but I believe the initial recommendations would have to come from the states.

Mr Whitehead—I think that we would be looking for some guidance from the Commonwealth in setting their priorities as to whether they would want to see funds go to rural and remote communities or the development of a continuing facility from elite down to local community. We would then prepare and work with local government to maximise those resources to put recommendations up to federal government for their consideration.

I think the way it can work in a tripartite arrangement is we need to maximise the resources from local government, state government and federal government and ensure the planning is right in getting it up through the systems.

CHAIR—What you are proposing seems to have some efficiency benefits. The downside from the Commonwealth's perspective would be that it might be perceived as being a silent partner in the process and, therefore, getting none of the credit either.

Mr Plastow—But the Commonwealth would be setting the guidelines, so any recommendations would have to come up within those guidelines. The Commonwealth would have the control from that point of view and would have the final say—it is partially their funds anyway. So the final decision making would be a partnership arrangement. What I am saying is that, if you had to have three parties agreeing and looking at every application or every project, then the process would be slowed down rather considerably.

Mr BILLSON—Would you have a minimum effort requirement from the states? We have a problem occasionally where the Commonwealth provides money and the states withdraw their effort. In those guidelines would you have a threshold effort required from the state governments in terms of funding?

Mr Plastow—I believe so. I believe if the states did not live up to their side of the bargain, then Commonwealth funding would cease. From a Queensland point of view, what we are proposing or what we would like to see happen is that anything that came from the Commonwealth would be well and truly over the top of what we are currently doing or what we would hope to do in the future.

Mr McDOUGALL—Just to go a bit further, we have talked about a third, a third, a third—the three levels of government. If you had developed this assessment process for development, where and how does the private sector become involved to be able to broaden the base of that funding and how then would it join in with the assessment process?

Mr Whitehead—I think that when you talk about a strict one third, one third, one third division, it certainly limits the partnerships that you can bring together. I think that certainly the private sector has a role to play in working with local government, state government and federal government in the development of those facilities. So I think we would need to look at a mix and that would depend. If you have got a general rule of thumb of a third, a third and a third and if state government could bring another mix towards that which would alleviate or diminish those contributions from each of those levels, then I think that should be welcomed and I think the private sector should be able to contribute and work with state government in

developing that sort of mix for consideration.

Mr McDOUGALL—I raise the point because we heard evidence in Sydney from James Hardie. Should I say it was like reinventing the Life Be In It BHP game. They specifically talked about a potential of doing a development in the Shailer Park region along with the education department and the Logan City Council.

Talking about the education department in this state getting involved in capital facilities for community use, from my history of being around this place for a long time, is like talking to a brick wall. How does your department feel and how is your cooperation with the education department about joining them in capital facilities development?

Mr Plastow—We funded a rather major project at Runcorn this year. In a pilot project with the education department, we have funded six major projects throughout the state and they are minor facilities. In remote areas particularly, we allow development to go on education department land if it is proven to be of benefit to the community. We certainly do not exclude development projects with the education department.

Mr McDOUGALL—How does that work with sport in that area and the management of that facility so that it has got proper use by the total community?

Mr Whitehead—It would be fair to say that we have been evaluating each of those and looking at how it happens. As Roger indicated, there have been several—Marsden, Palm Beach, Runcorn, Mossman and others. Generally, in each of those pilot programs a community management committee has been appointed to manage those facilities which comprises representation of local government, sporting users of the facility plus the education department. They have their own separate accounts in relation to the management of that type of facility.

They are the things we are currently evaluating now—the effectiveness of that management committee. Certainly they can employ, through that management committee, a professional venue manager to promote and develop activities within that. That is the sort of tack that we have taken in making sure that community access is guaranteed and there is community management over those facilities of which education is a key.

Mr McDOUGALL—Would you have the opportunity within that framework to be able to introduce private sector funding?

Mr Whitehead—Very much, that could be part of the mix.

Mr McDOUGALL—The education department would accept that?

Mr Plastow—I cannot speak for the education department, but I cannot see why not.

Mr McDOUGALL—They have not had a good record. You seem to have come a hell of a long way in a short period. I compliment you on that. It is something that has been tried for many years. I would be

interested if you could give us some feedback as to the education department's reaction to the private sector's having some involvement in that capital? What is the reaction of the universities and the tertiary education department to the same concept?

CHAIR—You may like to comment on your community use of schools pilot program?

Ms Armstrong—Yes, that is the one that we are currently talking about. It has been conducted over the last three years and is currently in an evaluation process. We have done six projects in total. Mostly in the south-east, but also one at Mossman. Of those six projects, one is an aquatic centre and the others are indoor courts of multi-purpose use. The community committees that are operating are functioning reasonable well.

The ongoing operational costs of the facility is an issue that all of these facilities are facing. We are currently jointly funding other projects with the education department through both the minor facilities and the national facilities program. Also there were several funded under the community recreation centres program at Harristown, Urangan and Atherton. Those three do not have community based committees, but are managed by the school principal and are functioning very well. It seems that the education department philosophy is a commitment to joint use where possible, but the discretion still comes back to the school principal. That we see as a bit of a stumbling block.

Mr McDOUGALL—What about your comments in regard to universities?

Ms Armstrong—We are jointly funding at the moment Queensland University with an athletics track and Griffith University at the Gold Coast with an athletics track. We welcome the partnerships with tertiary education departments, particularly where we know the ongoing maintenance and operation of those facilities will be kept up by the university for a long period of time.

Mr MARTIN—Will access be guaranteed to those facilities?

Mr Plastow—Yes.

Mr MARTIN—Is that part of your criteria?

Mr Plastow—Yes, that is part of the resource agreement.

Mr BILLSON—We visited Newcastle University yesterday.

Mr McDOUGALL—It was an interesting exercise.

Mr Plastow—We are also putting \$2 million into Central Queensland University for a major indoor facility up there. We have no qualms about doing that so long as it is guaranteed through the resource agreement and the community knows all about it.

CHAIR—You mentioned a problem with the attitude of the principal at the school. Bear in mind that

school principals get transferred periodically and that a problem which may not be there at the time the project is initiated could occur later. As I understand it, the state is moving much more towards principal managed schools.

Ms Armstrong—That is right.

CHAIR—How are you going to get over this problem in the long term?

Mr Plastow—We would like to believe we can draw up management agreements that will have very strict guidelines to limit the powers of a principal to say, ‘No, you can’t build’, or, ‘Yes, you can build.’ There would be a management committee that would be setting the guidelines for it. Naturally, we can’t walk in and take over a school and nor should we try to take over any part of the operation of that school. If we can provide a facility that the school can use and the community can use then we can set up that management structure prior to the building being finished or, hopefully, prior to even granting funding. We can’t see that there should be any problem with the ongoing maintenance of it or the ongoing operation of it.

Mr Whitehead—Those management committees have worked quite well. The reference that Pam was also making is that where we do not have management agreements and there is just access to, say, tennis courts or oval-type facilities then that is at the discretion of the school principal at this point in time and that varies with regard to how the school principal perceives his litigation position and his responsibilities.

CHAIR—So the education department or the school and the community would have to contribute to some kind of a sinking fund for ongoing maintenance and refurbishment.

Mr Plastow—That is correct.

Mr McDOUGALL—I am aware of your development that took place at considerable cost to the State Hockey Centre. I would be interested in your comments. While that is a fairly specific sort of operation and I know there is another building going up which has some multiple use for other people, what is your department’s general attitude in relation to multiple use of capital facilities when you are looking at making a judgment of where you are going to put money?

Mr Plastow—The State Hockey Centre is a very specific purpose built facility. It was built to be the State Hockey Centre. Those facilities can also have multi-use. It does not only have to be used for hockey. We are encouraging the management of that centre to broaden their outlook and to look for as much revenue as they can by using it as a multi-use facility.

Mr McDOUGALL—Are you saying you didn’t come to a management agreement with them before you built it and you are now trying to do it after it is up and operational?

Mr Plastow—The State Hockey Centre is probably not a very good example of what we can and cannot do. It is a facility that was put on a site that was extremely costly and unfortunately a lot of the funding that should have gone into the development of the overall site finished up going into knocking down

a hill. That was a very expensive site to develop. Unfortunately, we have two magnificent fields but very little infrastructure around them. Now we are working with the State Hockey Centre to try to help them to further develop the site and to use it as a multi-purpose area.

Mr McDOUGALL—Do you see private sector funding as a possibility there?

Mr Plastow—I would love to see it but I don't know if it is possible at this stage.

Ms Armstrong—In terms of multi-purpose though, in our assessment process multi-purpose is part of and has a higher weighting than single-purpose facilities.

Mr Whitehead—There does need to be clear recognition that there are some sports which require single purpose facilities. They come at high cost because of the requirements of the international sporting federation for them to be able to conduct those events and conduct those national championships.

Mr McDOUGALL—Some of the major cost in facility development is also that block that becomes the change room and the sewerage, and all those water costs become very high cost. As we travel around Australia I continue to see these isolated buildings that are there for one sport. You might have a hockey field, and I accept it is specific, but on the other side of that amenities block—that building which is so expensive to build—there does not appear to be any other further development which could utilise that building at the same time.

Mr Whitehead—That is a fair comment.

Mr McDOUGALL—So you are saying that you do now look at that as a criterion?

Ms Armstrong—Multi-purpose has been a criterion in our assessment for the past three to four years. The other thing we look for, more particularly, as well as location of facilities, is what we call a sports precinct because the sports can utilise common infrastructure within a sports reserve.

Mr Plastow—In some of our regional areas where it is probably most prevalent we are getting a number of sports—five, six, seven or eight sports—all utilising the same facilities, the same dressing sheds, the same clubhouse, the same everything. It is only in its infancy but it is definitely in the thinking of regional areas more and more.

Mr BILLSON—Would you be prepared to provide us with a copy of your evaluation process? It sounds quite interesting.

Ms Armstrong—Yes. We could certainly provide the guidelines that we provide to the clients plus our assessment process mechanism.

CHAIR—Quite a number of submissions to the committee have suggested that one way that the Commonwealth could fund an involvement in sporting facilities is a national lottery. Since your office seems to be fairly critically dependent upon gambling revenue for its existence, what would be your attitude towards

the introduction of a national lottery?

Mr Plastow—If it provides facilities, I have no problems with that. I do not know how the split-up of the money would work. There would be a lot of things to do, but I have no problems with that. I think it would be almost a guaranteed source of funding.

CHAIR—Do you think there would be a capacity for a national lottery to be introduced without affecting state revenue from gambling?

Mr Plastow—I do not think a national lottery would have much effect at all, not on our source of funding.

CHAIR—Do you think there is sufficient money in the community—gambling dollars in the community—to support another system of lotteries?

Ms Armstrong—I think at the expense of some of the social issues for the Australian community.

CHAIR—It has also been suggested to us under the model of, perhaps, VicHealth, that there could be a levy on cigarettes to fund a national organisation that provided funding for sport and sporting activities and facilities. Queensland does not have such a body. Do you have any reaction to the work that that body in Victoria is doing?

Mr Whitehead—From what I know of the work of the council, I think it does very good work. Its source of funding is a legitimate way in which the Victorian government has seen to fund that particular body. I can only support their principles and the activities that they are undertaking.

Ms Armstrong—I have a comment that may be appropriate. If we do not condone the sponsorship of sports by cigarette companies, are we prepared to accept money from cigarette smoking as a tax for the construction of facilities for sports?

CHAIR—But we do not, do we? We do not accept cigarette advertising.

Ms Armstrong—No, we do not.

CHAIR—So you do not think we should take money from them for sports?

Ms Armstrong—I think that is a really strong ethical question we should be asking ourselves.

Mr MARTIN—It might be ethical, but it begs the question about hypocrisy as well.

Ms Armstrong—That is exactly right.

Mr HOCKEY—Is there any relationship between the low taxation on tobacco in Queensland and the lower levels of spending on sport?

Ms Armstrong—No relationship at all.

Mr HOCKEY—So given that Queensland has the lowest taxation on tobacco in Australia, do you think there is a strong ethical claim to link it to spending on infrastructure in sport?

Ms Armstrong—Yes, I do think it is a strong ethical situation.

Mr Plastow—I would have thought that Queensland's spending on infrastructure per head of population would rate fairly highly amongst Australian states.

Mr MARTIN—If another source of funding for a national facilities program were to be a sports lottery, would the Queensland government give up any concerns they had about us putting a lottery in place?

Mr Plastow—I could not answer that on behalf of the Premiers Department and Treasury.

Mr MARTIN—They run lotteries, do they?

Mr Plastow—Treasury does.

Mr HOCKEY—Just to clarify that point a little further, as far as I am aware the Queensland government's expenditure on capital works is one of the lowest per capita in Australia.

CHAIR—On sports facilities?

Mr HOCKEY—Total. I would assume that that would include a proportional amount on sports facilities. Unless you are spending more on sporting facilities than you are on hospitals, which is quite conceivable—as a general principle—

CHAIR—You couldn't spend more than on hospitals.

Mr HOCKEY—That is right, of course. But the Queensland government has one of the lowest sports capital works programs per capita in Australia.

Mr Plastow—The spending on sporting facilities does not even come under the capital works heading because it comes under a trust fund. When you are talking about capital works spending in Queensland, the spending on sports facilities is not even listed there. It comes under a trust fund and it is not listed under capital works.

Mr HOCKEY—It is totally off budget?

Mr Plastow—Yes. The only capital work in our budget that shows up under capital works is the maintenance program for our rec camps, which is about a million dollars a year, or something.

Mr BILLSON—You have to give the statisticians a break though. I would not have imagined I would

have had to look for it under emergency services.

Mr HOCKEY—If Queensland follows the budget set-up of most other Australian states, the capital works budget includes the inner budget and the outer budget of the government, that is, the core budget funding and then related trust funds, anything that the government may control. You are saying that the government has no control over the capital works budget in sports?

Mr Plastow—All the facilities that are built through the Office of Sport and Recreation go through capital grants, so we are giving money to sporting organisations or local government to spend on sporting facilities. We are subsidising them. It does not come under capital works, it comes under capital grants.

Mr MARTIN—You missed the earlier comment that they have a guaranteed source of funding for this that comes from a proportion of gambling revenue in the state. As a consequence, as I understand what was being said, their funding at the minute continues to increase because gambling revenue continues to increase. The application of those funds therefore is contained within your own Office of Sport and Recreation which is within the Department of Emergency Services.

Mr HOCKEY—Yes, I am just trying to compare apples with apples to make comparisons with other states. For example, in New South Wales the capital works project—even if it is not directly funded out of the budget; even if it comes from another source or if it is hypothecated as you are saying that it is in your case—expenditure still goes through the capital works committee. Are you saying that it is different in Queensland?

Ms Armstrong—That is right.

Mr HOCKEY—So you do not have any comparisons of per capita expenditure on sporting facilities?

Mr Plastow—All I know is that our contribution to sport overall is much higher than most states.

Mr HOCKEY—Per capita?

Mr Plastow—In dollars alone we give \$7 million to state sporting organisations per year to help with administration. I do not think if you added all the other states together that they would come up with that figure.

Ms Armstrong—Our funding for grants for facilities is also the largest in Australia.

Mr HOCKEY—Can you provide us with some of the details of those figures?

Ms Armstrong—Yes, we certainly can and we can have a go at calculating that per capita rate for you.

Mr EOIN CAMERON—In an effort to short-circuit the debate between Queensland and the Mexicans, you mentioned earlier—

CHAIR—The state actually plays rugby union so you can understand why.

Mr EOIN CAMERON—In terms of the way you go about prioritising and working out which particular projects get funding, I point out that in the interests of furthering federal and state relations we have a great big whiteboard in Canberra that is surplus to our needs that you may be interested in.

Ms Armstrong—We try to avoid them.

Mr EOIN CAMERON—That is wise.

CHAIR—Ms Armstrong, you also had a document. Were you wanting that to be made available to the committee. I am sure the committee would be very interested in that.

Ms Armstrong—That is to be tabled today.

CHAIR—That being the case I propose to take that document as exhibit No. 2. Is there any objection to that process? If not, we will take this item as exhibit No. 2. The research paper is entitled *Identification of areas of need for community recreation centres*.

Ms Armstrong—That was in 1995. We would also be prepared to provide our state facilities plan process document that we are currently in the process of developing. We have also done a lot of work on the side of inventories so that we have a reliable database of facilities from regional standard and above.

Mr McDOUGALL—In terms of the database, I asked a group about this yesterday and they had actually done a database on what local government had. They had forgotten about education facilities and the private sector. Does your database include the private sector and the education facilities?

Ms Armstrong—Yes, it does.

Mr JENKINS—The \$7 million related to sporting bodies, is that all levels from state right through to regional levels?

Mr Plastow—That \$7 million goes just to state organisations. One million dollars goes to the club and regional level.

Mr JENKINS—Do you have any evidence that if, as you say, it is a high level compared to other states that it reduces the amount that individuals have to pay from the grassroots back up? It is one of the surprising things I think we—

Mr Plastow—One of the biggest evaluation needs that we have at the present time in the office of sport, is to look at that \$7 million and the way it is being spent and the benefits that are being accrued.

Mr JENKINS—That leads me to another question. What sort of advice do you get from the state associations about the needs of their particular sports?

Ms Armstrong—We are currently examining the needs of Olympic sports for their current facility development and applications for the next two years. We are also asking them about their needs beyond 2000, so that we can calculate a 10-year planning process for each sport.

Mr Plastow—Are you talking about facilities or—

Mr JENKINS—Facilities, yes.

Mr Whitehead—We have a sports development unit and officers within that area who work with individual sports. There is also the Sports Federation of Queensland that provides input and advice to the Queensland government as a representative of those sports as well as one agency. So there are various ways of getting that information that you are talking about.

Mr JENKINS—The last question I would ask in general about the state sporting associations is: have they got the management skills and planning skills to be able to assist in the type of long-range facilities planning that is required?

Mr Whitehead—We fund over 90 state sporting organisations. The level of expertise varies greatly from a quarter of a million dollars down to \$5,000. You go from rugby league to rugby union and the elite sports right down to darts and chess. The amount of planning that is needed in various sports varies a hell of a lot too. I would tend to think, at this stage, the resources that most of those organisations have do not allow them to go from day-to-day operations into long-term planning and visionary type work. Some are doing it a lot better than others, but with all the resources we are giving them, we are going to have to evaluate now whether or not the level of planning and the level of forward thinking has increased dramatically over the years that we have been giving that money.

Mr MARTIN—And should we therefore, as a consequence of that, make some hard decisions as to whether or not we should fund every sport that wants to put their hand up in this country?

Mr Plastow—That is right.

Mr MARTIN—Therefore, we should have some assessment process that indicates there should be a certain number of sports which levels of government will look after and that any others wanting perhaps to participate have to look after themselves?

Mr Plastow—Funding levels are now becoming more and more performance based.

Mr MARTIN—Do you think that is appropriate?

Mr Plastow—It is certainly appropriate in some areas. For sports that are getting very good levels of public funding and not performing at all, the funding will be reduced as far as government policy at the present time is concerned. Unless they are performing to a certain level, their funding will be reduced—and in some cases that has already happened.

Mr McDOUGALL—Does the level of participation come into that criteria?

Mr Plastow—Yes, it does. Possibly, it is not a major one, but it is getting up there more and more. Sports that have very low participation levels have been asked to work on development programs, and regional development programs, to encourage greater participation.

Mr McDOUGALL—We hear a lot of complaint at the moment about IOC sports getting all the dough, right through to the year 2000—and some of those probably have the highest participation rates of any sport in Australia. They are very concerned about where they will be by the year 2000. I have had the comment come back, ‘Well, federal government is going to cut back funding after 2000 because they’ve spent a fortune, and Treasury says that we’re going to save some money, so who then gets the money after 2000?’ I think Ms Armstrong started talking about program development. Ms Armstrong, you mentioned IOC sports, but you did not go on to say what you are doing about the rest after 2000.

Ms Armstrong—In that planning process with the state sporting organisations, we are commencing the work with all the other sports in May. It is starting that soon for us to have a better assessment of all the needs of all sports, not just of those Olympic sports.

Mr BILLSON—In relation to cooperation with federal agencies, it is encouraging to hear what you are saying about work with the schools. But are there opportunities currently for facilities at Department of Defence installations at Townsville, Amberley, and perhaps to a lesser extent Cabarlah and Oakey, to be worked into broader availability for the communities that surround them?

Ms Armstrong—We have not had any negotiations at all with the army or the other defence places. The Belmont Rifle Range is one at the moment that is proactive in its development, and that includes the army.

Mr BILLSON—So there are opportunities for more of that, you think?

Ms Armstrong—I think so.

Mr Plastow—But they are very limited in number.

Ms Armstrong—Certainly in Townsville the use of the existing community sporting facilities by the army personnel is quite large.

CHAIR—Does the community use the army’s facilities?

Ms Armstrong—That is a good question, and I do not have the answer.

CHAIR—I understand that Queensland currently is the chairman of the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. Can you tell us whether that standing committee is going to make a submission to the committee of inquiry? If so, we have not received it as yet.

Mr Plastow—I understand the draft has been put together by the Australian Sports Commission.

Ms Armstrong—The Australasian Facilities Committee.

Mr Plastow—The draft has been completed and is being sent to each state now, and it should be in your hands very shortly.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for your appearance before the committee today. We have appreciated the information that you have supplied, and we look forward to the additional information also that you will be supplying.

Short adjournment

[10.24 a.m.]

GRAHAM, Ms Margaret, Director, Policy and Research, Local Government Association of Queensland, PO Box 2230, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, Queensland 4006

GOLLEDGE, Councillor Roderick Warren, Mayor, Logan City Council, 150 Wembley Road, Logan Central, Queensland 4114

HUMPHRIES, Mr Garry George, Manager, Recreation, Logan City Council, 150 Wembley Road, Logan Central, Queensland 4114

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for your attendance today. We have received your submissions and we have authorised their publication. Are there any changes that you would like to propose to the submissions?

Ms Graham—No.

CHAIR—I invite you to make an opening statement before I invite members of the committee to ask questions.

Ms Graham—Thank you for the opportunity to come along today and to highlight some of the items that we have mentioned in our submission. The association is the peak body representing local government in Queensland, and when we were informed of your inquiry we asked our member councils for comment and we received over 20 submissions from local councils throughout Queensland. So our comments to the committee are essentially based on the response we got from councils. Some councils wrote to you separately—I noticed Cairns and obviously Logan did—but most of the comments that we were interested in putting forward were those from the more rural and remote councils because that is where the majority of our members are from.

Local government is a major player in sporting and recreational facilities through a range of its responsibilities. Local governments have responsibilities as planners; some of them are extremely involved in facility development; some of them engage specialist personnel to help manage and maintain; they provide a management role for some of the volunteer clubs and associations; they manage and maintain assets and facilities; and they are also involved in evaluating community needs. So their role apart from just being providers of facilities is fairly broad.

We believe that the Commonwealth has a role. The reasons behind that role, we see, are part of providing for a healthy lifestyle and making sure that people who are interested and committed, particularly young people from country areas, have an opportunity to participate in the international sporting arena. We also believe that from a Commonwealth perspective there is a need for equity of access and appropriate standard provisions.

I said that I would focus mainly on the concerns of the rural councils, and we heard from the state government people this morning that they do have a minimal rate base and their capacity to do things is

much more limiting than some of the larger urban councils. In Queensland we have extremely large councils like Brisbane, Gold Coast, Logan, Ipswich and Townsville and then we have some very tiny ones. It is those smaller ones with a very limiting rate base that cannot provide facilities or do not have opportunities to use private sector facilities that some of our urban friends have.

We saw a number of options that might help meet the needs of some councils, and we saw that the Commonwealth could probably be involved in some sort of cocktail funding arrangement, particularly for regional facilities where there might be some sort of cross-border arrangement. Within that cocktail funding we would want to see the community and the private sector as well as the three levels of government providing a role. We also thought that refurbishing and modernising existing facilities was a way of getting some services in place. We also saw the use of educational facilities as another option. School principals are the ones that make the final decision so there are some constraints in that area. In the more rural areas where the schools and the school principal are seen as major players in the community there would probably be a better option to use those sorts of facilities than perhaps in some of the urban areas.

With regard to private sector sponsorship and financing, there is very much a difference of capacity there between the urban areas and the rural areas, but still it is something that needs to be provided. The final option that we saw in meeting the needs is to identify that local government is probably best placed to identify and coordinate the needs of the local community. It is often hampered in doing so by a lack of resources to undertake those studies, and sometimes it is also hampered by having the appropriate mix of professional people that understand the issues and can put those submissions together.

I would also like to make a comment in relation to one of the issues mentioned earlier by the state government. When facilities are being developed, people often focus very much on the capital side, and one of the problems that local governments in rural Queensland have is that they can often get access to capital facilities, whether they be for recreational or community activities, but sometimes they do not necessarily need that because they often own the land and they might have a capacity to put a lot of the capital in. It is with the management and ongoing activities that they certainly have the problem, so I would make a plea that, with any programs to be put in place, the guidelines with which they need to operate should be fairly flexible.

We think that there is certainly a very strong need for a coordinated approach, that the three levels of government certainly need to work together, and that a lot of better outcomes can be achieved through better planning. The idea of having an analysis of what the needs are before you start is certainly one that we would strongly support.

In terms of meeting the ongoing costs, we have found in Queensland that a lot of our rural councils are becoming more used to sharing a resource. Where there is a need partly for, say, an environmental health officer or a youth development officer, three or four councils might be sharing that facility, and perhaps there might be scope within a program of this nature to do that.

In summary, we say that the strategic survey work needs to be done. Any Commonwealth funding that comes into this area should go through the state program framework to avoid duplication, and to make sure that people are not trying to double-dip. Funding, if it is provided, should be to enable councils to do some

needs analysis to help support some of the capital required, and to perhaps support some of the ongoing costs of having professional people working and providing guidance for the maximised use of the sporting facilities.

We need a lot more innovative approach, and we saw some evidence of that this morning in using a mixture of Commonwealth, state and local government funding sources, as well as using the community and the private sector. We would certainly support that.

CHAIR—Councillor Golledge, would you like to make any opening comments?

Councillor Golledge—Firstly, thank you for having me here. As I am addressing you, I recognise that we are partners in this major issue. I do not address you from an advocacy point of view, but rather I point out that we are in this together. Margaret, I endorse your comments because they are pretty much all encompassing, and they make me diverge a little bit from what I have to say because I am not here to lecture all of you and I am not here to enlighten you on what you are already fully aware of.

Logan City has a record over a number of years of cooperating with other levels of government from the point of view of sheer necessity, as well as reflecting our demands and our desires to do so, recognising that 50 per cent of our population is under 25 years of age. We are going to do our very best to make better adult citizens out of these people by providing what facilities we can and by getting away from the factors that are created by economic circumstances, including the high unemployment levels that we endure. I do not think there is any need to convince you of the desperate need for these facilities. However, as I talk to a few of my notes here so that I do not lose track of ensuring that my case is better put, I suggest to you that sport is the ideal outlet to help young people raise their self-esteem, promote teamwork, and concentrate on social skills which they will hopefully use in all aspects of their lives.

Sport is just one initiator of these needs. While we recognise the need to provide these facilities, we face a number of problems in doing so, as do you. Although these problems are by no means unique to Australia, in addressing them we have come up with some unique solutions, which have taken us part of the way. As I said earlier, we are innovators in this regard. Logan has long recognised the benefits of federally sponsored programs such as Aussie Sport—in fact, we were the first area in Queensland to be serviced by an Aussie Sport officer.

In cooperation with the state government, our clubs have also embraced CAPS, which, as you are aware, is the challenge achievement and pathways in sports program, with Queensland's first CAPS graduates originating in Logan. The need to address the issue of women and girls in sport was also guided by federal and state literature, and resulted in the creation of local 'girls in action' passports which, as you will remember, was a program based on Loganlea High School. This group was funded by Logan City Council, and has achieved such significant advances in promoting women's sport that four years ago the group received a prime ministerial women's sports award—the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Programs such as Aussie Sport and Girls in Action, coupled with other resources and guidelines like the national junior sports policy, have equipped the community of Logan to better meet changing community needs. These programs, while excellent, are not enough. All forms of sport need access to a facility of some

description, as Margaret has said, and Logan delivers sports on the philosophies of multi-user and user-pays—affordable quality. Logan's multi-user facility constitutions and management agreements have been used by many small authorities throughout the state. We are setting the standards for them, are we not, Margaret?

Ms Graham—I agree with everything you say.

Councillor Golledge—Yes, you have to because I am in arm's reach of you. It is an ongoing challenge to encourage all clubs in the city to adopt the multi-use philosophy. We have actively encouraged, and in some instances compelled, multi-use arrangements for tenant clubs. This has been done mostly to allow for increased, broader use and decreased costs through shared development and maintenance roles, and on occasions to solve other problems. A case in point is the local soccer club—and this will bring back memories to all of you—which was regularly losing the majority of its young male players when they reached 14 and 15. At the same time we had some netball players who needed a training venue. By allocating the girls with the boys, the girls had access to a top quality facility and the boys tended to stick around because of the opportunity to meet the girls. I would like you to reflect a little on this before I go on. Remember it? Of course you do. Of course we do.

Mr BILLSON—It still happens now.

Councillor Golledge—Right, I am with you. Despite Logan's innovative solutions to sport, we are facing the problems of massive capital costs associated with the indoor facilities. Our only recourse to date has been joint development arrangements with schools, and I ask you to recall this example. The first such development in Queensland took place at Marsden State High School with the construction of a two-court indoor facility four years ago. The indoor centre was a Logan initiative, and became part of a state government pilot program.

So we have never sat on our backsides. Although the pilot program has had some problems in other areas, the Marsden facility has gone from strength to strength. It has been so successful that the council has just entered into another such arrangement at Park Ridge High School. That is with the state government and hopefully the federal government. Cooperative development of schools such as these are ideal as they meet education needs during the day and community needs in the evening. Space and available capital still limit us to the construction of one- and two-court facilities and as a result such facilities cannot achieve the throughput of users to be cost effective.

The problems we face here are varied—as have been all the issues placed before you. We need to reduce the level of commercial debt so that the entry fees are kept as low as possible—that is to encourage the use of the facilities. We also face a problem of the restrictive policies, legislation and bureaucratic inertia associated with cooperative development with the commercial sector. Inertia does not come from you folk—I can guarantee you that. However, the benefits to the community do, I believe, outweigh the costs. Joint venture partnerships provide professional management, high quality service, the highest affordable standard of facility, and the opportunity for schools to have free or subsidised use of centres during the day. All levels of government have different roles to play in assisting us to achieve the aim. Council is prepared to take on the long-term operational role of ensuring facilities meet community needs and will stand ready to assist just in

case something goes wrong. We never adopt the attitude of washing our hands once it's under rental.

The state has a role to play in keeping user fees low by assisting with capital development costs and coordinating the planning of the facilities on a regional level to ensure there is no duplication. The federal government has a role to play in identifying centres of excellence and then contributing capital development funds. This will ensure a network of high standard facilities is developed which will enable competition to be staged up to an elite level. This in turn will not only help us provide much needed facilities for the benefit of our kids, at whichever level of competence they are at, but also enable us to develop our Olympians of the future. We have to do this together. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me.

CHAIR—Could I first ask Ms Graham a question. In your submission you recommend that a strategic survey be done to determine the need for community sporting and recreational facilities. You heard the state government in evidence this morning talk about the survey that they are doing and they led us also to believe that local government was participating in that. Is that a satisfactory response to your recommendation or did you have something more in mind?

Ms Graham—I think that, in any area, before money is put in, whether it be for capital or ongoing, we need to make sure that that survey work is actually undertaken. I think the approach of the state is fine. I just question whether there is enough resource in there to enable that work to be done at a fast enough pace.

CHAIR—Are there any examples in Queensland of local governments working together to achieve a regional sporting facility?

Ms Graham—I am not aware of them working on regional sporting facilities. I do not think that any of the evidence that they have put forward suggested that, but there might be some in south-east Queensland. There are, however, lots of examples that I am aware of where councils are starting to act more cooperatively across a broad range of issues because they are recognising that they have a duty to their community that they cannot meet from within their own resource. They are starting to cooperate on things like environmental health, youth development, catchment management and waste disposal. I know of lots of examples of that. To the extent to which they would recognise a need for them to cooperate, that climate of cooperation is certainly growing. The notion of parochialism is certainly diminishing where there is a demonstrated need, but I am not aware of any particular instances on the sporting side.

CHAIR—Councillor Golledge, on page 5 of your submission you have a long list of needed capital work in presumably the Logan City area, including three multipurpose indoor four-court high ceiling centres, an aquatic centre, three major fields, lighting, six substantial clubhouse developments and then you go on to what you need in the next 10 years. Yesterday we received evidence that you needed a population of 600,000 to support an aquatic centre. We have also received evidence from substantial numbers of people about making multipurpose indoor court facilities viable, even if you get some of the capital provided by way of a grant. Have you assessed the capacity of Logan City to support that shopping list?

Councillor Golledge—Very well, and, if I may, I will refer to the previous question to Margaret. Logan City is really the axle of quite a wheel of contiguous authorities. We have Redlands on one side, the top end of Gold Coast—which is almost divorced from the Gold Coast real—Ipswich on the other side and

the southern side of Brisbane plus 173,000 people in Logan, and growing like all heck. Regionalisation, because of the strategic position we are in, is a reality. We are not servicing just the 173,000 people in Logan City. We are, in truth, catering for hundreds and thousands more than that who come to us because of our strategic position. We are growing very fast as well.

CHAIR—Would Brisbane City and the neighbouring local authority areas be prepared to support an aquatic complex, including leisure pool facility, in Logan City rather than build one in their own area?

Ms Graham—There is a broader issue. I agree that Logan City has a ring of councils around it. This area has a six per cent growth in population and has limited space available for a lot of these facilities. It is a question of where there is land. Logan could be very well placed to service a large catchment and also the northern part of the Gold Coast. That is one of the few spots where available land could be used for recreational purposes.

Mr MARTIN—What is the source for local government in Queensland of funding for sport and recreational facilities?

Mr Humphries—Apart from the organic budget that exists within the local authorities, we can call on grants schemes through the state government. Most of the sporting associations call upon grants through the community assistance scheme, poker machine money or the state government's division of sport through their major facilities development program. They are the two core sources of funding that are called upon outside local government budgets.

Mr MARTIN—I turn to local government budgets specifically. Does funding for sport and recreation facilities within each local government area in Queensland require whoever is putting the budget together on behalf of the provision of those facilities to compete against engineering works, et cetera? Are there any specific funds designated in Queensland under the local government act that can specifically go to sport and recreation facilities?

Ms Graham—Garry mentioned the external funding sources that are available to councils. Councils' rates are their largest source of revenue. They also have money they might earn from activities that they operate—their water rates and the profits they might make on certain business activities. There is scope within council budgets to cross-subsidise between those activities. You might use rates to put in place a recreational facility that might need to be heavily subsidised.

Councils are required to put together corporate plans. The extent to which they get involved in recreational activities versus communities versus building of a much needed saleyard or something to enable some economic development activity to be generated is purely a decision for each individual council to make. The problems that some of them have is that, while their access to revenue is limited, they may own parcels of land that they could put in for their capital contribution. Their problem is not so much sometimes in the capital contribution of getting a facility built; their problem in the more remote areas is in the ongoing costs of running that and in the capacity within those councils to have specialist people who can enable that facility to be maximised.

Mr MARTIN—There is no capacity in Queensland, then, under any environmental planning legislation for councils to require a contribution by developers towards a provision of community services? In that I include sport and recreational facilities.

Councillor Golledge—We certainly do. We are pretty much Shylocks in that regard. As part of the environmental planning processes, we are not backward in coming forward and requesting or demanding contributions of such resources. To add to that, Mr Martin, I might mention our 1996-97 budget worth \$170 million overall. I am looking at some of the works: recreation and sport, \$200,000; environmental initiatives, \$800,000—and I think you are smart enough to know where a lot of those environmental initiatives go back to; community facilities, another \$700,000; recreation and sport, \$600,000—a rose by any other name; community facilities and cultural, \$844,000; community development, \$270,000, and the list goes on and on. So we are a council that has long passed the roads, rates and rubbish arena, and we are putting millions ourselves each year into exactly this.

Mr MARTIN—I will go back to that first point. You are actually at Logan City imposing conditions on developers to contribute something towards community facilities, but you are doing it from the point of view of local government without a legislative base that exists under any local government act or under environmental planning acts.

Councillor Golledge—Under our planning provisions.

Ms Graham—Yes, under the planning provisions. That is fine for councils where there is high growth, and large parts of Queensland have six per cent plus growth. But there are lots of areas of Queensland where there are needs, where there is no growth and there is no capacity to get either developer contributions or private sector contributions.

Mr MARTIN—Perhaps the Queensland Local Government Association should press that particular issue, as the other states have done. Environmental planning legislation, certainly in New South Wales and Victoria, requires that developers contribute.

Ms Graham—My point is that, if there are no developers doing any developing, there is no opportunity for them to get the money. In those cases in Queensland, where there is a developer contribution, the rest of—

CHAIR—The legislation in Queensland does give local government the power to—

Ms Graham—Yes, that is right.

Mr MARTIN—I will move on from that specific issue. We have been talking about—if there is to be a Commonwealth fund to assist with the development of community, sporting and recreation facilities or for regional facilities or even, dare I say, for national/international facilities—some proportional arrangement that is applied. We have been talking so far about one-third, one-third and one-third with the tiers of government in Australia, but I think more and more we should actually be talking about one-quarter, one-quarter, one-quarter, one-quarter, when in fact the other quarter comes from contributions by either the sport itself or by

some private arrangements or private sponsorship, et cetera. How would the Queensland local government respond to an arrangement based on either one-third, one-third, one-third, or one-quarter, one-quarter, one-quarter, one-quarter? Is there some other arrangement that you would prefer?

Ms Graham—I think, if you are going to go through the effort of identifying the needs in a particular area, that study should also look at the capacities and where moneys might come from in terms of the private sector, the users and the various levels of government. In some cases, in a fairly even world, you might say that equal shares might be a sensible way to go, but in some cases a lot of facilities would not get off the ground if some councils had to contribute one-quarter or one-third of the costs.

That may not necessarily mean that there is not a need in that area. In some cases there may not need to be a very large contribution by government. You might be able to get a lot of it supported by the community and by the private sector. Then you say, if you are looking at it on one-third, one-third, one-third basis, what do you do when you are using a facility that is owned by the state education department and it needs refurbishing? How do you determine what their third is: is it new moneys; is it existing moneys; is it in kind?

So I think what I would rather see is each facility being looked at. You need to do an analysis of the needs and incorporate in that the possibilities of money, and then have the state and the Commonwealth look at it as to whether it meets a state and national interest to determine the extent to which they should be funding it.

Mr MARTIN—Where do you think we should get the money from if we decided to buy into this program once again?

Ms Graham—This morning I have heard notions about lotteries. We have got a lot of lotteries. I think one of the biggest problems that we have in this country is that a lot of industry and a lot of small business people are going broke because there has been so much money going off into gambling. I have to say that I love gambling: I love going to the pokies, I love going to casinos and all those sorts of things, and that is fine, but a lot of people who cannot afford to are already doing that. I think our taxation base is so high. You either get some sponsorship from big industry or you use general taxation revenues that exist to determine what our priorities are. The notion of having specialist one-off activities to support another sounds fine in theory, but how much of the money that we pay for certain excises on petrol and diesel actually goes back into that sort of area? It creates too many opportunities for governments to skim money off.

Mr MARTIN—So you are not a hypothecation tax person; you are a taking it out of general revenue type person?

Ms Graham—Yes, my word.

Mr HOCKEY—This morning we heard of the example of Logan City where you will have an increase in population from 60,000 in 1978 to an estimated 185,000 in the year 2000. You say that currently over half the population in Logan City is under the age of 25. You have also set down a number of major projects—in fact, \$26 million worth of capital works—that are needed now to meet the demand for sporting

facilities. Given that the city council is going to plan and probably design and build the facilities, why shouldn't the city council pay for the facilities and run the risk of operation?

Councillor Golledge—I think that probably Shirley Temple would be able to answer that one better than me. The cold hard reality—if I could go back to Mr Martin when he said, 'One-third, one-third, one-third,' which I would suggest is more equitable—is that I think your comment that we should finance this ourselves is totally frivolous. Give us a share of the federal tax revenue and a share of the state tax revenue if we are going to lump it into the one basket. Yes, we will have our share.

Mr HOCKEY—You get a share at the moment.

Councillor Golledge—Exactly, but if we then have to accept that we will have to do \$26 million worth of capital works with no support from the feds, which is what you are inferring—

Mr HOCKEY—I suppose what I am getting at is that you are the one calling the demand. You are the one saying that there is demand for \$26 million worth of sporting facilities now. It is not the state government which is saying it and it is not the federal government which is saying it; your council is saying it.

Councillor Golledge—What do you say?

Mr HOCKEY—You are the council. You have made that call. I am saying that, as you have made that call and you believe there is demand out there—and that is a fair call—

Councillor Golledge—You have answered your own question. Council does not say we want this; the people need this.

Mr HOCKEY—So the council assesses demand?

Councillor Golledge—Purely on the basis of what is the expectation and what is needed. It is not because of some frivolous thing like, 'I would like to have a sporting facility.' Not at all. As I said in my presentation to you, I would like a better class of kid to come through the system. I do not want a kid sitting there sniffing butane or running around on a rollerblade or spraying graffiti all over the place saying, 'The bloody state, federal and local governments won't give me somewhere to go and bounce a ball,' or something like that. If you are looking at finance, I would rather listen to Mr Martin when he says, 'A quarter, a quarter, a quarter' or 'One-third, one-third, one-third.'

Mr HOCKEY—I am sure you would. I suppose I am going to the next stage. So the council is the one that assesses that there is demand in the local area—

Councillor Golledge—No, we don't assess—

Mr HOCKEY—Wait a second! You have put it in your submission.

Councillor Golledge—Exactly, but we do not assess that the demands are there.

Mr HOCKEY—Okay, the demand is there, but the submission from Logan City Council said there is demand now for \$26 million worth of facilities. There are two ways that you can fund those facilities: there is equity and there is debt. We have talked about equity, and some of the equity comes from the federal government and some from the state government.

Councillor Golledge—That is right.

Mr HOCKEY—We have touched on equity coming from the private sector and whether they would be prepared to put money into the facility, but we have not really talked about debt. I want to know what impediments there are to Logan City Council raising some debt.

Councillor Golledge—Okay. We already have a debt level at the moment that is barely manageable because we have been such a fast growing authority. We started with nothing and we now have a leading role with girls in action, et cetera, and the initiatives we have already put into place. But we have this issue of being able to provide a facility that is affordable. If we have a \$26 million debt level because we fund it ourselves and we have to say to the youngster on street, ‘Sorry, mate; it is going to cost you five bucks if you want to bounce that ball’, it is so counterproductive it is not even an issue.

Mr HOCKEY—Let me go to the next step. If I were a company building facilities and I saw this massive increase in population and potential users, I would borrow now on the basis that I was going to have a revenue stream out of those people into the future.

Councillor Golledge—Yes, but you saw a growth from 60,000 to 170,000 now. Then right through to the year 2000 you have seen it drop right off. That is a particular slow-up where we have not got the same rate of growth. We already have the established people within Logan City and contiguous authorities are looking at us for resources. Other than that, to a large degree we have rural areas, in effect, surrounding us. They are looking at us for the resources.

My 173,000 people I can look after quite well, to a degree, and project a growth. But we were talking about regionalisation a while ago, which is the future, so that we are getting economies of scale and we are getting the user base that justifies these things. We agreed before that we are looking outside the boundaries of Logan. We have agreed that we have a socioeconomic problem within our own region—and I use ‘region’ rather than ‘city’. I do not think we are in a position to be able to put a greater impost on our people, because we have already done it, to achieve as much as we have now. I am looking for something that is not counterproductive; I am looking for something that would be productive.

Mr HOCKEY—Given that it is a regional issue, what sort of support are you expecting or getting from the Queensland government?

Councillor Golledge—Never enough. You could probably better answer that, because you would know the figures reasonably accurately.

Mr Humphries—We get considerable support from the division of sport within the Queensland government. Their major facilities program, off the top of my head, last year contributed just under \$300,000 to support facilities within Logan City. So there is regular support forthcoming. But their budget is finite as well and they have to spread it throughout the entire state of Queensland. But we are good at using those funds and value adding to them. In my budget last year for direct sport and recreation assistance to clubs, we were able to demonstrate that we could double the funds effectively by capitalising on Jupiters Casino trust funds, through gaming machine community benefit funds, through state government grants and by local clubs going into debt to subsidise facilities.

Of the 44 significant venues in the city, I would say that just under 50 per cent of those are carrying a considerable debt. In a recent case the Rochdale Rovers Soccer Club went into a \$600,000 debt to expand their facility to provide a better service to the community and to place themselves in a better position in the market to have a longer life. Unfortunately, in another example in the city three members of the Logan City Kings Soccer Club mortgaged their houses to go into debt to finance the construction of the club facilities. Council provides assistance, but not the entire assistance. Now they are in a position where they cannot repay the debt and their houses are at risk. Current restrictions in legislation mean that it is impossible for us to pay off personal debts to save people. The debt level is there. Council through the community does carry a significant amount of debt. Unfortunately, the majority of that debt is secured by individuals in the community.

Mr HOCKEY—There are no restrictions on the council raising further debt?

Mr Humphries—The debt level that the entire council can raise is an issue that has to be addressed by our CEO.

Mr HOCKEY—What about local government generally? The Queensland government, when they go to Logan Council each year, take the local government application for debt along with them. Have local councils complained to you about their lack of ability to raise debt?

Ms Graham—One of the biggest problems that some councils have is their capacity to repay the debt. In Queensland you have some very large councils that have capacity to raise debt, capacity to develop contributions and, because there is a large marketplace around them, capacity to use private sector contributions.

Then you have other areas in Queensland where there is not high growth. There is no potential for developer contributions, there is limited industry capacity, and yet there is an unmet demand that councils have a limited capacity to service because they do not have the capacity to repay a lot of debt. Their rate base is just too low. So you have local councils that can do almost whatever they want, and you have some that are very limited. You cannot put in place a scheme and expect it to meet the needs of everyone. I think you have to look at what sorts of areas there are and what your objectives are and say, 'It is a shame but we cannot support that, but we can support this.'

Mr McDUGALL—We heard evidence in Sydney from James Hardie that they were looking at a program with the Shailer Park school, the education department and Logan City in relation to the

development of facilities for community use. Could you give us your version of that proposal?

Mr Humphries—Sure. James Hardie is one of many people who is courting the job, and is thereby by no means locked into the project. Their proposal had some rather attractive features. The facility was very cost-effective. They were willing to enter into a relationship with the school, which can be a risky venture because you are dealing not only with the education department as a landlord but also with the Crown and council as landlords.

We conceptualised a structure of a four-court indoor facility at Cornubia Park, which is on the border of the school, costing about \$4.1 million. About 12 months ago, \$1 million of promised funding was withdrawn by the Koala Coast secretariat, which placed us in the rather invidious position of having to raise \$2 million from the commercial sector. Thanks to the division of sport, which has retained its current level of commitment of \$1 million, we were able to seriously proceed with that project.

What we are looking at is two options: the construction within Cornubia Park, which is a piece of crown land, of a four-court indoor high ceiling facility; or, to take up the school's proposal, the construction of that facility within the school grounds. Personally, I find the school's proposal very appealing. It sets the standard of a commercial facility operating from within a school. We would end up with a four-court facility of a higher standard because the engineering problems within the school are far less costly. The James Hardie product is only one that we would look at to construct on that site.

That highlights the point of Mr Martin's comments before about whether one-third, one-third, one-third or one-quarter, one-quarter, one-quarter, one-quarter is the most desirable. It really depends on the tenure of the land on which you are constructing. The opportunity to involve the commercial sector, to become committed to the bricks and mortar of the project, often does not exist on crown land. The requirements of the Crown with regards to profit making activities on their land are very restrictive. They are very hesitant to grant approval, and that also applies to schools. But we found the education department's doors very open and the education people very receptive to this proposal at this time. So it may end up being another first for Logan.

Mr McDOUGALL—Have you a management plan in process for such a development?

Mr Humphries—Yes. The centre itself is conceptualised in quite a bit of detail, and we projected management figures for that. I believe that James Hardie, along with 30 or so other interested parties, have a copy of this and are looking through it.

Mr McDOUGALL—Is that available for the committee?

Mr Humphries—Certainly. I can distribute it this afternoon if the chair agrees.

CHAIR—One copy would be sufficient. We will accept that as exhibit No. 3, if the committee is agreeable.

Mr McDOUGALL—As you get a lot of developer contributions in a growing community, do you as

a council have a fixed percentage that you put aside out of developer contributions towards sports and recreation? Obviously you have a lot of things that developer contributions do, but do you have a fixed program in relation to capital facilities out of those developer contributions?

Councillor Golledge—So that we have equitable land use without totally destroying the environment, there is a standard 10 per cent that we take. If, for argument's sake, there is no environmental advantage to be taken, we can take money on a commercial basis in lieu of that. That money is not put in consolidated revenue; it is used for community facilities.

Mr McDOUGALL—But in a very broad based community.

Councillor Golledge—Yes, on a broad basis. When you say 'broad basis', on a needs basis we regard the types of issues we are talking about this morning as priority needs, and that is the direction we would be headed for—certainly not the libraries, which are quite adequately resourced within the council, but for this type of facility.

Mr BILLSON—We have had evidence provided that says that if the Commonwealth was to introduce such a program it would only do so for projects that could demonstrate an ongoing viability. That would seem to present some difficulty for the model you were advocating where even operational subsidies would be made available to support facilities that otherwise cannot stand on their own two feet.

Ms Graham—It depends on what your objective is. If you say that your objective is to facilitate the creation of an activity that the community can use for sport and recreation you might end up with a completely different result from what you would get if you said that what you wanted to do was to have the capacity to support sport and recreation for a healthy life style, et cetera. Councils in Queensland often do not get involved in projects that would be of benefit to their community because they have not got the skills to put in place to be able to manage them and get the maximum benefit out of them. Sometimes it is because they only allow money for capital, because that is the easy part of it, when what the council needs is someone with the special skills.

That is why I was making the point before that sometimes it is only a part-time skill that they need. Lots of councils are engaging a person on a part-time basis with the rest of that time being picked up by other councils. When they are looking at the development of the facility they need to take into account the ongoing activities and perhaps part of the proposal might be that they might enable a person to come in for a certain amount of time so that they can bring some of those sports management skills and other details and grow that skill within the community. That could be on an ongoing basis. I certainly do not believe that public moneys should be used for recurrent costs—unlimiting—but those sorts of costs need to be taken into account for the growth stage of a project.

Mr BILLSON—So you would not be arguing for operational subsidies; you are talking more about some establishment investment?

Ms Graham—Establishment and making sure that they get the skills facilities to enable the community to get the maximum benefit out of it.

Mr BILLSON—Fund management, planning, marketing strategies—all those sorts of things?

Ms Graham—All those sorts of things, yes.

Mr BILLSON—I do not know whether it is a phenomenon that is right across the state but there seemed to be very few private sector players in this industry in Queensland. We have had evidence from my part of the world that local council activity is unhelpful in that where there is a market—the growth in Logan would suggest there would be quite an attractive market for somebody—part of the reason why the private sector does not put any money forward is that councils are so forthcoming with competing facilities that are subsidised that they simply cannot compete. Is that an experience that you are seeing? I would be interested to know your views.

Councillor Golledge—You have socioeconomic factors—we are not Vaucluse or Potts Point or whatever the case may be. Because of the youth of our city and the socioeconomic standard that we have at the moment we find that your big players would not see us as viable or as profit producing as perhaps another area. There is that factor as well as the fact that we are, as I said earlier, away from roads, rates and rubbish in getting out of provision of community facilities. So there are those two factors.

Mr BILLSON—Right. We had evidence in Newcastle—it probably is not a Vaucluse—that a private operator was doing reasonably well in an ordinary facility. In my electorate—hardly the upper end of the socioeconomic field—likewise, the private facility is in competition with, I think, three council facilities and is surviving, albeit arguing that they have been ripped off by the council sponsored, tax exempt, operationally subsidised facilities that are nearby.

Councillor Golledge—If you want to carry a swag from one end of our region to the other it is a heck of a lot of empty space—simple as that. Walk around Hunter Street, Newcastle or whatever the case may be—the population density is such that it is a totally different ball game.

Mr BILLSON—So the catchments are different?

Councillor Golledge—The catchments are different. There a kid can walk two blocks and he has arrived at his destination. If our kids are going to walk they can walk 10 kilometres to arrive at their individual destination. It is a bit unfair to compare Newcastle with us because of the demographics.

Mr BILLSON—Mr Humphries, do you have any thoughts on the subject?

Mr Humphries—If I were a commercial operator competing with a subsidised centre up the road I would be quite cranky. The philosophy we have always adopted in dealing with anybody for the construction of major recreation facilities has been to get the manager involved in the design—that way we are using their expertise to make sure we have a quality facility—but also get them in debt to the bricks and mortar so they are very motivated to manage it in a cost-effective way. That strategy has worked rather well.

Unfortunately, the old fashioned build, own, operate and transfer strategy of public pools for many years has some flaws in it. We are adopting a strategy of getting a commercial operator in on the ground

floor and—

Mr BILLSON—Do you mean provide the facility and then buy someone in or tender out the operations of the whole thing?

Mr Humphries—Get them involved from the pre-design stage. Their capital goes in to help construct.

Mr HOCKEY—How big is the Logan City Council?

Councillor Golledge—In area it is about 250 square kilometres. It is elongated; it is very long from one side to the other. There is a difficulty moving around it because of the—

CHAIR—We look forward to seeing it this afternoon. Thank you very much for the evidence that you have provided. Ms Graham, you are aware of the fact that the federal government already provides significant untied grants to local government which they could if they chose spend entirely on sports facilities. If the federal government was to just give local government another \$30, \$40, \$50 million through the untied grants program would councils choose to spend it on sport or on roads, rates and rubbish?

Ms Graham—Each council in Queensland would make its own individual decision.

CHAIR—How many do you think would spend it on sports facilities?

Ms Graham—When we advised councils that you people were undertaking an inquiry we got over 20 councils responding to us. We have councils that see their role as providing that coordinating leadership role in the community because there is insufficient private sector there to do it. You would probably find that there is a lot of interest in youth, recreation and community facilities, child care facilities and those sorts of things. There is a great untapped demand in a lot of our councils. The reason constraining them from moving as fast as they can is that they have not got the capacity to meet all of the ongoing costs. They have land, which is a contribution on the capital side, but those that are away from the coastal strip have limited capacity to repay.

CHAIR—Thank you for the evidence that you have given to the committee today.

[11.19 a.m.]

BUCK, Ms Michele, President, Queensland Netball Association Inc. and President, Facilities Development and Management Corporation Ltd, 487 Vulture Street, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169

COOPER, Mr James Gordon, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Netball Association Inc. and Company Secretary, Facilities Development and Management Corporation Ltd, 487 Vulture Street, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169

PEACOCK, Mr Harold, Executive Director, Queensland Basketball Association Inc. and Chief Executive Officer, Facilities Development and Management Corporation Ltd, 487 Vulture Street, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169

CHAIR—Welcome. We have received submissions from your organisations and authorised their publication. Do you propose any changes to the submissions?

Mr Peacock—No.

CHAIR—Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we ask questions?

Mr Peacock—Perhaps we could give a little backdrop of who we are. We are obviously Queensland Basketball and Queensland Netball. We formed a joint initiative called FDMC, and we also speak on behalf of Queensland Volleyball and Queensland Futsal.

Mr BILLSON—Queensland—

Mr Peacock—Futsal. It is like indoor soccer but with slightly different rules. It is a French term: football de la salle—futsal. It is going to be an Olympic sport, incidentally. Those sports are pretty important. While they are relatively small in number in Queensland, basketball and netball are by far the largest users of indoor sports. They are something like 95 or 96 per cent of the users of indoor sport—and that is nationwide, apart from Queensland.

We could see that we were not going to get very far on our own. We tried that for a few years. It became obvious that we are the market and therefore it made sense for us to form a united front and, in fact, finally a joint initiative in the form of a non-profit company limited by guarantee. We have been working on this for the past 12 months. We currently have the management rights of two facilities in Queensland—the two most recently built ones—and I am personally heavily involved in the management of two others. We work not just in the south-east Queensland area but Queensland wide.

Rather than go into a long diatribe—because I think probably you have our proposal in front of you—I thought I would give you a few snapshots of what we are about. One of the major issues we see is funding, and we see four stakeholders. We are concerned about building standards, because in the past Queensland Basketball has been involved in building the vast majority of them. We have had to fund them either from a 25 per cent subsidy, which was the go until the last government came in, or a 50 per cent subsidy 20 years

ago.

Consequently, they were all built to a price, which meant that we cut corners wherever we could and, therefore, the standard was determined by the ability to pay. On account of the big debt that was incurred over that period and had to be paid off over 10—sometimes 15—years, they were not maintained properly and did not have the ability to put any money aside in a sinking fund. Consequently, after 20 years they are almost clapped out, as you might say. We see funding, building standards and management as being the three main issues, and I am not here to persuade anyone about anything. We are here, and our whole attitude has been, to find the solutions to a very serious problem facing us.

I have given you a few snapshots here that are not really coherent on their own but will give you a look at what is happening in Queensland. We represent over 100,000 registered players; there is an equal number of social, unregistered type players. But we certainly speak for the 100,000 registered players. The City of Brisbane, which, as you are well aware, is the third largest in Australia, has two stadia that are committed to sport: one four-court; one two-court. There are 42 courts in Adelaide, 45 in Perth, 150 in Melbourne and 200 in Sydney. There are six in Brisbane, which has 1.5 million people.

In the health situation, welcome to Queensland, the skin cancer capital of the world. Of its 55,000 netball players, 54,000 play outside on bitumen in the sun. Every other capital city, certainly in basketball, has a state centre. Queensland does not have a state centre for basketball, netball, volleyball or futsal—no centre, and I am glad the state government is no longer present.

This is not just a sports issue we are talking about; we are talking about health, community services, education, equity and social justice, and tourism. They all have an involvement in this situation. We do not see it as simply a sports issue. I now would simply invite your questions.

CHAIR—Mr Cooper or Ms Buck, would either of you like to add anything?

Ms Buck—The only thing I would add to that is that on behalf of netball, which is my pet subject, we have, as Harold mentioned, some 50,000 to 55,000 registered players in Queensland. For 20 to 25 years or more, we have been a large sport in this state participating outdoors. Whilst we all say that the weather here is beautiful one day and perfect the next—and you are experiencing that, gentlemen and ladies—until recently in the last few years, nobody recognised the damage or the danger to our participants. Our participants are aged from five years to 65 years, they are predominantly women, and we are a disadvantaged group. Some of you might disagree with that statement.

Mr MARTIN—Is that women or netballers?

Ms Buck—Both, but women mainly. We have never had indoor facilities in netball in Queensland. To take the ideal, I guess, would be to look at Victoria. I guess that Victoria has the weather for playing indoors as opposed to outdoors—and I apologise to those Victorians who happen to be present, but it is a reality.

Mr McDOUGALL—It is called drizzle.

Ms Buck—But through necessity, over the past umpteen years, throughout Melbourne and country Victoria have sprung various indoor facilities. I would like to quote some statistics to you about the indoor facilities that exist in Queensland, and they probably are part of the brief.

CHAIR—Yes, we do have the submission and we have read it.

Ms Buck—Then you will see that there is an urgent need for facilities in Queensland—and I speak for Queensland, not just Brisbane. Queensland is unique in Australia in that the major population growth is in the south-east corner. There are various members of mine out there in the country. They can come from very small localities. I was listening to some of the evidence given earlier about the ability of local governments to contribute towards the building of facilities. Some of those areas are very small.

In fact, our organisation, FDMC, has been successful in obtaining management rights to a centre in one of those areas; it is the Millmerran Shire. From the figures, I understand that there are 1,200 people who live in the town of Millmerran, and that in the whole shire there are 3,000 people. You can imagine what the rates base in that shire is, but that shire has just built a two-court indoor stadium. They have allocated in their budget a commitment to maintain it at a certain level and to pay outgoings, et cetera. Our group has offered management of that facility on an ongoing basis. So that sort of structure is able to be built in partnership with local government, and I understand that part of the funding for that facility came from state government.

There is another scenario which FDMC is involved in now, and that is the Morayfield centre. That is a very different kettle of fish because it is a larger shire, the Caboolture Shire. In the long run it will be able to generate, we hope, income to meet the operational needs and to maintain and add to the facility over time.

They are the places that we come from. All I can say is that we stress that there is an urgent need for facility development in this state, so much so that I do not believe that local government and state government alone can fund it.

Mr Cooper—I might also suggest that netball as an organisation has invested in a project for court stadiums at Runaway Bay as well—a four-court stadium. So we speak from experience in running that facility for an 18-month period.

I think there are a couple of other issues also, as far as our sports are concerned. At this point in time there is a big drag on the volunteer support for sport. Both parents are working, and so on. There tends to be less of a commitment to volunteer to administer sport and, therefore, a greater need for user-pays facilities. When both parents are working, and so on, there tends to be less of a commitment to volunteer to administer sport, and therefore there is a greater need for user-pays facilities.

As far as netball is concerned, we also compete with commercial centres which play hybrid games. One of the reasons FDMC was created was that we were losing members. Our efforts in bringing this organisation together were so that we could stop such a problem taking over our sports at that point in time. At this point, does anyone have any questions as far as the submission is concerned?

CHAIR—Is it the case that the FDMC intends to construct and manage facilities?

Mr Peacock—We will be involved in the construction, but not as builders. We have formed understandings with a number of builders. One of them, as I think you heard, is in Sydney—James Hardie. They offer a turnkey operation. I am sure you are all familiar with their proposals. We do not have the expertise or the capital to do what they are doing, but we do have a number of builders who have built facilities in Queensland at various levels. It is horses for courses: what is working at Millmerran would not work in a city. If we have an ideally placed situation in a city—it needs to be as ideally placed as in a shopping centre if it is going to contribute significant funds—then that is a different situation again.

CHAIR—So your role will be to provide advice?

Mr Peacock—Consultation, basically, would be our role in the initial stages.

CHAIR—But you are also managing three complexes?

Mr Peacock—Yes.

CHAIR—The one that obviously will attract the interest of the committee is the work that you are doing in Millmerran. For those committee members who may not understand Queensland geography, Millmerran is, what, about three hours drive from Brisbane?

Mr Peacock—Yes.

CHAIR—And it is an hour, I suppose, from Toowoomba. It really is an example of quite a prosperous rural community. Nonetheless, it is a small rural community. Are you satisfied with the financial viability of that proposal?

Mr Peacock—With the arrangement to stand alone it certainly cannot be self-sufficient. We were the only people to apply who could show that we could provide professional management within a budget and that it can be a growth situation. It is quite a remarkable council up there, actually.

Mr Cooper—The project was debt free.

Mr Peacock—It can be a regional centre in the sense that there are a lot of little village type places around where hundreds of people live rather than thousands. They can come in there. The management we put up there will work in the schools all around that area—he will be a regional manager. We will also make a wider regional period. Each of the smaller councils up there is now anxious to build these small stadiums, because they were built for about \$1.2 million.

CHAIR—What sports will be played?

Mr Peacock—The four—volleyball, basketball, futsal, netball—and in some cases badminton, depending on what the town particularly wants.

Mr BILLSON—Does the FDMC see its role as bringing a discipline to local communities that want

to build facilities but will not, in a pink fit, ever fund their own activities?

Mr Peacock—Absolutely. I have been to each one of the 33 councils that you see here. I get word either through the council or through local netball or local basketball that there is a mood in town to build an indoor facility. They know what is going on through the mayors meetings in all the other towns. Some will say, ‘Yes, we want this,’ so they will call everyone in town and say, ‘Put down on your wish list what you want.’ Someone says, ‘Okay, we can do it. It is \$5 million and we have got \$500,000. Can you get the money for us?’ It is just so far out of this world. We then say, ‘We’ve got a viable plan. How much can you spend?’

We might also give our assessment of how many netball players and volleyball players there are. We are the state centre. We know how many players there are in every town in Queensland. Netball has got 100 or so associations; we have from 65 to 70. We are in every town and every village, so we know the exact situation from our own database. We also know what the potential is for that town to get the cash flow to support professional management.

We try to get them away from saying, ‘We will go and build it and then we will hand it over.’ That is what Millmerran did. They built it and the town said, ‘How are we going to run it?’ So we came along just at the right time, fortunately for both of us, and we said, ‘This is how we can run it, this is what it will cost and we will cap it at that.’ So we are saying to local councils, ‘You can afford a four-court stadium, capped at \$2½ million. If you have \$2 million and it is a very good site, then cash flow may be able to carry it’, depending on the site and the demographics.

Then we will go to a place like Logan City. We will say that the demographics of Logan City are that 4,000 people live within the square kilometre around it. Around Brisbane there are 4,000 people every square kilometre, right across the city. You are going to get all of your people within five kilometres. So you have 80,000 people in a capital city. But you have still got to site it with the same amount of care as you would a shopping centre or a school or McDonald’s or whatever. You cannot just say, ‘There is the local tip; let’s fill it in and build a stadium on it’: it may have no profile, nothing; it may have high engineering problems—all of those things.

I would point out all of those things and say, ‘This is a big investment for you; put it with a high profile on a good site and build it to a standard where it won’t be falling over after 20 years, build it with a 30-, 40-, even a 50-year vision and then it will be successful. Cap it at what the local economy can carry.’ The socioeconomic level of Logan City is terrible. It is no good saying: ‘We are going to get \$7 a game at Logan City.’ You could turn everyone upside down and you would not get \$7. You have to find out what the locals can pay. Our knowledge through our state bodies tells us what the local standard is for payment; then we put a proposal within those parameters.

Mr BILLSON—Lindsay Gaze has a similar role in Victoria. A wonderful lifeline he tends to be when some well intentioned councillors, for example, say, ‘We need to build a centre.’ Lindsay says, ‘Hang on a minute; do yourself a favour. This is going to be a crashing failure.’ That is a useful role.

This leads me on to the next question—the thrust to compete with private centres. You are not

suggesting that the taxpayer should subsidise that thrust, are you?

Mr Cooper—Not at all, but I think we have a role to play to ensure that there are facilities for our sports to play. We have to do what we can to ensure the growth of our sports and that our sports facilities are upgraded and so on. The biggest problem facing netball at this point in time is that a hybrid game has developed, mainly in Queensland, because of a lack of facilities. The problems that indoor cricket and so on are having are because they are not attracting the numbers of people. So they are coming to play netball. They have created something. Those people at this point in time are not registered members of our organisation. They play the game socially.

We are addressing that on two tacks, one being the issue of facilities, but also looking at the structure of our organisation and how we manage our membership. That is our intention. Our effort, as we have mentioned before with the other local government and state government authorities, is to be partners in this whole process to ensure that the deficit in facilities is fixed up. That is our issue.

Mr BILLSON—My last question concerns the way facilities have to meet certain feasibility thresholds—at least it is a view I have—before some taxpayer money is put into it. How would that sit with some of the people you are talking with, particularly out of the urban areas, where again we get back to a viability question, ensuring that people do not continually come back to the Commonwealth, as was suggested by the local government association, looking for operating subsidies and the like? Is that an issue you are coming up against? How are you handling that?

Mr Peacock—It is always an issue, but it is usually an issue that concerns the council. They have had some very unhappy experiences, particularly with wet facilities, which are notorious money-eaters. They ask us, ‘Who is going to manage it? How much are we going to make out of it? How much is it going to cost? What happens if it falls over?’ That is what they are really afraid of.

We go into great detail to show how this should be managed. And if you vary from it—and this is where they do go—the council says, ‘Yes, we are going to build this’ and they say this the day before the election or the month before the election, hoping that it is going to attract some votes. Then, wanting to be good fellows, they say, ‘We are going to charge a dollar. Then it is open to everyone.’ And we say, ‘If you charge a dollar, you are going to carry \$100,000 a year loss every year.’

We put a proposal to them which was, ‘If you follow this model, it will be successful and viable. Immediately you decide that you are going to cut the price to make it look good and make everyone feel good, you are going to lose money.’ That is the first issue that has to be decided.

Then there is the fact that it is a wish list for everyone wanting to put in darts and gymnastics and everything under the sun with all the expensive equipment. They say, ‘We have five people in town and they want a fully equipped gymnasium, which is only going to cost you \$25,000’ and all that sort of stuff. We just stand there and say, ‘This is what you can afford. This is where the money is and if you want to go beyond that, be prepared to take a loss.’

So we go into that very fully and, generally, there are two things we stick on. One is that the capital

cost has got to be justified by what is viable and the other is, 'This is what the charges are going to be.' If you interfere with either one of those, you are playing with dynamite.

Mr BILLSON—Thank you.

Mr MARTIN—I see that netball in Queensland has got McDonald's in front of its title. Obviously, you have done very well and attracted a sponsorship from McDonald's. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Ms Buck—The arrangement that we have with McDonald's is one that is about three years old. The naming rights of the association have been given to that company. McDonald's supports the association not only financially in cash terms, but also in what they call below line leverage of a sponsorship. The profile that our sport gains through being linked with a company like McDonald's is something that you could not buy. They actually contribute in value to our sport—and I would stress that is in value, not in cash—something like \$1.5 million over three years.

It was a rather large sponsorship to gain for what is just a women's sport and what is just a Queensland or a state-based sport. The money that is paid in cash into the organisation is spent on the development of our sport. In fact, we spend probably close to \$400,000 a year in payment of people on the ground to travel this vast state—including air fares and the provision of vehicles and all of those things—to develop the game at grassroots level, which is what our core business is. So the McDonald's sponsorship is one that props up netball profile-wise, which means that we can attract other sponsorships and other corporate interest. It also allows us to develop the game out there in the regional areas, which we would not otherwise be able to do.

Mr MARTIN—And a very appropriate use of sponsorship funds, I might say. In terms of your relationship with Netball Australia and, accordingly, through the Australian Sports Commission, which funds Netball Australia, do you get much of a flow down effect in terms of funding, and is it essentially for administration if you do?

Ms Buck—The funding that comes back to the state organisations from the national body is not in cash; it is in provision of services and development of the game. I am on the Australian board, so I know fairly intimately what the arrangement is. The Australian Sports Commission does generously support our sport—perhaps not quite so generously as it did a year or so before the last funding cuts.

Mr MARTIN—Mind you, there was a bit of a battle recently.

Ms Buck—There was a small to-do, yes.

Mr MARTIN—We will not go into that now.

Ms Buck—We have reached an amicable impasse.

Mr MARTIN—You had to be there to appreciate it.

Ms Buck—I was and you obviously were, too, Mr Martin.

The Australian body, I would think, would be one of the very few which is very professionally run. From a state point of view, the support for the development programs is there from the national body, and I think that is its major aim.

Mr MARTIN—Okay. And you should not be defensive about women's role in netball; it has the best sponsorship deal nationally of any women's sport ever.

Ms Buck—That is right.

Mr MARTIN—I think they have done very well. On the facilities issue though, one of the comments that I read in here—and I guess it applies as equally to basketball as it does to netball—concerns the time in which existing facilities can be used.

Mr Peacock—Are you talking school-wise?

Mr MARTIN—I am talking school-wise and even about other facilities. There is a comment made in here about councils putting time restrictions on when facilities can be used. That is obviously the case if we are talking about outdoors when the court is floodlit. The local residents do not like the lights being on all night, for obvious reasons. It seems to me that that is an issue which needs to be re-evaluated in terms of a number of factors.

It was put to us in evidence, for example, that people are no longer weekend sports people. Because of the way in which our society has moved, with flexible working hours and so on, we need to make greater use of the existing facilities that are there seven days a week. If people want to run a netball or basketball competition on a Thursday or Friday night, then there is going to be an attractive number of participants on those nights, because they cannot possibly do it on a Saturday or Sunday. In terms of that sort of approach, do you still find that there is an overwhelming shortfall of the sorts of facilities that you require?

Ms Buck—Absolutely. I can probably speak in a more informed way about netball than I can about basketball. As far as netball is concerned, it has had to grapple with those sorts of problems over the past few years. The major catalyst for our rethinking the times when we play our sport was the change in the shopping hours that occurred some years ago. Here in Queensland anyway the shops are open almost 24 hours and a lot of our players, being women, shop assistants and young girls who have a bit of extra earning capacity through loading supermarket shelves and things, were unable to play our sport at the traditional times.

So that is another new ball game, because to play at night you need more things than you do on a Saturday afternoon down at the local tip which has now become a basketball or netball centre. You need lights and you need to have a safe environment for young women to be involved. It creates more problems than it solves.

Netball is an elite game and at the elite level it is now played indoors. That has not always been the case. I might be showing my age a little, but when I first started playing elite netball, we played on grass.

We then went onto bitumen, then onto plexipave and now indoors. It has developed and evolved over a long period of time to the stage now that, if you do not play elite netball indoors, you are disadvantaged at national and international competitions. I must say that Australia has a pretty good record internationally in netball and we want to keep it that way.

Mr MARTIN—On the second matter involving indoor facilities, the comment was made by Mr Cooper, and it was certainly backed up by you, that this hybrid game which has now developed sees people paying to go into what were formerly indoor cricket facilities. This caused a great rage throughout much of Australia some years ago and, through the modification of rules, netting and one thing or another, they can play indoors. What is the prohibitive factor, if any, to netball hiring out those facilities themselves and playing netball as opposed to the modified game?

Ms Buck—They are overflowing with the hybrid game of netball. They cannot accommodate the number of people who want to play in those facilities and, as far as I understand it, there are very few more of those being built. I may be wrong on that point but in Brisbane that does apply.

Mr Cooper—Because of the structure of them too, they do not meet the requirements of the sport itself with regard to the size of the courts, and the nets are fixed.

Ms Buck—There are moves afoot at national and state level to actually include those groups as a recreational arm of our traditional sport. If you can't beat them, you join them. It is the social aspect that our sports traditionally have not been able to offer, because, out in a paddock which is freezing cold in the middle of winter, we cannot offer the environment that you can indoors. So there is a demand there for that area of netball, for instance, that has not been tapped.

Mr Cooper—On that point, if you asked each of the individuals who are playing in those facilities whether they would prefer to play the traditional game indoors, they would conclusively say yes to you.

Mr MARTIN—It really comes then to the issue of funding and what might happen from the Commonwealth's perspective. On the list that has been provided in your submission there is quite obviously in your mind a considerable shortfall of indoor sports facilities, particularly for your two sports and for the others that you represent. What you are suggesting is that one of the innovative ways in which this might be funded is that, for \$93,750 a year, split four ways, in which the Commonwealth provides one-fourth of that funding, you would be able to get a—

Mr Peacock—No, \$95,000 is a quarter of \$375,000.

Mr MARTIN—Yes, I am reading the figures that are here in front of me. I am saying that I agree with you.

Mr Peacock—Okay.

Mr McDOUGALL—I agree with you, Mr Peacock, that it did not sound right.

Mr MARTIN—You are saying here that, for \$93,750 per annum, a typical four-court facility could

be funded; that is, each of one-fourth.

Mr Peacock—Each of the fourth, yes.

Mr MARTIN—That is right. And the Commonwealth's share of that is that same amount of money.

Mr Peacock—Yes.

Mr MARTIN—That provides one four-court facility under this innovative program that you have put forward here.

Mr Peacock—Yes.

Mr MARTIN—Under a previous program that provided community, recreation and sporting facilities, and so on, the maximum grant for any one application was \$250,000 but, typically, the average was much less than that. If this type of funding was put in place, do you think there should be some minimum and maximum limits applied; and how do you see a facility like this being developed on the basis of it either being in a local government area or in a regional type of setting?

Mr Peacock—First of all, I will tell you who we do and do not represent here. We do not represent clubs with poker machines and alcohol facilities; we do not represent major facilities with major international sports. We, as the state bodies, represent the state membership across the state. So we are really talking about grassroots. At this point in time, there is a dearth of facilities at all levels but we are not concerned with the super stadium. What we are concerned with primarily are community facilities which are council based. I find that that is where the great response is from local councils in Queensland. The regional situation will probably flow from that but I would suggest that the cart before the horse would be to build regional centres before we even have the grassroots looked after.

Mr MARTIN—But it may well be that one of these typical four-court facilities would be a regional centre and not a local centre.

Mr Peacock—That is true. Why we talk about four-court facilities is that, from speaking with Lindsay Gaze—and I have spent a lot of time with Lindsay as I have known him for most of his life—we have found that that is the optimum management level from a commercial viability point of view. As soon as you get down to two courts, there is no way that you are going to be able to repay a debt.

Ms Buck—That is something that needs to be a major consideration, I would suggest, that you might need to come up against. There has to be a minimum model that will allow for maintenance of the building in the future; the operating costs which, in our situation, are minimal because we are not entrepreneurs and we do not put money in our own pockets; and the improvement of the facility to cater for increased demand. There are various proposals that we are involved in that are really just that at the moment. They cater for four-court facilities but, in the long run, they are catering to an extension to eight-court facilities. In a business plan, the operational income, or net profit, needs to be able to fund that expanded facility.

Mr HOCKEY—I am curious as to why netball is so different from a host of other outdoor sports, such as triathlons, surfing, jogging and cricket, in that netballers are so susceptible to skin cancer.

Ms Buck—I do not know that netballers necessarily are so susceptible to skin cancer but, in Queensland, Queenslanders are. That is the point that we would like to make. In Victoria, it is probably not quite the same problem as it is in Queensland.

Mr BILLSON—It is nearer the hole in the ozone layer.

Ms Buck—Possibly. You might have created a larger hole down there.

Mr HOCKEY—My comment was not facetious. It was about the fact that you have used those sorts of arguments to justify the construction of indoor facilities which are, of themselves, four to five times—perhaps greater—more expensive than outdoor facilities to construct, yet there are other sports that have far greater length of time under the sun.

Mr MARTIN—You cannot surf inside a building.

Mr HOCKEY—No, that is quite right.

Ms Buck—I may not have represented myself very well and I apologise for that. Netball is such a large sport that I do not believe that we are going to be able to fit the million people in Australia who play—and there are increasing numbers—inside indoor facilities if there is one in every square kilometre of this country that is occupied.

The elite game is now played indoors. There is a need for us to develop indoor facilities to meet that need. The major problem in Queensland for sport—and it is not just netball—is that there are some sports which are played outdoors that are disadvantaged because they do. People who participate outdoors in sport, regardless of whether they are in the water or on the ground, really have a problem with skin cancer. That is the point that I made.

Mr HOCKEY—What about stress fractures associated with running on bitumen?

Ms Buck—I suppose it is the same as stress fractures which one can incur from running on boards. I do not know that that is a medically proven point that needs to be pursued. I really would not be able to answer the question.

Mr HOCKEY—Because netball has developed an elite group at the very top level, do you think that justifies the enormous capital contribution to the construction of 120 indoor courts?

Ms Buck—I do not think that is the only reason why 120 indoor courts are urgently needed in Queensland. I think there has been an evolution in netball to the point where now people are playing indoors at the elite level. The evolution has arisen due to the recognition of various factors. Often you cannot play when it is pouring down with rain. In Queensland you cannot play when there is thunder and lightning, and

we get a lot of lightning storms here.

There are lots of reasons why the sport has developed to the stage where elite netball is now played indoors. I do not believe that is the only reason or even part of the reason really why we need indoor facilities in this state. Indoor facilities keep kids off the street and keep them occupied. I think those are more the community benefits that are able to be gained from having indoor facilities rather than looking at elite sports.

We are looking at grassroots sport. We really want to have our kids in the community playing sports. They are not attracted to a paddock out in the middle of nowhere, especially young girls where there is an inherent danger in being in a large area where they cannot be properly supervised.

Mr McDOUGALL—As we go around this inquiry, I am getting more and more disturbed about the data people are putting to us. There seems to be no common base for people to be putting data to us. I notice in your data that you exclude school facilities. Can you give me a reason why you exclude school facilities? Is it all too hard and you do not want to be bothered with it or do you just not want to use them?

Ms Buck—Brisbane is where our major netball competitions are held. We do not have one centre within Brisbane where we could hold our state league competition. Our state league competition involves a number of players and at the moment we are paying large amounts of money to private school operators who have gymnasias. We travel during the week at night to about six to 10 centres.

We have found on a number of occasions—and this is just one instance; I think this will graphically demonstrate the reason why we exclude school occupation or school centres—that we have had the booking, have paid a large amount of money to hire the hall and turned up and found that the hall is not available to play netball in because someone forgot to tell somebody that there is a school exam happening tomorrow and the whole centre has school desks and chairs in it.

The school has the building. It has raised the money to build it. It obviously wants to be able to use it at its own leisure. It does not necessarily mean that sport independently run is able to co-exist well.

Mr McDOUGALL—But you have gone again to isolation and you have isolated elitism and you have isolated private schools. I think what you have really shown me is that there is a management problem. Management problems can be overcome. A while ago you were talking about the need for facilities to participate, and you have not included state school facilities, either primary or secondary.

If you were really going to analyse the need and the dollars that were needed in a capital contribution, which my friend up here was talking about, then surely you must include—however you have to manage it—the facilities that are currently available so that government can make an informed decision. We heard this morning from the state department that it has set in place a program to work towards cooperation and participation with the education department. Why are you so sure that you want to run away from that?

Mr Peacock—We use every school in Brisbane. Every school in Brisbane is used by basketball if we can get there before netball gets there. Then we have futsal, which struggles. That is played in scout halls, in

halls about half the size. It is a desperation situation. We do not exclude them from the factor. They are used and probably will be always. We are trying to find a long-term solution rather than a patch solution. That is not the ideal solution. We are major sports.

The management problem cannot be solved. You will not get professional management of the school facility. It will always want to be the P&C, the headmaster and a couple of the users. That is not management at all. It is management by amateur committee, which is the worst possible form of management. However, they exist and they will always be used. But the fact of the matter is that a major sport needs infrastructure. It needs its own office, computer system, noticeboards, dressing rooms and change rooms. None of those things are available at those schools.

Mr McDOUGALL—We heard from the state department that it wanted to address that problem in joint funding and joint management arrangements. I agree with you that those management things exist, but why should not there be the ability through proper management to get capital expansion of existing facilities with a professional management structure if it is going to be multi-funded? You then overcome the problems that you are talking about rather than having to go out and reinvent the wheel again.

Mr Peacock—I do not think it is reinventing the wheel. I think that is good in theory, but it has not worked with the best will in the world.

Mr McDOUGALL—I know it has not worked.

Mr Peacock—If someone builds one court, straightaway that is no good. A one-court facility is not viable in itself. Some of the schools have built two courts. That is the maximum. No school is going to build a four-court stadium. They very rarely have the ground and they very rarely have the capital. In the private schools that build them, they are state-of-the-art jobs, there is no question about that, and there are 10 activities. They are not really interested in the community.

Mr McDOUGALL—That applies to the city, but when you get out into regional Queensland and into rural areas, usually the schools have got a bit more ground than that.

Mr Peacock—That is right, and that is what works. I can give you any number of places where that is working.

Mr McDOUGALL—But if you are going to make it work out there, why did you not put what facilities they have got out there so that you might be able to tag onto them, improve them and thus deliver a greater community result? The impression I got was that you want to go out into regional Queensland and Australia and set up in opposition to the schools through the local council. By the way you have done your survey you give me the impression that that is what you want to do.

Mr Peacock—We only want the best solution and the best value for the dollars. Let us get back to a situation where there is a one-court facility in town and you have five sports wanting to use it. Straightaway, the day it opens, it is full.

CHAIR—They are still living with that in Millmerran.

Mr Peacock—No, they do not have anything in Millmerran. What they built in Millmerran was a leisure centre. Millmerran has an olympic pool, a 25-metre swimming pool, a two-court stadium and five state-of-the-art courts—nothing in the school.

CHAIR—But you have taken on the management of the one court facility at Millmerran?

Mr Peacock—No, it is two courts, and we are going to develop that as a regional centre. But to get back to the school problem, you have got no potential for growth whatsoever. No one sport has got any control over its future. There is no long-term planning and no possibility of any long-term planning. The short-term vision was to get up a one court stadium—and that is it—and hope that it pays.

When you say ‘going in opposition,’ we are trying to look at a 10-, 15- or 20-year vision. If we are only going to solve the immediate problems then they are going to go on in an ad hoc way that has been going on here for years. Politicians are given the right to go and say, ‘Okay, we will give you \$1 million because we think you need a stadium.’ What they are really saying is, ‘It is to our advantage to give you that \$1 million.’ That is what has been happening in Queensland. Are there any Queenslanders here? One. This is what has been happening in Queensland all along. So we are looking for solutions when we do that.

Mr JENKINS—One of the things about the viability of the facilities is the ongoing management. I am wondering whether you can explain, within these facilities that you envisage, what form of management model you would see as being appropriate, also taking into account the sort of multi-use of the facility, which in traditional models brings all sorts of dangers?

Mr Peacock—I will explain the management model we use. Up the top we have our FDMC board. On that board are people with a remarkable range of skills, qualities, experiences and education. Down from that board you have the CEO. Across from the CEO then we have the council itself which has a representative dealing with the CEO, that is assuming we have got a lease. Then we come down to the local manager of the stadium. Across from that all of the users have an advisory committee who liaise with the manager. The council liaises with the CEO. Coming from that all of those users have their rights, their bookings and whatever.

Ms Buck—There is consultation with the users, with the manager in a committee structure, and the council has direct input to the organisation.

Mr Cooper—From a multi-purpose situation we also seek to share the time that is available, dependent on the number of people that wish to use the facility. We would offer that on a seasonal basis, so that everybody would have equity in use.

Mr JENKINS—Is the manager responsible to the corporation or is there some other structure?

Mr Peacock—The manager of the facility is responsible to the CEO of FDMC and the CEO is responsible to the board. The council has control through liaison with the CEO of the council and through

their lease.

Mr JENKINS—Is it a discretionary item in the ongoing funding of the facility that there is a manager on deck? When you are trying to enable Logan City as against other places to have a facility, where are the discretionary elements of the ongoing management?

Mr Peacock—I do not know what your question is, I am sorry.

Mr JENKINS—What you are saying is that there is no discretionary element to the level of management that you put in place for the facilities—that is, you have a model and you stick to it, no matter what the locale?

Mr Peacock—Issues like demographics and the size of the court—how many courts it is going to have, et cetera, whether it be two, three, four—determine the level of support in terms of staff and human resources that that specific facility would require. We evaluate everything on its individual situation.

CHAIR—We very much appreciate the advice and the information that you have given to the committee. Again, we may want to come back to you because you have some models that are of interest to us in the nature of our recommendations for the future. We appreciate your coming and giving evidence today and thank you for making a submission to the committee.

[12.10 p.m.]

TRENORDEN, Mr Phillip Edwin, National Executive Director, Squash Australia Ltd, Office 9, Sports House, Cnr Castlemaine and Caxton Streets, Milton, Queensland

HUNT, Mr Geoff, Honorary National Coach, Squash Australia Ltd, Office 9, Sports House, Cnr Castlemaine and Caxton Streets, Milton, Queensland

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

Mr Trenorden—No, not any changes as such. I have prepared some supplementary material and have a copy here to provide to each member of the committee.

CHAIR—Is that in addition to—

Mr Trenorden—Yes. It was my thinking that we would provide this and I do not specifically wish to hand it out to you at the moment but—

CHAIR—It will be difficult for us to question you on it, though, if we do not have copies of it.

Mr Trenorden—It is really expanding on some of the points that have been made in the original submission.

CHAIR—Okay. Do you want to make any opening comments or a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

Mr Trenorden—Yes, I would appreciate that. There are two or three main points that we have made in our submission. Firstly, in our view there has not been an appropriate level of government financial support—I am talking about all levels of government—for the sport of squash, given the size and popularity of the sport in Australia. It is a very large participant sport. We believe that this lack of government financial support is largely due to a perception in the community that squash facilities are the domain of the commercial sector. That has been the way the sport has largely developed in Australia, but not so in other countries. That is a key point that we would like to make.

There are very few government-funded sporting facilities for squash throughout Australia. This does vary a little bit from state to state and I can expand on that if you wish to ask me further questions. We are particularly concerned—and this is a point which I did not make in the initial submission—about the fact that there has been a decline in squash centres in Australia, largely due to real estate values. This has resulted in many squash centres being knocked over and the sites used for home unit developments, shopping centres, service stations and the like. In the older areas of our cities in particular, there have been a lot of centres lost to the sport generally.

To add to that, in the whole of the western suburbs of Sydney and in the whole of south-east Queensland—with the huge population increases in those areas—there have been no new squash centres built

in the last few years. This is of concern to us and we would like to see local governments, perhaps in a joint arrangement with state governments, directing some funding towards development of squash facilities.

I would also like to put to rest the fact that there has been a decline in participation in squash. This is true to some extent but, according to a survey that is conducted annually, something like 13 per cent of the Australian population state that they play squash at least once a year. So there are still very large numbers playing squash and the lack of new facilities and the closure of the existing centres is making it increasingly difficult for many people to play. People in many areas have to travel long distances if they do wish to play squash or take part in other activities which can be played within a squash centre.

Finally, I would make the point that Geoff Hunt, whom you are probably aware of, has been one of the most famous athletes that Australia has produced. Geoff is involved with the development of our elite players. At the moment our elite program is being severely jeopardised by the decreased participation and the fact that many kids in many parts of the country do not have the opportunity to play squash. I will ask Geoff to expand on that point a little bit.

Mr Hunt—Obviously coaches throughout the world can help develop players, no matter if they come for only a few players at a time. There is no doubt about it: the bigger number of participants you have, the better catchment you have for trying to develop players. We have found over the last number of years at the AIS—with the numbers of junior tournaments, in particular, and the number of players involved in some of those junior tournaments—that the standard of the players coming through is inferior to what it has ever been in the past. It is a bit of a worry to us, despite the fact that as coaches, through the Coaches Association, we have been trying to upgrade the level of the coaching throughout the country. It is not having an effect on the numbers of participants coming into the game; hence, our pool of elite players is diminishing a little bit.

CHAIR—Can you give us any indication as to why you feel squash has declined in this way? Why are squash centres no longer attractive investments?

Mr Trenorden—I think it depends very much on the management. Where a squash centre is being well managed, there are plenty of examples to show that squash can still operate as a profitable concern. However, I guess with the increasing competition in the sporting and recreational areas, squash has not generated the funds to market itself and promote the sport as much as it would have liked, and I guess this is a major thrust of ours at the moment.

The commercial sector has also been something of a problem for the sport in that it has had both its strengths and weaknesses. Squash centres have operated completely independently, like the corner store, and Squash Australia has realised that for the sport to progress we really need to tie all these squash centres together. We are at the moment going through that process of establishing the link of squash centres through to us in a licensing type arrangement similar to a franchise arrangement. We can then market and promote and develop the sport. However, the declining centres due to real estate values is a big issue.

CHAIR—However, if the squash centres were profitable, people would find the real estate to put them on.

Mr Trenorden—Yes, I guess that is a valid point. We are embracing that now and working on the management and marketing of the sport so that that will happen.

Mr MARTIN—That really is the key—attracting people back into the sport and then developing your elite talent, which ensures that you have a base of broad participation.

I would be interested in your comment if somebody came along to us and suggested that they build an indoor sports entertainment centre and that the various levels of government should contribute towards that, but a canteen would be contained within that facility. Then over time perhaps that would be expanded a little bit more so that there are tables and chairs and a little restaurant that was run with that and so on. Then that would be seen to have some sort of commercial focus on it as well.

In the case of squash, one of the arguments that has always been used in the past about why squash centres do not necessarily get funding is that they were perceived as being purely commercial operations. Do you think that sort of image is now changing somewhat and, if so, would that be a reason why the development of additional facilities might then attract government support, whether it be from the Commonwealth government or elsewhere, if such a program were put in place?

Mr Trenorden—I think the best way to answer it is that there are a number of government multipurpose centres which are not commercial and do operate very effectively. It is shown that where they have a manager operating the squash area in a very professional manner it can be a very successful operation. I am not sure about the perception out there. I am not sure whether I have answered your question adequately.

Mr MARTIN—I will use my own area as an example, which is the Illawarra. The councils in Wollongong basically, in the construction of community recreation facilities, have put a couple of squash courts in place that go with that. It is a facility that is part of the 25-metre heated swimming pool, it is part of the aerobics area, it is part of a complex. As is still the case in most of New South Wales with licensed clubs, there was a time when they would always have a couple of squash courts that were part of it. They are still there, and many of them still have a very active participation level there. Do you see that they need to be brought in under the umbrella that you are talking about?

Mr Trenorden—Where possible, yes. That does create some additional difficulties with the private clubs, but we are currently talking to some of the non-commercial centres to bring them under that umbrella. The arrangements need to be somewhat different but, from the marketing and the promotional side of things, there are advantages. They obviously have to see the benefit themselves. They have to be able to see that by joining our new structure they are going to get marketing benefits in that process.

Mr MARTIN—Sure. One of the great arguments in New South Wales at the minute is about the tax system that applies to hotels but does not apply to registered clubs. In fact, it centres on the fact that the clubs argue that they provide community based facilities for their members and others to use. As I have said, most of the clubs down my way have squash courts associated with them, and they see that is open to their membership. It is a way in which they are saying they are providing facilities back to the community. It seems in the past that certainly your sport was one which attracted a great deal of support from licensed clubs

in particular because it was such a popular sport.

Notwithstanding your comments a little earlier, Mr Trenorden, I think the real difficulty that Mr Hunt is suggesting is how you build on attracting people there. That then develops the elite talent, which then comes through the AIS programs and so on, and we continue to replenish our standing in international competitions.

Mr Hunt—Internationally, there are a lot of very big multipurpose centres built today which incorporate tennis, basketball and gymnasiums. I know there may be problems in getting the right managers to run those, but there certainly seem to be a lot more being built, which indicates to me that maybe they are able to be run successfully.

CHAIR—Are there any of those in Australia?

Mr Trenorden—The only one is due to be completed very shortly in Melbourne—the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre—but that is part of the wider, multipurpose centre, as you are probably aware, with a number of other sports.

CHAIR—Is that multipurpose centre maybe a model for the future?

Mr Trenorden—It depends again very much on the management. A squash facility can be run successfully, whether or not it is part of a broader recreational centre, and that has happened, particularly in country areas. In Tasmania there are some that are very successful. It can be very successful as a stand-alone squash facility. It depends, I repeat, on the standard of management in that centre.

Mr McDougall—That raises an interesting point of what is the ideal centre and what is the ideal type? We can go back and have a look at QEII. Do you still operate out of there, Geoff?

Mr Hunt—No, we have not operated there, because it has only five courts. They reduced the number of courts with another tenant coming in—

Mr McDougall—That is exactly the point I was going to raise. It depends on who has ownership of the multicentre. You have a multipurpose centre that has all these other things in it. All of a sudden, the whole principle of the centre goes away from what it was originally built for and it goes to a private operated football company. All of a sudden, the whole emphasis on that changes and people who have been in there either get downgraded or thrown out altogether. Where do we end up? I think you have answered the question I was going to ask about QEII. You have moved.

Mr Hunt—Yes, at the moment we are at Southside Sportsworld, which is down the road in Salisbury. However, we have put a submission in because in the long term, from an AIS perspective, we would prefer to be with state government here in Queensland, and also the Brisbane City Council if it can remain in Brisbane. We are putting a submission together with Squash Australia to see if they can redevelop the Hibiscus Gardens area, which is being targeted for netball redevelopment as well. Some of those facilities could be joint facilities. They already have six squash courts there. We desperately need doubles squash

courts in Australia and we are trying to see if we can incorporate that and have a long-term arrangement then with the Brisbane City Council, hopefully with support from the state government.

Mr McDOUGALL—You have given evidence this morning about the growth of squash, the decline of squash and the management problem in relation to commercial centres. Yesterday we visited Newcastle University and I saw a lot of squash courts there. I have my extreme doubts as to how much they are being used. I must admit I did not ask the question, but you have raised it in my mind now.

Mr BILLSON—I can help you. Two of them have been converted to circuit training and one to weights.

Mr McDOUGALL—If we were to properly manage and utilise the existing capital infrastructure that is in Australia in squash court form now, would that allow for the growth that you require in the participation rate to be able to satisfy the new demand, and at the same time meet your objectives at the elite level to get the right base to come through? Because I also take on board what you have said about your organisation trying to bring in this arrangement to try and get better management. Are we looking at that or are we really looking at a need for definite capital infrastructure at this stage?

Mr Trenorden—I think we are looking for both. There is no doubt that there are a lot of facilities around that are not being used to the maximum, whether they be universities or even commercial centres. If you go into many commercial centres now you would find many of them are not being used. However, the responsibility for that rests fairly and squarely on our shoulders—to create the perception in people's minds that they want to get out there and play squash. We have developed a whole range of other activities, for example, that you can play on squash courts as well, so it is not just squash. You can do volleyball, basketball, doubles squash, racquetball and other activities.

Nevertheless, we are still going to have a huge problem in the western suburbs of Sydney. I do not know how many people live in the western suburbs of Sydney now, but as I said earlier, there has not been a new squash centre built in the western suburbs of Sydney that I am aware of, or that my New South Wales executive director is aware of. So you are still going to need new facilities in areas like that. It is particularly in those areas where we would like to see local government recognising that there is still a lot of interest in squash and there will be people who want to play it if there is the right management of those centres and they are being professionally run.

Mr JENKINS—Has Squash Australia done an inventory of available squash facilities?

Mr Trenorden—We are working on that at the moment, to be honest. It is a very difficult thing to get, given the diverse nature of the universities and so on. We have a fairly good idea, but we do not have accurate data.

Mr JENKINS—I think you heard the discussions earlier about the difference between people only putting to us council owned basketball stadiums, as against those on education department land and universities and things like that. I suppose you are in a position, because you have had such a great deal of private input into the provision of facilities, that you would be looking at a wider scope.

I can only give another anecdote of where, in the area that I represent in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, in two local government facilities that had squash courts they took the squash courts out of one to be replaced with circuit rooms and weights. In the other, about three or four of the courts have been converted to boxer size and weight rooms and things like that, but in that case leaving four or five, which I suppose is on the margin of viability for a squash centre, but with nobody really using them because there is not a marketing campaign overall. That was partly by way of comment; because of time I do not really need an answer.

But I want to go to the Albert Park development and a bit of background history about that. Is it the sort of thing where, because of what was happening down at Albert Park and the need to resite facilities that the trust had had historically, you got a cut of the action with the aquatic centre, or was it more strategically planned than that?

Mr Trenorden—I may not be in a position to give you a lot of details, because that was mainly handled by our Victorian Squash Federation. But they were on site. They have had difficulties with the venue that they have had at Albert Park for many years and it was an opportunity. I think we have a very strong association down there. They did a bit of effective lobbying and ensured that we did get a good facility in the new development.

Mr Hunt—If you do not mind my answering, this goes back many years when I was living in Victoria as well. I have been here for 12 years now. At that stage they wanted to put in a first-class facility for squash with viewing. They wanted to put in a glass court so people could see the game and they tried to re-develop it, but they had a lot of trouble with—I think it was the Albert Park Council—in infringing over two feet extra onto the land. So it was a big problem. Then of course when the redevelopment of Albert Park came about they decided—nothing was done for many years because they obviously had the big plan in mind, luckily, I suppose, for squash—that they would put squash in the facility.

Mr JENKINS—And the development involves a show court?

Mr Hunt—Yes, and doubles courts as well.

Mr Trenorden—I would like to pick up one point that you have made, because I think it is very relevant, and that is that we accept that squash is not likely to return to the heady days of 10 years ago. Sports, to a certain extent, like everything else I guess, go through boom periods and it can be cyclical. We accept that that is unlikely given the amount of sports and recreations and other activities that there are today, but we do make the point that squash participation seems to have levelled off now and that there is still a very substantial number of people out there that do want to play the game. We are doing something about the marketing of it, but we are really concerned about those people that do not have access to the sport. Given the tradition of the sport as well, we believe that in Australia it has got a long tradition and we need to keep it strong.

Mr BILLSON—I am very encouraged about the work you are putting into marketing the sport. I am not sure about the real estate values argument because my experience—having tried to work out what to do with vacant squash facilities in community venues in a growth corridor in south-east Melbourne—tends to

suggest that that may not be all that it is about. So the appeal of the sport in my view is the issue, particularly with some medical practitioners advising that unless you are in fair shape to start with, you play squash at your own peril, which is a bit of an issue as well.

It leads me into the next question: given the history of trying to find other uses for the squash infrastructure to try and have those facilities pay their way, I am actually advised by some proprietors of squash centres in my electorate, who I am trying to help out with some cash flow problems that are of their own making, that really the value of that investment is trending down. The second and third owners of commercial squash facilities are doing okay, but if you build them and you have that full capitalisation it is very tough indeed. Someone is telling me that even with the prices of participation in squash going down he still cannot get people through the door. Is this a unique experience? It just seems too common.

Mr Trenorden—It is not unique and it is due, I suggest, to a large extent to the marketing approach and the management that the operators have used. There are a lot of examples that would contradict that. There are lots of areas where, with the right sort of management, people are still coming through the doors and centres are operating very well. But, nevertheless, it is common enough for us to be concerned about it and that is why we are developing things such as—maybe you would like to put these people onto us, we might be able to help them—operations manuals. We have got a huge operation manual with a range of activities that can be played, marketing ideas and material on the training of the right people so you have got the right people behind the counter. We are working on developing curriculum with DEETYA and on having professionals managing squash centres. It is all linked in with that.

Mr BILLSON—There has been some new investment in squash facilities down in my part of the world at Frankston but it was not to build squash courts. It was to build aquatic centres, privately funded and privately operated, circuit venues, gyms, weight rooms and those sorts of things as an adjunct to the squash courts in order to push up their viability.

Given that experience and the 90 per cent private ownership, I could imagine the Commonwealth coming out and saying, 'Here is some funding available for councils to build facilities.' I suspect that the private operators will be on to me in about 30 seconds saying, 'Bruce, it is hard enough now, mate, without giving public sector or not-for-profit providers a head start when we are here trying to make a buck.' Given the history of the squash industry's development and that 90 per cent private ownership, I wonder if waving some public funds around to help encourage more venues is likely to bring an outcry that I have not seen for a while.

Mr Trenorden—It could in some areas but, on the other hand, I could go back to certain areas of south-east Queensland, the western suburbs of Sydney or certain parts of Melbourne. In the newer areas of Melbourne you will find there are bigger areas where there are no squash facilities. Your argument is a little bit like the arguments in Melbourne over McDonald's franchises. It is a relevant point. We have got to be mindful of that always—even with our proposed redevelopment of Hibiscus here in Brisbane because that would be an international standard facility if we get the funding. It will also operate as a squash centre. Some of the commercial operators are probably not going to be very happy with the prospect of a government funded centre with a lessee to manage it.

Mr Hunt—In that case of Hibiscus Gardens, I would imagine that the courts at QEII and the stadium complex would probably close and then you are not going to have any more courts. They would just be putting their energies into developing the Hibiscus Gardens venue.

Mr BILLSON—In your submission to us, if the Commonwealth were to find its way clear to providing funds, you would be encouraging us as a funding criterion to have the applicant demonstrate that there is not a competing private centre within a certain catchment area or something of that order?

Mr Trenorden—Yes, that would be entirely relevant. I think that also from the federal government's point of view there is the need for quality—high quality international facilities such as the Albert Park development and such as the one that we are striving to get here in Hibiscus Gardens in Brisbane. There are really not quality venues for running international squash events. As a result, we have got the best squash players in the world having to play overseas most of the time because we do not have good venues here in which they can play.

CHAIR—Thank you for the evidence that you have given. Again, I am afraid that we have run out of time. If there is something additional you want to make available to the committee, perhaps by way of a supplementary submission, we are happy for that to occur. Is that the case?

Mr Trenorden—Yes, it is. I do have some copies that I will submit.

CHAIR—We shall receive the copies of it as a supplementary submission. Thank you again, Squash Australia, for the information. It has been good to talk to representatives of a sport that has traditionally been one where the facilities have been provided by the private sector. That issue has certainly been raised in our discussions with other sports where the facility is traditionally provided by the public sector. Your evidence has been of particular interest to us, and we thank you very much for your attendance today.

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 12.40 p.m.