



Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020

## **Re: Select Committee enquiry into the administration and award of the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.**

Parks and Australia wish to express its deep concerns regarding the recent Sporting Grant allocation as a manifestly unfair process that betrayed the communities trust in government and cast a dark cloud over one of the founding stones of our national identity – community sport.

### **About Parks and Leisure Australia**

Parks and Leisure Australia is the peak industry association for professionals working in the Parks and Leisure sector in Australia representing over 2500 individual members, and more broadly over 300,000 professionals who work across policy, planning and the provision of services, facilities, programs and research in the sport, recreation and parks and leisure sector.

Our members consist of Local Government, State and Federal government employees and agencies, private consulting, universities, schools and other Parks and Leisure providers which service and support this significant industry.

### **Our Vision:**

For Australia to be the most liveable country in the world, renowned for its parks, sport and recreation facilities that provide the foundation for healthy communities and liveable towns and cities.

### **Our Mission**

Is to build, serve and develop a strong and united parks and leisure industry in Australia.

### **Our Values and Objectives**

- Champion Leisure Benefits
- Promote Recreation Participation
- Build Excellence in Park Management & Environmental Stewardship
- Develop Sport
- Drive Economic Prosperity





With the aforementioned values, mission and vision we wish to express our deep concern regarding the distribution of grants recently carried out. We should also note that in our members experience that this incident or political allocations is not isolated to federal funding rounds. We respect as an absolute right, governments role in setting policy to determine how funds are distributed however reject any process that fails to deliver a “fair go” for all applicants.

Our view of an equitable system would include

- evidence based decisions
- a national facility blueprint for strategic provision
- a process that intergrade sports planning with broader community planning
- well-resourced assessment to ensure disadvantaged communities are not further disadvantaged by a competitive process
- a commitment to management to just infrastructure of sport

Parks and Leisure Australia regularly collaborate with Sport Australia and see this review into Grant Funding as an ideal platform to change the way community sports infrastructure is delivered at a local level.

***Parks and Leisure Australia wishes to take this opportunity to provide input into the Senate Enquiry into the administration of the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant*** with a twenty point response which we feel will assist the development and high-performance sport, increase levels of physical activity and ultimately create active and vibrant communities for all Australians.

## **1. Prioritisation of Projects**

There are \$billions worth of sport projects either currently being developed or shovel ready. A national system to prioritise community sport projects to address greatest need is required and PLA recommends:

1. Projects should have and identify evidence-based outcomes
2. Projects should highlight and link to participation
3. Projects should be linked or identified within a strategic planning context
4. Projects should be endorsed by the National Sporting Organisation
5. Projects should link with vulnerable, target population and at-risk communities
6. Projects should showcase the link with sport development and performance
7. Projects should value add as a partnership with a local government authority
8. Projects should align with data for activities and where the activity sits on the national participation hierarchy





## **2. Grant Mechanics**

The way grants are administered and decided should be based on a clear and objective assessment with industry representation and/or assistance and as a minimum there should be independent oversight. As previously noted, government sets the policy agenda and we therefore recommend:

9. Guidelines, assessment tools and priorities should always be available for review during a grant round.
10. There should always be an independent body included in decision making.
11. Decision making should be documented, transparent and published
12. There should always be a meaningful feedback mechanism.
13. Identified need should be the highest priority
14. Assessment should not rely on the quality of the application rather the merit of the project.

## **3. Research and Data Collection**

The use and collection of objective facility and participation data is an ongoing task that should be the foundation of all decisions in relation to supporting community grants. The industry can lead and advise government with relevant data which can be interpreted and prepared on an annual basis. We therefore highlight and recommend:

15. While Ausplay data is useful, it should be noted the Federal Government has cut funding and support to the broader collection of participation data and has left the industry facing major decisions without accurate information. Data collection must continue. In the absence of a single source of data, the real picture may be manipulated to paint a positive image by those seeking funding.
16. There is a need for a national sports infrastructure database to be developed which is independently collected and monitored, most previous attempts have been point in time data and not integrated into evolving asset systems like those in local government.
17. Many National Sport Organisations (NSO's) are grant dependent and may not provide information that truly reflects the current status of their sports. The collection of this data needs to be independent but guided by NSO's.
18. Facility blueprints should be a priority for all NSO's and these be developed with and through industry bodies who can work with local communities and Councils directly.
19. An annual State of Community Sport (SOCS) report should be developed that summarises and makes recommendations in relation to facility and participation data across Australia more broadly.



20. That the industry is regularly consulted, and a National Community Sports Task Force is developed to include organisations such as PLA to advise Government accordingly. This taskforce should equally consider elite pathways and community participation

We thank you for your time, wish you luck with the review and please feel free to call or speak with either our National President or myself as the CEO on this or any other matter

Kind Regards

**Mark Band**  
National CEO  
Parks and Leisure Australia

**Paul Jane**  
National President  
Parks and Leisure Australia

