



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND AGEING

Reference: Obesity in Australia

WEDNESDAY, 25 JUNE 2008

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND AGEING
Wednesday, 25 June 2008

Members: Mr Georganas (*Chair*), Mr Andrews (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Bidgood, Mr Coulton, Ms Hall, Mrs Irwin, Ms King, Mrs May, Mr Morrison and Ms Rishworth

Members in attendance: Mr Andrews, Mr Bidgood, Mr Coulton, Mr Georganas, Ms Hall, Mrs Irwin, Mrs May and Mr Morrison

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The increasing prevalence of obesity in the Australian population, focusing on future implications for Australia's health system.

The Committee will recommend what governments, industry, individuals and the broader community can do to prevent and manage the obesity epidemic in children, youth and adults.

WITNESSES

ESPELAND, Mr Brenton Jack, Director, Sport Performance and Development, Australian Sports Commission..... 1

FLANAGAN, Mrs Judy, Director, Community Sport, Australian Sports Commission 1

Committee met at 8.47 am**ESPELAND, Mr Brenton Jack, Director, Sport Performance and Development, Australian Sports Commission****FLANAGAN, Mrs Judy, Director, Community Sport, Australian Sports Commission**

CHAIR (Mr Georganas)—Good morning. Just before we start, I would like to alert you that Hansard will be recording your oral submission. Witnesses have been advised that their transcript may be authorised for publication as well if the committee agrees.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Andrews**, seconded by **Mr Bidgood**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at the briefing by officials from the Australian Sports Commission.

CHAIR—Before we start, is there anything you would like to add about the capacity in which you appear today?

Mr Espeland—I am the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Sports Commission while Mr Mark Peters, our usual CEO, is overseas.

CHAIR—We will now hand over to you for an opening statement and then we will ask some questions.

Mr Espeland—I thought I would just talk for, say, five to 10 minutes and provide an overview of the Australian Sports Commission and its current priorities in the context of the fight against obesity in Australia. The Australian Sports Commission's overall role is to lead and shape the Australian sports sector from the grassroots through to the elite level. This encompasses many activities. Some of these are providing quality assurance to the accreditation of coaches and officials and developing particular opportunities for women, for Indigenous people and for people with a disability to participate in sport as athletes, coaches, officials or administrators. It also encompasses providing a comprehensively researched framework for sport at the junior level to be delivered in an environment of nurture. We also deliver world-leading, very cutting edge Australian Institute of Sport programs in 26 sports. We work with the national sporting organisations to instil best practice governance, strategic planning and management arrangements and practices to allow them to grow participation and perform at their best internationally.

Over the past decade the Australian Sports Commission has become increasingly concerned about levels of inactivity, particularly for young Australians, and the resultant rise in significant health issues, including obesity. In an attempt to combat this alarming trend, the Australian Sports Commission has worked with the health, family and community, and education sectors at all levels of government across Australia to provide opportunities for young Australians to be physically active through the introduction in 2005 of its Active After-school Communities program. This program is a free, fun and safe structured physical activity program offered to primary school age children in the after-school environment across 3,250 schools and out-of-school-hour care sites throughout Australia. The program to date has reached up to 150,000

children, provided free training with employment opportunities to over 25,000 community coaches, and stimulated local community involvement in structured physical activity. It has been a great success and we would like that to continue to grow. I ask the question: 'Is this enough really?'

Research from late 2006 indicates that 66 per cent of all Australians did not meet the national physical activity guidelines as promoted by the Department of Health and Ageing in the previous week. The commission is concerned about the activity levels of primary school age children outside the reach of the current program, and also about activity levels across the later life span from the teenage through to the senior years. The commission will continue to explore with government whether there are opportunities to partner with other government and private sector stakeholders to provide increased opportunities for all Australians to be active. A key element of the strategy would be to expand and build upon the Active After-school Communities program, which links schools, local communities, an ever-expanding pool of people trained as community coaches and local sporting clubs together and can provide the basis to grow participation in sport at the grassroots level. This would go a long way to placing structured physical activity, of which sport is the significant component, in its rightful place on the agenda as the major preventative health factor in the fight against obesity for Australians of all ages.

This is a fundamental point that has received insufficient regard thus far in debate in tackling obesity in this country, despite its increasing acknowledgement overseas. The Commission of European Communities published two white papers in 2007: a white paper on sport and a white paper on a strategy for Europe on nutrition, overweight and obesity health-related issues. These papers clearly identify sport as a key player in the fight against obesity, noting that, as a health enhancing physical activity, the sport movement has greater influence than any other social movement. They go on to state that there is a need for an emphasis on sport and strengthened cooperation between schools, teacher training bodies, local and national authorities and sports clubs. Thank you.

CHAIR—Judy, is there anything that you want to add?

Mrs Flanagan—Just to say that, as I am responsible for the establishment of the Active After-school Communities program, the success of that program is something that I think government has taken on board and recognised with the extension of the program, but it is only reaching 3,250 schools and out-of-school care centres. We have large, unmet demand for that program. It has become a catalyst for all community involvement, from families to schools, to out-of-school care centres, so it is not just about children within the after-school setting; it is about whole community involvement. We are very keen to continue to look at the opportunities that that program can provide to grow structured physical activity at the local community level.

CHAIR—Thank you for your submission. The after-school or out-of-school care program is offered for out-of-care school sites. Is that correct?

Mr Espeland—It is a mixture of schools and OSHCS, as they are called.

CHAIR—So it is mainly for children that are being cared for after school. It is not for kids that leave immediately?

Mrs Flanagan—No, it is open to primary schools that do not have out-of-school care centres. The government felt that the out-of-school care centres had a place to be involved in this program as well so that those children did not miss out. It is a mix. At the moment, probably 60 per cent of our sites are primary schools and around 40 per cent are after-school care centres.

CHAIR—When children cannot be picked up after school they go to the after-school care centre. A lot of the programs are across the board, but that is what you mean by after-school care. Is that correct, or have I got that wrong? Explain to me what you mean by after-school care, because it means different things in different states.

Mrs Flanagan—Basically, after-school care centres are established for children whose parents need a facility—whether it is at the school or with a private organisation—after school where their children can stay and be cared for.

Ms HALL—Could I make a suggestion? Maybe one of your local people could take Steve out to look at one of the programs.

Mr Espeland—That is a very good idea.

Ms HALL—That is something I have done a couple of times and I have found it very useful.

Mr ANDREWS—I am still not clear in my mind about what the chairman is asking. The primary school that my youngest son goes to has out-of-school-hours care, before or after school. Parents can drop their kids off at seven in the morning if they need to, or they can leave them and pick them up before six in the evening. How does what you are doing coordinate with that?

Mrs Flanagan—The children who are in the out-of-school care centres that run the program can register to be involved. We provide a structured physical activity program. Sometimes other things are going on, so there are a range of activities they could be doing.

Mr ANDREWS—So that is one of the options through that program?

Mrs Flanagan—Yes, it is one of the options.

Mr ANDREWS—Is that open to children who do not normally use the after-hours care program?

Mrs Flanagan—Yes.

Mr ANDREWS—I will stop talking in abstracts and make this question practical: let us say my 11-year-old son goes to the after-school hours care. If that program had your program as part of it, he could do that?

Mrs Flanagan—Yes.

Mr ANDREWS—Let us say that he does not go to that program and he comes home after school. Can he still go to your program?

Mrs Flanagan—No. There has to be a place.

CHAIR—That is what we were trying to establish.

Ms HALL—Could I give you an example? Recently I went to Northlakes Public School, which is in Shortland electorate. An after-hours school care program is run in that area but the school runs the Active After-school Communities program. There were about 68 kids there, and they were doing a variety of sporting activities. They had nothing to do with the after-hours school care centre. These were kids that stayed at the school, after school finished.

CHAIR—Not because they need care, but because they want to participate.

Ms HALL—They want to participate in this active after-hours school program.

CHAIR—So it is open to all students if they wish to participate at that particular place where the care is offered—whether it be a school, or day care centre, or whatever.

Mrs Flanagan—Yes, that is right, depending on the numbers. We do try to target the inactive children. While we do not turn children away who may have other options to be active, about 85 per cent of our children who are involved in this program were previously considered inactive.

Depending on the size of the school and the out-of-school care centre, we have only a certain number of places available because of resourcing. This is a popular program, so some of the schools and the out-of-school care centres will put in more resourcing. In some instances, they have 200 kids involved.

CHAIR—What sort of activities are they? Are they structured sporting activities, for example? Most schools have sporting teams, whether they be netball, soccer or football. Do you participate in the actual structured team of the school?

Mrs Flanagan—No, it is separate from competitive school sport. Basically, we have a lot of young children in the program. Our main cohort is between four and nine years of age. A lot of these kids have never done sport, so we generally start with introducing lots of multi-skilled, fun activities and lots of small games. We do not apply the rigid, competitive, technically based approach to getting these kids involved in sport. However, once we have got them going and they are enjoying it, we do offer modified junior sport programs which are a lot of fun and, again, engaging for them.

We have come up with a whole new resource and philosophy behind this program. We have done a lot of research on why kids do not want to be active and the barriers that are there for them, and we have tried to overcome them by developing a program that is about fun, small games, lots of equipment and lots of variety, but we also do offer the traditional sports. The non-traditional activities are very popular: flying discs, circus skills, dance—

CHAIR—Whip-cracking and juggling?

Mrs Flanagan—and whip-cracking in our school of the air. They are very popular. We are trying to meet the needs of young children today, too. A lot of them do not want that very

structured approach to sport but, once they become confident and their self-esteem is good, they are really happy to try a lot of other things. So that has been a real bonus for these kids.

Mr BIDGOOD—Can you elaborate on what the key barriers to children are?

Mrs Flanagan—Moving away from the children, two barriers lie with the families. Time and cost are the most significant barriers to families providing opportunities for their children now to be active but, for the children themselves, I think they do like a lot of variety. Particularly if they are not confident, they do not like to feel exposed—that they are going to go out there and not catch a ball, not hit a ball or whatever it is they are doing. The program is taking that away and making it a lot of fun rather than that rigid competitiveness. They would be the three things: from the family side, time and cost and, from the kids' side, taking away the competitive, skill based approach. Kids will always be competitive—don't get me wrong. As soon as you introduce a game, somebody wants to win, and that is natural and great—

Mr BIDGOOD—The third thing is the fun element?

Mrs Flanagan—Yes, along with safety. They must feel comfortable.

Mr BIDGOOD—You did touch on self-esteem.

Mrs Flanagan—Yes.

Mr BIDGOOD—How do you deal with those issues?

Mrs Flanagan—If children are not confident, the one thing they do not want to happen is to be exposed so their peers can see them not doing something well. That often happens when you put kids into large team game-type environments, so we do small team games: two on two and three on three. We get them all engaged so they are not all standing around watching while one person misses as they try to get the basketball into the net and things like that.

Mr COULTON—How many of these are in more remote areas? I have got a lot of schools that do not have enough students or are in communities with a lack of organised sport. Do you have many of those smaller, more isolated schools participate?

Mrs Flanagan—Fifty-two per cent of our sites are in regional or remote Australia. We have specifically looked at that environment because of the lack of opportunities compared to the metropolitan environment. We have a lot of small schools, say, in the Parkes area around Forbes, Parkes, West Wyalong and Orange. Further afield we have a lot of remote communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland and on the islands—Christmas Island, Thursday Island, Bruny Island and King Island.

Mrs MAY—How many years has the program been going now?

Mrs Flanagan—It first rolled out in 2005, term 2.

Mrs MAY—How much funding is there for the future?

Mrs Flanagan—This current funding period finishes on 31 December 2010.

Mrs MAY—In that period of time, is there room for expansion? You talked about numbers this morning regarding how many schools or communities are able to access this program. With the funding level you have now, are you able to expand that? Do you see a need throughout Australia to increase the number of sites?

Mrs Flanagan—There is a definite need, but we do not have the resources. We are at full capacity now, so we have no options in terms of expansion.

Mrs MAY—So where the program is operating, they get recurrent funding each year, or they have their funding bucket till 2010?

Mrs Flanagan—No, they have to reapply each year. It depends on their meeting set criteria in running the program, particularly quality assurance. We have to have supervision on-site for the schools. It is a bit easier in the after-school care centres because they have paid staff. We have to ensure that the children are coming, that we do not get deliverers or our coaches there and find we have no children. All those sorts of things. They have to provide a healthy afternoon tea for the children, which is another spin-off of the program—nutrition education for children. A lot of the kids do not have access to good nutrition.

CHAIR—Just out of interest, could you describe the afternoon tea and what sort of food they would be eating?

Mrs Flanagan—We provide a lot of fresh fruit and, obviously, raw vegetables as well. We found particularly in some areas—our lower socioeconomic sites—that kids have never eaten fruit. It is amazing. Parklea Markets in Sydney sponsored a couple of our sites and provided apples and oranges on different days. It actually enticed the kids to come, basically, because they wanted to eat the fruit. We provide fresh sandwiches, things like freshly made dips that the kids can stick carrot and celery sticks into and things like that. Sometimes the sites will include a session where they get the kids to do some cooking of good nutritious food and, whether it is pasta or rice.

CHAIR—So the cooking is an activity.

Mrs Flanagan—Yes. They build that into the program as well. We provide guidelines. We have worked with the Department of Health and Ageing to produce our guidelines for the sites on healthy, nutritious eating patterns. We also put advice in newsletters for the parents as well. We put recipes and things like snacks that the kids might like to make and enjoy eating.

Mr ANDREWS—How often a week does it occur—once a week?

Mrs Flanagan—It can run up to three times a week. It is up to the school or the out-of-school-hours care centre.

Mrs MAY—Is there an employee of the institute at each of these community programs?

Mrs Flanagan—We have a network of regional coordinators who are responsible for a number of sites within their community. They are not at every site every day, but they go out regularly. They are responsible for training the community coaches who are at the sites every afternoon, and we have a very strong quality assurance program behind that training for obvious reasons. People cannot go into a school or an out-of-school-hours care centre without completing our training and becoming a registered provider.

Mr Espeland—On the issue about regional coordinators, I would just like to add to what Judy said. We have always understood that the only way to deliver the program out there is to actually get it out in the community, respond to their needs and draw together the wherewithal to make it happen. That has been borne out by research. We have had an extensive research program associated with rolling out the initiative and that has shown that the use of the regional coordinators is very much integral to the success of the program.

Mrs MAY—I have just one last question. Are any kids precluded from participating because they do not have, maybe, the right shoes or equipment? Is there any expense for the parents?

Mrs Flanagan—No expense at all. No child that wants to be involved is precluded because they do not have the right shoes. We make it very easy for the kids to be engaged.

Mrs MAY—To be part of it.

Mrs Flanagan—We do not put those barriers in place.

Ms HALL—There was a lot of uncertainty about the funding last year. There has been a slight increase, hasn't there, in the amount of money that you have received?

Mrs Flanagan—Yes, we actually did not have enough funding originally to roll out fully to the 3,250 sites. To maintain that number, we needed additional funding and we had to fight fairly hard to get that.

Ms HALL—I just wanted to put that on the record.

Mr MORRISON—What is the current level of funding?

Mrs Flanagan—For the program, we are looking at \$124.5 million from new appropriation.

Mr MORRISON—That is the annual cost of the program?

Mrs Flanagan—No, that is for the whole time.

Mr MORRISON—What is the annual cost of the program?

Mrs Flanagan—We are looking at around \$45.6 million to keep it at this level. The commission has also had to put some additional funding into the program to be able to ensure that the schools and the after-school care centres can deliver it.

Mr MORRISON—Of that \$45.6 million, what is funded directly in appropriation and what is funded by the commission?

Mrs Flanagan—Four million dollars is from the commission annually, and the rest is from appropriation.

Ms HALL—I have two questions that I want to ask and I will preface the next question by saying I am a supporter of your program. I think it does a great job, and I have visited the disadvantaged schools within my area. On Friday we heard from Professor Simon Stewart of the Baker Heart Research Institute, and there was one program that he cited as not being properly assessed. He referred to this program as a program where money could be better directed toward other programs because the outcomes were not being assessed. Would you like to comment on that?

Mrs Flanagan—Somebody is concerned that this program—

Ms HALL—It was in evidence on Friday. He is with the Baker Heart Research Institute and he was talking about different programs—I think it was him. He said money would be better directed to some other area than to a program such as this, citing this program because it was not being properly assessed.

CHAIR—You can see a copy of his transcript at some stage.

Mrs Flanagan—We have an extensive evaluation framework behind this program and we have categorical evidence of what it has achieved for the last three years. It is a very robust research program, and at this stage we certainly do not have any evidence to say that it is not achieving its objectives. In fact, it is to the contrary.

Ms HALL—Could you submit your assessments to the committee?

Mrs Flanagan—Yes.

Mr Espeland—There is a lot of empirical evidence, but we have also got some very illustrative case studies, as well.

Ms HALL—I think that would be really useful—

Mrs IRWIN—The case studies, especially.

Ms HALL—for the committee to see and understand exactly how the program works because, as I said, I am a big supporter of it. I think that every member should fight to get it into their schools because I think it is great.

Mrs MAY—It just needs more funds, Jill.

Ms HALL—It got more than when you were in government.

Mrs MAY—Well, we started it. You can finish it now.

Ms HALL—My other question goes to the institute. You talk about inactivity and obesity. Do you do any work on diet and good nutrition, as well?

Mrs Flanagan—For the Australian Institute of Sport? Yes. It has a very extensive nutrition department which does a lot of research, as well as advising and giving good nutrition options to our high-performance athletes.

Ms HALL—Does the commission get that out to our lower-performing athletes?

Mr Espeland—We have a partnership with Nestle and, through that, we are able to get that material out into the community. The work that is done in support of the elite athletes does spin off into advice and information to the community at large.

Mr BIDGOOD—I find it interesting that Nestle is sponsoring something like that.

Mrs IRWIN—You have been talking about out-of-school activities. We have received some evidence that compulsory PE has dropped in Australian schools over many years. Would you agree with that?

Mrs Flanagan—Yes, it has, particularly when you look at the primary school environment, and that is a result of a few factors including very crowded curriculums. There is far more put into curriculums these days than 20 years ago and physical education and sport have, I suppose, been pushed down the agenda in relation to curriculum offerings.

Mrs IRWIN—Something has got to be done about that.

Mr Espeland—Health and physical education is a part of the national curriculum but, as Judy said, it tends to be a lesser priority because of that crowded curriculum factor. Second languages and IT were not part of the curriculum 20 years ago, so it has made it difficult. In many ways, I suppose, where a lot of the problems started was with young primary school kids not having adequate opportunities to be active in that very critical setting of the primary school.

Mr ANDREWS—Are you saying that there are primary schools where kids do not do any PE?

Mrs Flanagan—It is probably minimal, if that makes sense. There is not daily physical education and nor is, in some instances, sport part of their school curriculum agenda. We used to have an afternoon of sport on Fridays. Everybody stopped and played sport. That often does not occur, and it really is a crowded curriculum issue. In the primary schools we have an ageing workforce who are not confident in delivering sport and PE within their daily agenda. I suppose there is an issue to consider what is included in teacher training for our new breed of teachers coming out. While you can put PE teachers as specialists in primary schools, they still need to be across a large number of classes. It would be great for every teacher to be skilled in incorporating PE and physical activity into what they are offering each day.

Mr ANDREWS—We also have a fear of litigation that says kids cannot do things that kids have always done in the past—which is bloody stupid, in my view.

Mrs Flanagan—That is exactly right.

Mrs IRWIN—I have to agree with the deputy chair on that.

Mr MORRISON—I have a couple of comments. First, I am also a big supporter of the program. I recently had the opportunity to visit one of the programs operating in a local Catholic school, so they do not confine themselves just to the public sector—

Mrs Flanagan—No, we do not.

Mr MORRISON—which is great. I am pleased to see the funding is there and I would like to see it further improved. My comment, though, relates more to the viability of local sport clubs. One of the things I like about how you are approaching this problem is that you are approaching it from the point of getting people physically active and giving them opportunities to do that. In my electorate, I think we are very fortunate—we have one of the highest levels of volunteerism anywhere in the country, we have got active sport clubs, we have got kids enrolled in everything from soccer to nippers to whatever, the clubs are quite healthy and vibrant, and that is all fantastic—but one of the things we have heard as a committee is that in more socioeconomically depressed areas we are seeing obesity as a larger problem.

What worries me is that in those communities the local sports club is only surviving on the basis of a very small handful of volunteers who have been doing it for 20 or 30 years and the local infrastructure to support community sport is basically dying. Even in a strong area like my own, they still have their struggles and their challenges. I mentioned in this committee before that one of the largest clubs in the place runs their operation out of a broom cupboard. I am interested in your view of whether it is worth us considering how we can support local community sport better, not just in the formal sector of schools but also by ensuring that community support is stronger, that we have got stronger clubs and stronger support for volunteers. That gives kids—and adults, for that matter—the opportunity to engage in sport. That is one issue. The other issue relates to the balance between elite sport funding and community participation in sport funding. It is great to win gold medals but if we are not healthy and if we are not fit then I am wondering whether the balance is right. Do you have comments on that?

Mr Espeland—To turn to the first question, I touched on that during my opening remarks. We talked with a fair bit of detail about the aims of the program in terms of providing opportunities for previously inactive children to be active, but the second aim is to grow that capacity into the community and into the clubs. There is a model, which we are not in a position to roll out at the moment, which would see community sport officers working with our regional coordinators to build that capacity.

I mentioned the 25,000 community coaches. A lot of those are brand-new coaches who have never been involved before. I originate from a low socioeconomic area in Adelaide and I have returned to my old school. It was clear that there were a lot of parents who had been long-term unemployed, and they had re-engaged with the community. We spoke to the principal of the school, and he said that before there was no-one coming to his friends and parents of the community meetings, but now he had to bring in extra chairs. So there have been some really good spin-offs in terms of community. We really feel that opportunity to build partnerships

across all levels of government and into the private sector as well, and to build them off the back of a very comprehensive, expanded Active After-school Communities program that reaches all those primary school kids that need to be reached but then can build back into the community, providing opportunities for teenagers and for people—

Mr MORRISON—What three things do you think we could do to boost the capacity of community sport?

Mrs Flanagan—You have hit the nail on the head. Our clubs are struggling. It does not matter what the environment is. So we need to reinvigorate that. The success of the AASC program has really relied on that resource at the community level. The regional coordinator can bring a lot of support and advice. The grants for the schools and the OOSHs have allowed them to purchase equipment for the clubs that are involved in our program to set up some infrastructure.

The key things are: we need more resourcing at the community level, similar to the concept of the regional coordinators, these community sport development officers; and we need some grants because, no matter what human resourcing you put on the table, we have infrastructure problems and a whole range of issues that are affecting the viability of the clubs. Those are key things to have: human resourcing and some financial assistance.

Mr MORRISON—Do you think those grants should extend to capital as opposed to just operational funding for positions—that is, should they be for equipment, facilities, grandstands, showers, administration areas in clubs and those sorts of things?

Mrs Flanagan—I think it needs a holistic approach because we do have a facility issue. Obviously the drought has significantly impacted on sport. We need a nationally coordinated approach to looking at what options are available to assist things like that, and facilities as well. But we do need human infrastructure.

CHAIR—Could I just go back to another question that was raised earlier about the connectivity to community clubs et cetera. Earlier, in your opening remarks, you spoke about children from the age of four to around the age of nine, which is the majority. How do you connect those kids who are nine, 10, 11, 12 or 13 years of age? A lot of them would not need after school care. Even though the program is open to all children, I still suspect that most of them are kids that are doing the afternoon care program because their parents are working or whatever. What is the success rate of seeing those kids go on to participate in structured team sports at the school or in local community clubs? Have there been any benchmarks set, or measurements to see how many of those kids continue? I think that was one of the criticisms that we heard on Friday, that a lot of children will participate in different programs but, once they grow out of it or they are no longer eligible for that program, that is where it all ends. That is where we see kids not participating in physical activities. Do you have a formula that tries to ensure that kids go on to participate in community sport, or structured team sport at school?

Mrs Flanagan—As Brent said, the second major aim of this program is to provide a conduit for the children in the community to continue with the activity, whatever they are doing outside of our program.

CHAIR—How is that measured for success?

Mrs Flanagan—We do not have funding to track this longitudinally. We can only do it in a snapshot in time. The latest research for 2007 has shown that those of our coaches and community organisations who have been surveyed believe that their membership has increased by around 50 per cent since the introduction of our program. That is our key. To track longitudinally is something we just cannot—

CHAIR—So 50 per cent is not too bad. It is pretty good.

Mrs Flanagan—Yes, it is quite good. Since the program has become established—obviously for the first couple of years it was all hands on deck just to get it running within the after-school environment—we now have far greater capacity to make those links with local community clubs and organisations and provide opportunities for the children. Whether they will stay there, who knows, but certainly we need to provide those links in the first place.

Mrs IRWIN—In your reply to a question that Scott asked you, Brent, you stated that you are not in a position to roll out at the moment. Was that a program that you were talking about?

Mr Espeland—We have developed an initiative to build that capacity back into the sport at the grassroots level off the back of an expanded Active After-school Communities program. It is happening now on an ad hoc basis, but this would actually prime it and do it on a structured basis and bring together those partners at the local level. We talked about infrastructure facilities. It is the case that whilst there are problems associated with maintaining facilities, many local government agencies would see themselves as, I suppose, asset rich but cash poor.

Mrs IRWIN—Jill asked me to ask a question on her behalf regarding grants. She wanted to know how the state and local government grants are working together.

Mrs Flanagan—Are these the grants for the AAC program?

Mrs IRWIN—Yes.

Mrs Flanagan—It is not connected to state and local government. Those grants go out to the schools directly. We do have a number of partnerships, though, at state and local government level—in-kind support—particularly with state departments of sport and recreation and education. Local government authorities have also been fantastic in providing support in an in-kind fashion, but there is no sharing of that money capacity at all. Does that answer your question?

Mrs IRWIN—I hope it does answer Jill's question.

Mrs Flanagan—There was one question that we did not answer about the elite end versus the community end.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Espeland—The commission has two outcomes: one for participation and one for high performance. The split is roughly 70 per cent high performance and 30 per cent participation. We would make the point—and indeed the government's new directions paper makes this point—

that basic participation and high performance are linked. It is also the case that the government has flagged that there will be a high performance review, and we are expecting an announcement imminently as to who will be on that review panel and what the terms of reference will be. It is the case, though, that ironically in Australia the high participation sports are not the Olympic sports. There are a few what you might call 'fringe dwellers' in the case of tennis and football—a la soccer—but they would see their major event as the World Cup or winning the grand slam and that sort of thing.

CHAIR—You wouldn't call them fringe—

Mr Espeland—But what I am saying is that they do not see the Olympic Games as the pinnacle of their pathway. They are feeling fairly professional—we are talking about cricket, tennis, the various football codes, netball and the like. When you come down to swimming, when you come to rowing, when you come to cycling, when you come to track and field, they do not have the capacity to grow their sport as a whole, including the high-performance end, without the support of government. That is just a fact. For rowing, we provide probably 75 per cent of their revenue. In fact, when you count the money that we give direct to the athletes we are probably more than 100 per cent of the money that goes into their programs.

What we are saying is that, basically, sport runs sport but, certainly for that level of investment of public money, there is a high level of scrutiny and a high level of partnership for us. That is what I was talking about before about getting good governance practices, good management and good strategic planning practices, so that they can effectively use that money that comes from government. If the high-performance levels of funding were reduced then you would see quite clearly a fall-off in our international success. It is something that we need to address with government through this review in terms of the level of funding that goes to high performance. So it is a complex picture. It is wrong to say that it is either one or the other. They are very much linked.

CHAIR—I am not here to give evidence; I am here to listen. But I think they are completely different. With one you are looking at physical fitness and health, and the health of the nation, and the other one is an elite—or maybe not an elite—sport that brings glory to the country—and most people want to see that continue.

Mr Espeland—But they are linked in terms of the pathways.

CHAIR—Yes, they are linked, of course, but what you want to achieve from each is very different.

Mr Espeland—They are, but simply for participation it is both a means and an end. It is a means to the subsequent high-performance opportunity but it is an end in itself in the benefits it brings to individuals for well being and developing communities through social cohesion. High-performance sport is expensive and our competitor countries are throwing more and more money at it.

CHAIR—I think it is important for innovation as well.

Mr ANDREWS—Can I just go back to the program and children. I presume there are recommended guidelines as to how much physical activity young people of various ages should get.

Mrs Flanagan—The Department of Health and Ageing guidelines, which came out of the National Obesity Taskforce that was established a few years ago, recommend an hour a day of moderate to vigorous intensity activity for children and young people. There is a movement though, both internationally and nationally, to reconsider whether that is enough and whether children should be more active. If you look at the European situation, they had similar recommendations and they are going to redo them. I suggest Australia will probably be having a close look at that in the next 12 months or so.

Mr Espeland—To repeat what I mentioned in my opening remarks, even on those current guidelines a survey in 2006 found that 60 per cent of all Australians did not meet those recommended levels.

Mrs IRWIN—That was in 2006, so it will be interesting to see what the next survey is going to say.

Mrs Flanagan—That is right.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for your submission. It is greatly appreciated. I believe there are some figures that you will be sending through to the secretariat. If there is anything else, I am sure we will be in touch with you and vice versa.

Mrs Flanagan—Thank you. We did prepare a written brief if you would like to take a copy of that. It provides a bit more background.

CHAIR—Can someone move that we accept that submission?

Mrs IRWIN—I will move that.

Mr BIDGOOD—I second that.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 9.31 am