



21 February 2020

Via email sportsgrants.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Chisholm (Committee Chair)

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF SPORTS GRANTS

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our thoughts on the administration and awarding of funding under the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.

1. Recital:

The Confederation of Australian Sport (CAS) is the not-for-profit industry organisation supporting the work of Australia's 90 National Sporting Organisations (NSO) with a particular emphasis on community level sport. Our mantra is 'Sport for All'.

Since 2014 CAS has been working with a group of over 80 national organisations across Health, Education and Sport to promote a cross-sector approach to promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity from a preventative health perspective. By example these collaborating organisations include National Heart Foundation, Australian Primary Principals Association and Australian Secondary Principals Association.

The Health, Education and Sport Cross-sector Collaboration has made a number of submissions to the Australian Government for consideration including to:

- Pre-Budget Submissions to Treasury in 2016 and 2018
- Consultation process for the development of the 'National Sport Plan' – ultimately released in 2018

These submissions and associated advocacy work to Ministers for Sport at Australian Government and jurisdictional level promoted the importance of providing Community Sporting Facilities that were functional, well maintained, safe and that catered for all users in order to encourage physical activity and maximise the use of the facilities for the benefit of the user and the broader community.

2. Demonstration of Need for Financial Support:

In May 2018 the Federal Budget allocation announced to the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program (CSIGP) was \$30m. This subsequently increased to \$100m in the lead-up to the 2019 Federal Election.

We understand that when the then Australian Sports Commission initially advertised for grant submissions later in 2018 there were over 2,000 applications totalling requests for over \$450m.

Clearly there is a massive unmet need for financial support for Community Sporting Facilities.

3. A Long Term, Strategic Approach and Commitment is needed:

Ongoing and continuing support for Community Sporting Infrastructure and Facilities is essential and should be budgeted for every year.

CAS recommends that commitment be made to establishing and funding a strategic, long term, coordinated approach to maintaining existing community sporting facilities and to identifying areas of need for new facilities.

3.1 National Audit of Existing Sporting Facilities:

- Conducting an audit of existing sporting facilities would require collaboration between the Australian and State/Territory Governments, and also liaison with Local Government as a major provider of such facilities.
- Once the National Sporting Facilities Audit is completed a needs assessment could be undertaken to establish the physical and financial requirements of maintaining the facilities at an acceptable standard.
- This assessment would inform Government of the level of resourcing required.
- Once the Program is established – all compliant Community Sporting Organisations would be invited to apply for future assistance – justifying their case based on the needs of their individual facilities.
- Set a timetable for resource allocation
 - Assess the lifecycle of the facilities and plan to assist in the upgrade/refurbishment/improvement to ensure the facilities do not fall into disrepair and remain functional, accessible, attractive and relevant for ongoing use.
 - Establish a future schedule of works that will occur at a logical point in the facility's lifecycle to minimise downtime and inconvenience to facility users.

Example:

Moruya Tennis Club – a small community tennis club on the south coast of NSW - originally laid 5 synthetic tennis courts in 1990 with an expected lifespan of the synthetic material being 15 years. 28 years later the courts had not been replaced, they had been patched multiple times and were arguably unsafe and virtually unplayable.

Under the proposed system – the synthetic surfaces would have been identified for replacement after say Year 12 with a schedule to replace them 3 years later. This information and knowledge would have given confidence to the Club members and administration. Planning to maximise the changeover could be put in place to ensure a smooth transition.

This planned, proactive approach will benefit all involved at Club level and ensure that confidence in and use of, the facilities is maximised.

3.2 Database of Scheduled Repairs/Refurbishment:

There are a number of advantages in establishing a proactive system as proposed:

- The Managers/Administrators of local clubs know that their facility is confirmed as being on the list for support.
- There would be no need for the Government to establish or assess Grants schemes on a one-off basis as occurred with the CSIGP as the proposed program would roll-out on a continuing basis.

- There would be no need for thousands of volunteer sporting administrators to spend many hours compiling an extensive application document as part of competitive process that they have limited chance of success.

3.3 Changes to the Timing of Planned Repairs/Improvements:

- If available Government financial resources were insufficient to cover all needs at a particular time then planned recipients could be advised that their repairs project would be delayed slightly - say 12 months.
 - Most people understand that sometimes circumstances do change and they would accepting of a short delay. Given reasonable notice this would not be a major issue and would not erode public confidence in the program.
 - Conversely – if the Program management identified that in say 2028 there will be a spike in need for funds for a particular reason – then that may be a justification for Federal or one or more jurisdictional Governments to increase their allocation to the fund.
- If there was a particular emphasis needing to addressed as a priority eg: Poor Quality Women’s Change/Toilet Facilities – this could be accommodated with allocating additional resources or adjusting the repair schedule.
- If additional financial resources became available – eg: in the lead up to Federal (or jurisdictional) elections – the projects at the top of the list may be undertaken earlier than planned.
 - In the case of say the NSW Government – if the NSW Government wished to contribute additional resources for any reason – then those resources could be allocated to the NSW sporting clubs at the top of the list.
 - It is recognised that State Government legislation is likely to require that grant funds they allocate can only be used to benefit that state – fair enough!

3.4 Who Conducts the Audit and Who establishes and monitors the repair/refurbishment schedule?

- The National Sporting Facilities Audit would be undertaken as a joint project of the Australian Government with State/Territory Governments – with access to required expertise from local government and building/planning authorities.
- The process should be as independent as possible to ensure an accurate and unbiased information.
- Clubs and Sporting organisations would be encouraged to enrol/apply for inclusion on the list for future support and confirm their commitment to the process.
 - The ‘place in the queue’ of each sporting club/organisation would be dictated by when their repair/refurbishment was needed in terms of facility life-cycle and the date they joined the program.
- New community clubs/organisations established after the program start-date could apply to join at any appropriate point in the future.

3.5 How much funding would be required?

The ultimate answer to this question would be answered by the National Sporting Facilities Audit.

CAS believes that \$150m-200m allocated each year to Community Sporting Infrastructure from the Federal Government with a similar total amount allocated by the respective jurisdictions on a pro rata basis may be adequate to maintain community sporting facilities at a sound functional level.

4. Benefits of this Proposal

There are a number of important benefits to this proposal:

- **Comprehensive coverage of community sporting facilities** – maximising the percentage of facilities that are considered for support. Not relying on whether the Club had an effective 'Grant writer' available to them.
- **Strategic Planned Approach** – assessment of the total picture through the National Sporting Facilities Audit will allow a planned, measured and strategic approach to maintaining facilities at optimum levels into the future.
- **Partnership at National and Jurisdictional levels** – maximising the use of available funds and allowing all parties to contribute
- **Fair and Unbiased** – all facilities have the same chance of being included and assisted with an independent, unbiased set of operating principles and system.
- **Proactive with advanced timeframes** – the program will identify community needs into the future, commit to them and allow for all users and stakeholders to prepare in advance
- **Flexible to accommodate new priorities** – the system can accommodate the emergence of new priorities or needs in a fair and unbiased way

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute this proposal for your broader consideration.

If you would like further information or input please do not hesitate to make contact.

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