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

Dear Select Committee

**SUBMISSION – ADMINISTRATION AND AWARD OF FUNDING UNDER COMMUNITY
SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee.

At the outset, it is acknowledged that almost every grant program released at Federal or State level are oversubscribed and there will always be projects that are not funded due to the highly competitive nature of the grants process. This is not intended as a criticism of the process but more of an indication of the ever increasing funding pressures on local government.

In turning to the specific terms of reference for the Committee, I would like to provide the following observations:

(a) Program Design and Guidelines

The program design and guidelines were clear and enabled Council to consider a number of different projects before finally submitting the application for the resurfacing of the Noranda Netball Courts. This project had been identified by Council as a high priority due to the number of weekly users at the facility. The project has also been on the Council's works plans but has been delayed or deferred due to insufficient funding.

In reviewing the program guidelines, the City was satisfied that the project met all the criteria and would have been eligible for funding.

(b) Requirements placed on applicants for funding

The requirements of the program were no different to many other grant funding programs and as such did not create any additional burden on applicants.

(c) Management and Assessment process

The City is unable to provide informed comments in relation to this aspect.

(d) Adherence to published assessment processes and program criteria

Based on the information available to the City it is apparent that the application submitted for the Noranda Netball Courts met all of the program criteria and when initially assessed was a highly rated project. It is apparent that there were some other unpublished criteria that were added to the assessment process which resulted in the project not being in the final announcements. Without further clarity being provided and additional criteria it is extremely difficult to add further details to any funding application.

- (e) 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

The City is unable to provide informed comments in relation to this matter.

- (i) Any related programs or matters

As mentioned at the outset, almost all grant funding programs are oversubscribed and there will always be worthwhile projects that do not receive funding. Having been involved with local governments for nearly 30 years I have experienced this first hand on many occasions. This is despite the application being of a very high standard and meeting all the required criteria. It is recognized that regardless of the assessment criteria and who does the assessment, there is always going to be some personal bias coming into the assessment.

In looking at past programs and the funding beneficiaries it is apparent that there are always some underlying priority areas and the only way that this can be addressed would be for all grant applications to be assessed by an independent panel and then made public with a complete list of all projects ranked in accordance with the selection criteria. These would then be awarded on available funding and the organisation's ability to deliver. Whilst this was the intent of this funding program, it is apparent that the political aspect was not a component of the application or initial assessment.

It is acknowledged that the political imperative often influences the final decisions in any funding approval and this is nothing new, however in this instance it appears that many worthwhile projects missed out on being funded and some less compliant projects were funded.

Overall, the City is disappointed that the Noranda Netball Courts resurfacing project was not funded as it met or exceeded all of the selection criteria. This was seen by the City as the highest priority project and the community benefit which would have come about would have seen a further increase in participation in sport across the City with an estimated increase of 30% participation of players each week. The project would also have seen safety improvements through the upgrading of the playing surfaces.

On behalf of the City, I would again thank the Committee for the ability to provide a submission and the City looks forward to further opportunities to provide comments on impact if required.

Should you wish to discussion this submission further, please feel free to contact myself or Jon Vines, Manager Project Services, on (08) 9272 0622.

Yours faithfully

ANDREW BRIEN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER