



Our Ref: F180266
Your Ref:
Enquiries: Andrew Campbell

14 February 2020

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

To Whom It May Concern.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF SPORTS GRANTS

I write to you to convey considerable concern regarding the outcome of the Sport Australia's Move It AUS – Community Sport Infrastructure grant program. The Shire of Manjimup sought \$498,145 from the grant program (Application CSI003552018) but was advised we were unsuccessful on 26 April 2019 by Sport Australia.

More recently the Shire of Manjimup was advised by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), who had obtained additional information about the program that our application was assessed by Sport Australia who scored it at 84 points on merit and with a threshold score recommended for funding being 74, that our application should have been funded. As you would be acutely aware the Minister overseeing this program, Senator Hon. Bridgette McKenzie, has since resigned from the role after this matter was exposed. It is of serious concern that ABC have further reported that 94 of the 224 grants approved and funded did not meet the threshold of Sport Australia based on merit and the Shire of Manjimup's application was therefore rejected on grounds other than merit.

In response to your Inquiry I offer the following submission to the Terms of Reference:

Program design and guidelines

The program design is very good in that it provides opportunity for recreational funding without the usual funding provider requirement for either a matching funding contribution or greater from the applicant. The guidelines are clear and succinct which allows the online application to be readily completed. The online application is what is to be expected for grant funding applications of the magnitude that the Shire of Manjimup applied for. Sport Australia was helpful where the Shire of Manjimup had queries related to the grant application.

Requirements placed on applicants for funding

The requirements placed on applicants are what is to be expected for grant funding applications of the magnitude that the Shire of Manjimup applied for. Significant grant funding applications must have relevant information supplied in them so that the grant provider / assessor is adequately able to make assessment of all applications based on the grant criteria. It is critically important for any tier of government in Australia to assess grant applications on comparative merit to ensure transparency and accountability of public funds is upheld at all times.

Management and assessment processes

The Shire of Manjimup was satisfied that our most recent grant (Application CSI003552018) was assessed on merit given the amount of work put into the grant application by our organisation and the advice from ABC that the submission was scored at 84/100 by Sports Australia.

However, the announcement of the unsuccessful application to the Shire of Manjimup by short email as follows was unacceptable:

Dear Shire of Manjimup,
Thank you for applying for funding from Sport Australia's Move It AUS – Community Sport Infrastructure grant program. Your application CSI003552018-Transformation of the Lower South West Sporting Precinct has not been successful.
The grant program experienced overwhelming interest with over 2,050 applications submitted totaling more than \$396 million in grant requests. With such a large number of applications, unfortunately many projects were unsuccessful.
Due to the high number of applications Sport Australia is not able to provide any individual feedback on unsuccessful applications.
A list of alternative third-party funding opportunities is also available via the Sport Australia website. In addition, the Australian Sports Foundation are dedicated to helping grassroots and community sport organisations raise funds, and in the last four years alone they have helped raise over \$150m for projects just like yours through tax-deductible donations. They run Australia's only specialised sports fundraising platform and have a team of Sports Partnership Managers available to help you raise the necessary funds. Sign up with the Sports Foundation here to help bring your project to life.
Sport Australia wishes you all the best with your infrastructure project and future endeavours.
Kind regards,
Sport Australia
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Team

The particular concern of the Shire of Manjimup was that there was no ability to receive feedback in relation to the unsuccessful application. At the time this was considered unusual by our organisation as the Federal Government had previously allowed for a feedback process for other grant programs which we often utilised to improve future grant applications. There was some further suggestion from within our organisation, after looking at successful project announcements for the program, that possibly some

projects had been funded on something other than merit and that is why a feedback process was not implemented.

Adherence to published assessment processes and program criteria

The published assessment process and program criteria appeared strongly geared toward considerations based on merit. If the findings of the ABC are correct, where 94 of the 224 grants approved and funded did not meet the assessment threshold of Sport Australia based on merit, there were clearly decisions made that were not based on merit for the Sport Australia's Move It AUS – Community Sport Infrastructure grant program.

If this is actually the case then it is extremely disappointing that our organisation put so much resource into preparing an application in collaboration with the community for it to rate highly on merit with a recommendation to be funded by the assessor, only to have an outcome that was determined on matters other than merit by an elected representative.

The role of the offices of the Minister, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and any external parties, in determining which grants would be awarded and who would announce the successful grants

It is considered that the assessment of grant applications should always be transparent, accountable and clearly based on merit. Agencies and any other external groups should continue with the role of unbiased grant assessment against clear and concise grant criteria to make recommendations to elected representatives based on merit. The role of elected representatives should continue to include grant announcements but any influence on the final determinations should be exclusively on merit alone with transparent and accountable justification for any change to recommendations in final decisions made by elected representatives.

Any related programs or matters

In the interest of fairness, respect for the resource effort required of organisations who made grant submissions, and given the controversy surrounding the outcomes of Sport Australia's Move It AUS – Community Sport Infrastructure grant program, the Shire of Manjimup recommends that the Federal Government give due consideration to funding all grant applications that were recommended for funding by Sport Australia but were denied funding for reasons other than merit.

If you require any further clarification please feel free to contact me by telephone on 97717777

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Campbell
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER