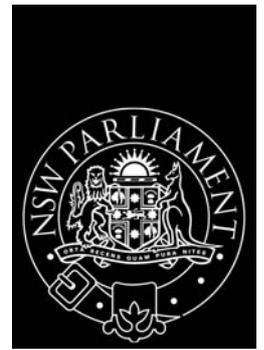


LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Standing Committee on Public Works  
INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT IN NSW

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## Terms of Reference

The Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Works is undertaking an inquiry into the availability and core objectives for management of community land designated as sportsgrounds.

The aim of the inquiry is to assess current and projected community demand for sportsground facilities and the adequacy of current measures to allow equitable access, to manage environmental pressures and to ensure maintenance and public safety.

In particular, the Committee will examine the following factors:

1. Adequacy of provision of quality sportsgrounds to meet community needs across NSW;
2. Cost and revenue arrangements including capital upgrades;
3. Environmental concerns associated with sportsground management;
4. Effectiveness of current administration of sportsgrounds by various providers including councils, state government (including schools) and private operators;
5. Impact on health outcomes and social cohesion, particularly in disadvantaged communities;
6. Traffic, noise and other direct impacts on residential amenity;
7. Affect of litigation and insurance costs on financial viability; and
8. Access to open space for active and passive recreational users.



## Chairman's Foreword

Physical health and well being are good insurance policies for a productive and rewarding life. As individuals, we must accept responsibility for maintaining a level of physical activity appropriate for our age and fitness level. Participation in sport and recreational exercise also builds community cohesion and social capital.

Sporting organisations and governments provide the essential infrastructure for sporting and recreational activities. They have a joint responsibility to ensure that opportunities for active engagement in sport and leisure can take place. This Inquiry examines one aspect of the provision of such venues and facilities, namely the management of sportsgrounds in New South Wales.

While sportsgrounds at the local community level are, in the main, managed by local councils, all tiers of government have a responsibility to establish coordinated policies to ensure an adequate supply and equitable access to available grounds now and into the future. This Report makes observations and a series of recommendations to improve the current undersupply and inadequate maintenance of sportsgrounds in this State.

The Report also looks at the role of sporting organisations in sharing the responsibility for keeping grounds in good condition and limiting unwanted impacts on adjoining residents. In addition, options for increasing availability of grounds by gaining better access to funds, examining other ways of sharing joint facilities and improving planning decisions are canvassed as part of an overarching framework for management.

I believe that the recommendations in this Report will assist to improve our community's capacity to manage sportsgrounds effectively.

Even though this Inquiry was undertaken in a relatively short space of time, having commenced in July this year, it attracted substantial contributions from many local councils, various sporting bodies, State government departments, community members and individuals. On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank all those who made submissions to the Inquiry.

I would also like to thank Penrith and Liverpool Councils for hosting our inspections in September 2006 and for participating in extensive discussions regarding the facilities in their local area. This greatly assisted the Committee in gaining a practical appreciation of the state of the grounds under their control. These included Jamison Park and the Mark Leece Soccer Facility, St Clair and Rosedale Oval and Hammondville Park.

I am pleased to present this Report and thank my fellow Committee Members and the Committee Secretariat for their contributions.



Kevin Greene MP  
Chair



## List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CAP	Capital Assistance Program
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation
DET	Department of Education and Training
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
RSFP	Regional Sports Facilities Program
RTA	Roads and Traffic Authority
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
SHOROC	Shore Regional Organisation of Councils
SRMC	Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council
WSROC	Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils



## Executive Summary

Evidence gathered during the course of this Inquiry demonstrates that continuing and future access to sustainable sportsgrounds and open space recreation facilities is under threat in New South Wales. Uncoordinated planning, disparate management practices and a lack of consistent data collection are compounding an already precarious situation and preventing active community sporting participation.

In addition to a chronic shortage of sporting venues in many local government areas, existing sportsgrounds are subjected to increasing user pressures, resulting in degraded playing surfaces aggravated by the prolonged drought. This leads to a lack of opportunity for training, an inability to accommodate emerging sports and a failure to put into practice Federal and State government campaign strategies to improve general community health and well being.

This report identifies many of the associated components of this problem. These include: current levels of demand and the provision of sportsgrounds; local management and access policies; existing funding and revenue sources; community and environmental issues; and initiatives to improve and integrate planning strategies at all levels of government.

One of the core issues underpinning the precarious state of sportsgrounds in NSW is the failure to anticipate and plan for changes. Such changes include greater community participation in active recreation, population shifts from rural to urban areas, increased housing density and environmental consequences of increased use of facilities.

The Committee has concluded that because the current distribution of sportsgrounds in NSW has evolved historically, there is a lack of consistency in the provision of facilities across council areas. This means that planning for sportsgrounds in the future requires a more strategic focus than in the past.

Competing land use pressures and contemporary housing trends mean that existing open space is under increasing demand. If current trends continue, new sportsground infrastructure must be created. This is explored in Chapter 5 of the report.

Historically, communities have a mix of small passive open spaces in residential areas and larger spaces, including sportsgrounds, suitable for active sports use. The Committee sees opportunities, in some circumstances, to rationalise this supply to provide larger areas which are more multifunctional. Such a decision and financial burden should not be left solely to local councils but must be assisted and supported by State government. The Committee considers that the Department of Planning scope options and develop a framework for the purchase and provision of new land parcels for sportsgrounds in areas of acute need.

The Committee therefore recommends that the Department of Planning examine the feasibility of purchasing and allocating land for redevelopment for the exclusive use of community sportsgrounds, in areas where there is a documented shortage of such grounds. Such land should provide sufficient space for two playing fields and should take precedence over the development of smaller parcels of land adding to the currently fragmented supply of pocket parks in local neighbourhood areas. (Recommendation 11)

Executive Summary

Furthermore, sportsground planning in new release areas should be a critical component of initial planning and integrated with other public amenity facilities. The Committee, to this end, recommends that the Department of Planning, as part of its process of determining land use in new release areas, should ensure that active sportsgrounds are provided to meet documented and projected levels of demand. Such grounds should be situated in suitable areas with access to transport services, taking account of residential amenity considerations and environmental issues, including water retention and sustainable environmental factors. (Recommendation 12)

Ad hoc government arrangements in the past have substantially contributed to the poor situation faced by communities today in the management and provision of sportsgrounds. Given the social and health benefits to the community that are clearly linked to sporting participation, the Committee believes that a more permanent management and coordination infrastructure should be established. The Committee therefore recommends a State coordination program and a linked national coordination program to improve outcomes. This should have several strands.

The NSW Regional Council of Parks and Leisure Australia has established a working group to improve sporting industry coordination at State level. This is supported as a useful mechanism to further enhance collaboration and create partnerships between sporting stakeholders in relation to sportsgrounds. The Committee recommends that the Department of Sport and Recreation provide seed funding of \$30,000 per year for two years to enable Parks and Leisure NSW to represent its membership in a professional manner and to provide useful input to government as part of a coordinated strategy for the improved management of sportsgrounds in NSW. (Recommendation 13)

There is also a need to establish a permanent structure to address broader sportsground access and availability issues. For this reason, the Committee recommends that the Department of Sport and Recreation establish a network of regional planning forums involving relevant State government agencies, local councils, industry groups and peak sporting bodies to gather data and devise strategic plans for the management of sportsgrounds at State level. This network would assist in the determination of appropriate standards for use of grounds and facilities in the State. (Recommendation 14)

At the Federal level, the Committee recommends that the Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council convene a working group to address issues raised in this Report and specifically examine the need for consistent data collection across Australia about current trends in sporting and leisure activity. This should complement current Federal initiatives in relation to obesity and health issues and acknowledge that education campaigns and programs designed to increase physical fitness must link to the provision of adequate resources to meet increased demand for open space and sporting facilities. It should also include consideration of the special needs of an ageing population and people with limited mobility, in order to ensure access and equity across communities. (Recommendation 15)

In relation to existing facilities, the major provider of sportsgrounds for community use is local government. The Committee has made a number of recommendations in Chapter 2 to assist local councils in improving their management practices and policy frameworks to ensure fairer and more equitable allocation of available venues and resources. This will require councils to standardise arrangements with each sporting association in their region.

The Committee recommends that each council, in conjunction with sporting clubs/associations in its area should develop a strategic plan of management. The plan should include partnership arrangements with other clubs to manage increasing demand on facilities and acknowledge shifting sporting requirements across the community. In addition, the Committee recommends that councils, when conducting negotiations with sporting organisations in relation to hiring sportsgrounds, adopt consistent and transparent hiring policies reflecting current and projected demand based on sporting category. (Recommendation 1)

A further related issue is the sporting community's access to and relationships with other possible sportsground providers (including non council providers). Councils should be encouraged to integrate the use of other sportsgrounds in their area, such as those on school grounds, to meet increased community demand. The State government must facilitate this arrangement.

Hence the Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training develops a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local government, to facilitate joint arrangements between school principals and local councils in relation to the use of school grounds for community sporting activities. Such arrangements would have to take account of practical issues related to shared maintenance costs, security, safety and public liability. In addition, the MOU should stipulate that school principals ensure that grounds are made available for community use to the greatest extent possible, without detrimental impacts on the grounds themselves. (Recommendation 2)

The Committee also recommends that councils, as part of their strategic plan of management and in consultation with sporting organisations, investigate options to increase the availability of sportsgrounds by negotiating with private schools and other educational institutions. (Recommendation 3)

Another issue related to access concerns the growing needs of particular sportsground user groups, particularly disadvantaged community members. The Committee has been told that these groups need special consideration and hence recommends that local council strategic management plans take account of the specific requirements of groups with special needs, including disability and socially disadvantaged groups in determining access to sportsgrounds in their local area. This policy should be developed in consultation with community and sporting groups and based on available demographic and sporting activity data, reflecting current and future demand. (Recommendation 4)

The provision of adequate funding for maintenance and upgrading of facilities is another driver for improving the conditions of grounds and is explored in Chapter 3. The imposition of hire fees and charges is an inadequate mechanism to meet this need, based on inconsistencies and philosophical differences in approach by councils about the extent to which ratepayers should have to pay for facilities in their local area.

The Committee considers that the lack of consistency in current council fees and charges imposed on sporting organisations can be improved. However, a provisioning system involving granting preferred hirer status to clubs contributing funds to grounds maintenance, could prevent access and user opportunities for emerging or growing sports which do not have long standing in the area. Some scope for standardised fees or minimal contribution charges

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within a council area should be considered for equity reasons. At the same time, a regional or standard council fees structure across the State would not be appropriate, given the diversity of council constituencies.

The main conclusion from the evidence gathered is that fees and charges revenue obtained from sporting organisations is not a viable or adequate source of funds to cover the needs of sportsgrounds currently or in the future. Hence, State and Federal funding must be better accessed and to this end, the Committee suggests some reforms.

A source of great frustration for local councils is their inability to gain sufficient access to available grant funding to meet their requirements. In addition, there appears to be no justification for NSW to be the lowest per capita sports funded State in Australia. The Committee recommends enhancements to NSW Government funding to move NSW per capita resource distribution closer to the level in other jurisdictions.

A further issue is that fund “matching” appears to be a key structural component to various sources of funds made available by Government. In the case of State funding, the CAP and RSFP both require “dollar for dollar” contributions from the local council / sporting association. The Commonwealth funds similarly require “dollar for dollar” co – contributions” for any project undertaken.

Although matched funding does provide some benefits in increasing the total pool of funds, the difficulty with this approach is that those council areas and sports that are most disadvantaged are less able to generate their portion of contribution to get funding access. The Committee believes that decoupling of “matched” funding should be explored and initially suggests this be taken on at a Federal level.

The Committee further considers the benefits from enhanced sporting facilities and activities as a critical factor in terms of national health and community outcomes. Hence, in keeping with its national responsibilities, the Committee urges the Federal government to adopt a greater role in this area and has recommended a substantial enhancement to its existing commitments.

The Committee does not consider current levels of funding provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation under the Capital Assistance and Regional Sports Facilities Programs to be adequate for meeting the Programs’ objectives. For this reason, the Committee recommends that funding for the Capital Assistance Program be increased to \$8M per annum over the next 2 years and that funding for the Regional Sports Facilities Program be increased to reach \$16M per annum over the next 4 years. (Recommendation 5)

The Committee also recommends that the Federal government make available annual funding of \$150M, based on a maximum of \$1M per Federal electorate, for sporting facilities applications to develop new grounds or to improve existing facilities for groups and organisations with unmet needs. (Recommendation 6)

As levels of demand for venues and facilities increases, new challenges will be faced in providing sporting access to particular groups in the community, such as an active ageing population. Every increase in participation impacts on the surrounding community and the

local environment and these impacts must be anticipated and ameliorated. Chapter 4 develops these issues.

The most pressing concern arising from this Inquiry is the environmental management of sportsgrounds. Water is a critical factor in keeping grounds functioning. At the same time, the need for water conservation across the community is paramount. The Committee considers that the State government should provide practical and policy support to local government in order to identify the most efficient processes for water management. Given the expressed support for alternative sources of irrigation and the current investigations undertaken as part of the NSW Water Savings Action Plans, the Committee recommends that the NSW government examine, as a matter of priority, the potential for alternative irrigation methods and optimal watering time cycles to improve surface conditions at sportsgrounds. (Recommendation 7)

The Committee also considers that local councils should not be left to independently determine best practice solutions for turf management and further recommends that the NSW government, as part of its water conservation strategies, provide funding to investigate alternative turfgrass options for sportsgrounds in order to optimise playing conditions and potentially reduce watering and maintenance costs. (Recommendation 8)

Responsibility for conservation must be shared across the community and, to this end, sporting organisations relying on and receiving direct benefits from their use of sportsgrounds must play a significant role. Therefore, the Committee urges local government to seek cooperative agreements with sporting associations, with built-in safeguards to enable better conservation of grounds. The Committee recommends that councils, as a condition of hire of sportsgrounds and facilities, require sporting organisations to agree to schedule their seasonal use of grounds so as to enable grounds to be rested for a minimum of two weeks. (Recommendation 9)

While it is desirable to provide maximum sportsground access to meet increased community demand, the Committee believes that critical areas of safety should not be compromised. In particular, adequate lighting of fields should be provided. The Committee suggests that where lighting is provided, it should meet the minimum Australian standard. Where there are budget constraints, upgrading of existing lighting should take priority over the provision of new lighting.

The Committee also considers that flexible lighting placement should be employed to divert night activity to low wear areas of fields to reduce the acute wear and tear on high use areas of sportsgrounds.

Hence the Committee recommends that grounds designated by councils as requiring lighting and used for club competition and match practise should be lit to a minimum of 100 Lux, as mandated in Australian Standard: AS 2560.2.3-2002. In addition, standards should include ratings for maximum glare to minimise residential impact and horizontal illumination to encourage even use of the playing surface of the sportsground. (Recommendation 10).



## List of Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: Council Provisions of Sportsgrounds**

The Committee recommends that each council, in conjunction with sporting clubs/associations in its area, should develop a strategic plan of management, demonstrating partnership arrangements with other clubs to manage increasing demand on facilities and acknowledge shifting sporting requirements across the community. In addition, the Committee recommends that councils, when conducting negotiations with sporting organisations in relation to hiring sportsgrounds, adopt consistent and transparent hiring policies reflecting current and projected demand based on sporting category.

### **Recommendation 2: Schools Provision of Sportsgrounds**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training develops a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local government, to facilitate joint arrangements between school principals and local councils in relation to the use of school grounds for community sporting activities. Such arrangements would have to take account of practical issues related to shared maintenance costs, security, safety and public liability. In addition, the MOU should stipulate that school principals ensure that grounds are made available for community use to the greatest extent possible, without detrimental impacts on the grounds themselves.

### **Recommendation 3: Private Schools Sportsground Access**

The Committee recommends that councils, as part of their strategic plan of management and in consultation with sporting organisations, investigate options to increase the availability of sportsgrounds by negotiating with private schools and other educational institutions.

### **Recommendation 4: Special Needs Planning**

The Committee recommends that local council strategic management plans take account of the specific requirements of groups with special needs, including disability and socially disadvantaged groups in determining access to sportsgrounds in their local area. This policy should be developed in consultation with community and sporting groups and based on available demographic and sporting activity data, reflecting current and future demand.

### **Recommendation 5: Increased State Funding**

The Committee does not consider current levels of funding provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation under the Capital Assistance and Regional Sports Facilities Programs to be adequate for meeting the programs' objectives. For this reason, the Committee recommends that funding for the Capital Assistance Program be increased to \$8M per annum over the next 2 years and that funding for the Regional Sports Facilities Program be increased to reach \$16M per annum over the next 4 years.

### **Recommendation 6: Increased Federal Funding**

The Committee recommends that the Federal government make available annual funding of \$150M, based on a maximum of \$1M per Federal electorate, for sporting facilities applications to develop new grounds or to improve existing facilities for groups and organisations with unmet needs.

**Recommendation 7: Sportsground Irrigation**

Given the expressed support for alternative sources of irrigation and the current investigations undertaken as part of the NSW Water Savings Action Plans, the Committee recommends that the NSW government examine, as a matter of priority, the potential for alternative irrigation methods and optimal watering time cycles to improve surface conditions at sportsgrounds.

**Recommendation 8: Improved Playing Surfaces**

The Committee recommends that the NSW government, as part of its water conservation strategies, provide funding to investigate alternative turfgrass options for sportsgrounds in order to optimise playing conditions and potentially reduce watering and maintenance costs.

**Recommendation 9: Reduced Playing Seasons**

The Committee recommends that councils, as a condition of hire of sportsgrounds and facilities, require sporting organisations to agree to schedule their seasonal use of grounds so as to enable grounds to be rested for a minimum of two weeks.

**Recommendation 10: Improved Sportsground Lighting**

The Committee recommends that grounds designated by councils as requiring lighting and used for club competition and match practise should be lit to a minimum of 100 Lux, as mandated in Australian Standard: AS 2560.2.3-2002.

In addition, standards should include ratings for maximum glare to minimise residential impact and horizontal illumination to encourage even use of the playing surface of the sportsground.

**Recommendation 11: Land Acquisition Policies**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Planning examine the feasibility of purchasing and allocating land for redevelopment for the exclusive use of community sportsgrounds, in areas where there is a documented shortage of such grounds. Such land should provide sufficient space for two playing fields and should take precedence over the development of smaller parcels of land adding to the currently fragmented supply of pocket parks in local neighbourhood areas.

**Recommendation 12: Greenfields Planning Policies**

The Committee also recommends that the Department of Planning, as part of its process of determining land use in new release areas, should ensure that active sportsgrounds are provided to meet documented and projected levels of demand. Such grounds should be situated in suitable areas with access to transport services, taking account of residential amenity considerations and environmental issues, including water retention and sustainable environmental factors.

**Recommendation 13: Industry Coordination**

The NSW Regional Council of Parks and Leisure Australia has established a working group to improve sporting industry coordination at State level. This is supported as a useful mechanism to further enhance collaboration and create partnerships between sporting stakeholders in relation to sportsgrounds. The Committee recommends that the Department of Sport and Recreation provide seed funding of \$30,000 per year for two years to enable Parks and Leisure NSW to represent its membership in a professional manner and to provide useful input to government as part of a coordinated strategy for the improved management of sportsgrounds in NSW.

**Recommendation 14: Regional Planning Forums**

There is a need to establish a permanent structure to address broader sportsground access and availability issues. For this reason, the Committee recommends that the Department of Sport and Recreation establish a network of regional planning forums involving relevant State government agencies, local councils, industry groups and peak sporting bodies to gather data and devise strategic plans for the management of sportsgrounds at State level. This network would assist in the determination of appropriate standards for use of grounds and facilities in New South Wales.

**Recommendation 15: National Working Group**

At the Federal level, the Committee recommends that the Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council convene a working group to address issues raised in this Report and specifically examine the need for consistent data collection across Australia about current trends in sporting and leisure activity. This should complement current Federal initiatives in relation to obesity and health issues and acknowledge that education campaigns and programs designed to increase physical fitness must link to the provision of adequate resources to meet increased demand for open space and sporting facilities. It should also include consideration of the special needs of an ageing population and people with limited mobility, in order to ensure access and equity across communities.



# Chapter One - Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 The impetus for the Committee's Inquiry into sportsground management resulted from a combination of three factors, namely: increasing participation in active and passive recreation; pressures associated with greater usage and threats to the sustainability of existing sportsgrounds; and inadequate planning for future needs. These factors have arisen from underlying trends such as population shifts from rural to urban areas, increased housing density, greater attempts by governments to increase physical fitness in the general population and higher awareness of the benefits of exercise and fitness on health and general well being. The introduction of new sports, changes to existing sports and growth in junior and female sporting participation have also increased pressures on available sporting venues and resources.
- 1.2 Increasing community demand for physical activity infrastructure has meant that existing sportsgrounds are under great pressure, are not rested or maintained sufficiently and cannot meet the levels of need being experienced. As a consequence, there is an increasing likelihood that players and teams will be turned away because already overstretched grounds are used to full capacity and there is a shortage of available open space to cater for new groups and activities.
- 1.3 The Committee's task was to examine better ways to manage existing sportsgrounds, investigate current planning strategies and policies and look at building improved partnerships between governments, the sporting industry and users to increase access and ensure sustainability of this community resource. Also included in this review was an assessment of current financial arrangements, environmental issues and residential impacts, with the overall aim of balancing competing interests to achieve optimal outcomes.
- 1.4 Under the Local Government (General) Regulations 1999, a sportsground is defined as "land that is used, or is proposed to be used, primarily for active recreation involving organised sports or the playing of outdoor games. This includes sporting fields, courts, indoor sporting venues, swimming pools, skate and cycle facilities and the like". For the purposes of its Inquiry, the Committee determined to limit its investigation to outdoor sporting facilities primarily consisting of outdoor grass fields, grounds and ovals, used for sports such as Australian Rules Football, Hockey, Cricket, Soccer, Softball, Baseball, Touch Football, Athletics and Rugby. In addition, the Committee resolved not to address issues relating to professional sporting venues.

## Conduct of Inquiry

- 1.5 On 7 June 2006, the NSW Standing Committee on Public Works resolved to inquire into the availability and core objectives for the management of sportsgrounds in New South Wales.
- 1.6 The aim of the Inquiry was to assess current and projected community demand for sportsground facilities and the adequacy of current measures to allow equitable access, to manage environmental pressures and to ensure maintenance and public safety.

Introduction

- 1.7 The terms of reference adopted for the Inquiry directed the Committee to particularly examine the following factors:
- 1) Adequacy of provision of quality sportsgrounds to meet community needs across NSW;
  - 2) Cost and revenue arrangements including capital upgrades;
  - 3) Environmental concerns associated with sportsground management;
  - 4) Effectiveness of current administration of sportsgrounds by various providers including councils, state government (including schools) and private operators;
  - 5) Impact on health outcomes and social cohesion, particularly in disadvantaged communities;
  - 6) Traffic, noise and other direct impacts on residential amenity;
  - 7) Affect of litigation and insurance costs on financial viability; and
  - 8) Access to open space for active and passive recreational users.
- 1.8 The Committee launched the Inquiry by advertising the terms of reference and calling for submissions from relevant organisations and the public on 15 July 2006. While the initial submission period closed on 11 August 2006, the timeframe was extended to allow additional submissions. In total, the Committee received 76 submissions from local government councils, sporting organisations, State government agencies, non-government organisations and private individuals. A full list of submissions received can be found at Appendix 1.
- 1.9 The Committee conducted a full day of inspections of sportsground facilities in Penrith and Liverpool on 14 September 2006. During the site visits, the Committee inspected the following facilities:
- Penrith - Jamison Park and Mark Leece Soccer Facility, St Clair; and
  - Liverpool - Rosedale Oval and Hammondville Park.
- 1.10 In conjunction with the inspections, the Committee met and conducted discussions with a range of council members and staff.
- 1.11 The Committee also held a public hearing on 29 September 2006 in order to explore in greater detail issues raised in the Inquiry with a range of representative organisations. A list of witnesses who appeared can be found at Appendix 2.

## Report Structure

- 1.12 This Report summarises the information provided in submissions and obtained in public hearing evidence, based on the Inquiry's terms of reference, in the following four Chapters: Chapter 2 looks at the provision of sportsgrounds to match demand; Chapter 3 examines funding and revenue sources for sportsgrounds; Chapter 4 looks at associated community and environmental issues; and Chapter 5, the final chapter, looks at the intergovernmental planning frameworks and requirements for coordination to improve sportsground provision.

## Chapter Two - Adequacy of Sportsground Provision in NSW

### Levels of Demand

- 2.1 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, New South Wales had a total population of 6.8 million in March 2006 and experienced a population increase of 56,900 in the previous year (Australian Demographic Statistics, ABS 2006). Of this increased figure, 29,800 or 56 % occurred in Sydney, representing an average of 570 people per week. The areas with the largest or fastest population growth tended to be outer suburbs, inner cities and certain coastal regional centres. In addition, large increases in population continued to occur in many outer Local Government Areas, such as Blacktown and Baulkham Hills (5,400 and 3,500 respectively).
- 2.2 In New South Wales, increases in population were recorded in most coastal areas outside Sydney, with the largest occurring in Shoalhaven, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The statistical district of Newcastle recorded the second largest growth, after the Gold Coast-Tweed district, which is on the Queensland/New South Wales border. As this growth is not evenly distributed throughout the State, some inland areas will not experience the same levels of population pressures and some, such as the Far West region of the State, will in fact decline.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 The ABS projects the population of NSW in 2051 to reach 8.4 million, assuming medium level fertility and migration. People aged 65 years and over are estimated to make up more than a one-quarter of the population (27%) in 2051, compared with 13% in 2002. These demographic trends, combined with changing patterns of leisure and recreational pursuits, will have significant impacts on service provision and will place additional demands on existing infrastructure provided to support active and passive use of sporting facilities. This is reflected in the increasing focus on whole of life participation in activities such as tennis and walking and the pursuit of such activities as master games.
- 2.4 Improved health and more exercise contribute to prolonging active engagement in sporting activities to a greater age. In addition, high growth areas with young families will create greater demands for extended junior sporting activities and changing patterns of women's involvement in traditionally male dominated contact sports such as football codes will add to this pressure.
- 2.5 As cited in an article in the Daily Telegraph in December 2005, due to increasing population levels in Sydney "at least 100 cricket teams, 60 soccer teams and countless touch and Oz Tag teams have been refused registration because of the unavailability of playing pitches".<sup>2</sup> Similarly, according to the Sydney Morning Herald in September 2006, "many sports codes can't take more players into their competitions. The situation is becoming critical."<sup>3</sup>
- 2.6 Approximately half of the submissions received by the Committee from local councils and sporting organisations reinforced the current and projected pressures on existing

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<sup>1</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Daily Telegraph, 22 October 2005.

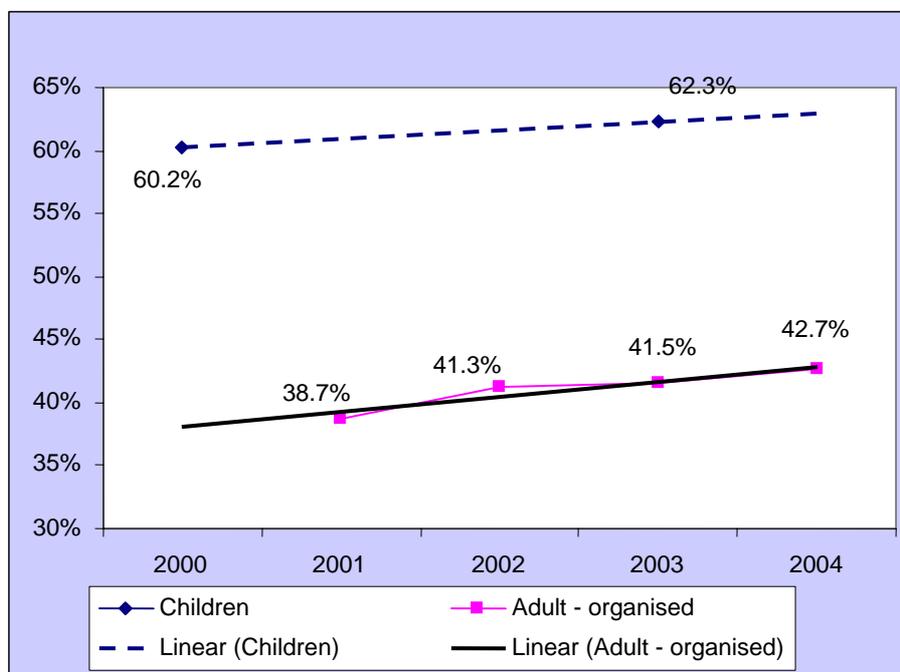
<sup>3</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 August 2006.

grounds and facilities. This ranges from councils such as Ashfield, which manages six grounds for 21 sporting clubs<sup>4</sup> to an area such as Lake Macquarie, where the Council operates 145 sportsgrounds catering for over 17,000 registered players under delegated authority to incorporated associations and community committees.<sup>5</sup>

2.7 Participation rates in sporting activities have been increasing for more than two decades. Figures provided to the Committee by the NSW government indicate “the prevalence of physical activity participation increasing by between 15% and 25% from 1985 to 2004 among secondary school students”.<sup>6</sup>

2.8 The following graph, provided in the NSW government submission to the Inquiry, charts the trend in participation rates in organised sport in New South Wales in the period 2000 –2004.

**Table 1.**



(Source: Submission 75, page 6.)

2.9 A more recent survey released by AC Nielsen indicates that at the end of 2005, 83.5% of people in NSW aged 15 and over participated in a sport or physical activity at least once, representing a 1.8% increase from 2004. Of this total, less than half participated more than three times a week, although the rate for women, at 47.3%, was 5% greater than that of men. Nationally, rates in NSW were less than in the ACT (89%), Victoria (84.7%) and WA (83.8%) but greater than the other States and Territory.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Submission 44, Ashfield Municipal Council, p. 1.

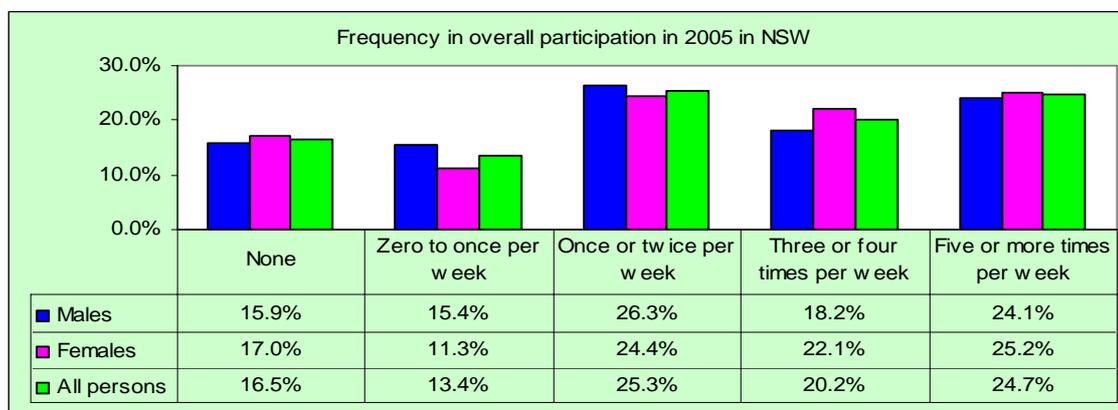
<sup>5</sup> Submission 69, Lake Macquarie City Council, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Exercise, Recreation and Sports Survey, Fifth Collection, AC Nielsen, September 2006

2.10 The following table illustrates overall participation rates by frequency and gender:

**Table 2**



(Source: Exercise, Recreation and Sports Survey, Fifth Collection, AC Nielsen, September 2006)

2.11 Different levels of sports participation based on sporting category are also reflected in age groupings, with major divergences evident between children and adults. The following table, contained in the NSW Government submission to the Inquiry, illustrates this trend as follows:

**Table 3**

SPORTS PARTICIPATION – TOP TEN			
<u>Children</u>		<u>Adults</u>	
1.	Soccer (185,900)	1.	Walking (1,959,400) (other than bushwalking)
2.	Swimming (162,000)	2.	Swimming (961,800)
3.	Netball (82,400)	3.	Aerobics/Fitness (842,000)
4.	Tennis (67,800)	4.	Tennis (518,100)
5.	Rugby League (49,200)	5.	Cycling (481,700)
6&7.	Basketball and Cricket (43,700 each)	6.	Golf (460,600)
		7.	Running (423,700)
8.	Athletics/Track and Field (35,200)	8.	Bushwalking (330,900)
9.	Martial Arts (32,700)	9.	Soccer (outdoor) (328,100)
10.	Gymnastics/Trampolining (27,100)	10.	Surf Sports (232,300)

(Source Submission 75, page 7)

2.12 Finally, in order to demonstrate changing patterns of sporting interests, the following table ranks participation for the top sporting and recreational activities in NSW in the past five years:

**Table 4**

Sport or physical activity	Ranking in 2001	2001	Ranking in 2002	2002	Ranking in 2003	2003	Ranking in 2004	2004	Ranking in 2005	2005	% change from 2001 to 2005	Fastest growing ranking out of top 15
Walking (other bushwalking)	1	26.8%	1	29.0%	1	36.0%	1	37.2%	1	36.6%	37%	3
Swimming	2	19.0%	2	17.0%	2	17.5%	2	18.3%	3	16.4%	-14%	decreasing
Aerobics/fitness	3	12.5%	3	14.3%	3	16.2%	3	16.0%	2	18.5%	48%	2
Tennis	4	11.0%	5	9.0%	4	9.8%	4	9.8%	4	9.1%	-17%	decreasing
Golf	5	8.4%	4	9.1%	5	8.4%	6	8.7%	6	7.6%	-10%	decreasing
Cycling	6	7.9%	6	8.3%	6	7.7%	5	9.1%	5	8.9%	13%	5
Running	7	7.0%	7	7.6%	7	7.1%	7	8.0%	7	7.1%	1%	8
Bushwalking	8	6.6%	8	6.6%	8	6.8%	8	6.3%	8	7.0%	6%	7
Soccer (outdoor)	9	4.7%	9	6.1%	9	5.3%	9	6.2%	9	5.7%	21%	4
Touch football	10	3.4%	11	4.0%	10	3.6%	11	3.5%	12	3.2%	-6%	slight decrease little change
Surf sports	11	3.4%	14	2.9%	13	2.9%	10	4.4%	11	3.3%	-3%	little change
Netball	12	3.3%	13	3.4%	14	2.8%	15	2.9%	13	3.2%	-3%	little change
Cricket (outdoor)	13	2.9%	15	2.8%	(a)	2.6%	13	3.2%	(a)	2.2%	-24%	decreasing
Basketball	14	2.7%	12	3.5%	11	3.3%	(a)	2.6%	14	2.9%	7%	6
Weight-training	15	2.6%	(a)	1.6%	(a)	2.7%	14	3.0%	(a)	1.4%	-46%	decreasing
Yoga	(a)	1.9%	10	4.1%	12	3.3%	12	3.5%	10	3.9%	105%	1
Lawn bowls	(a)	1.8%	(a)	2.6%	15	2.8%	(a)	2.7%	(a)	2.4%	only in top 15 once in 2003	

(Source: Exercise, Recreation and Sports Survey, Fifth Collection, AC Nielsen, September 2006)

2.13 It is evident from these tables that levels of participation and interest in a variety of sporting activities is determined by a variety of factors and subject to changes over time. These factors must all be taken into account in devising accurate and responsive planning strategies.

2.14 When the figures above are combined with data from the Sydney Open Space Inventory, provided by NSW Department of Planning<sup>8</sup> it becomes apparent that the competition for facilities is variable across local government areas, ranging from 1,233 people per active sports park in Mosman to 7,584 in Waverley. However, this variability in demand is also influenced by the average size and capacity of the

<sup>8</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, Attachment B.

grounds, which can fluctuate from 0.52 hectares in Mosman to 9.88 hectares in Penrith.

2.15 Moreover, according to evidence provided by Parks and Leisure Australia:

We are well aware participation continues to grow and is being managed as best as possible in many different settings, but the big challenge is actually on the horizon. We hear of sports growth into double digit figures. A recent Exercise, Recreation and Sports study in 2004 indicated that approximately 57 per cent of the population do not participate in organised sport. If we look at a modest improvement in participation, half a per cent to one per cent, it equates to 20,000 to 40,000 people in the Sydney metropolitan area alone. If you want to translate that into sports fields and teams, let us take cricket for example, that 20,000 to 40,000 becomes 2,000 teams. To cater for 2,000 teams you are going to need between 150 and 300 playing fields over and above what we have now, because these are new users.<sup>9</sup>

2.16 Underpinning these statistics is the fact that societal sporting needs and expectations have changed and that there is a need for more coordinated planning based on available research and demographic data to make optimal use of existing sportsgrounds and to better locate and manage new facilities for future use. The Committee makes a series of recommendations based on improved planning strategies and increased funding for sportsgrounds in Chapter 5 of the Report.

### **Providers of Sportsgrounds**

2.17 The principal provider of sportsgrounds in NSW is local government. Additional grounds are provided through State Government, predominantly via the schools sector, but also through other trusts and Crown land facilities.

2.18 The New South Wales Government, through its statutory agencies, maintains a database of land usage and management in New South Wales. According to the NSW Department of Lands,<sup>10</sup> the State has more than 6,000 reserves with a sport or recreation classification. The Department of Planning, as part of its Sydney Open Space Inventory, has documented more than 10,300 hectares of active parks containing active sporting facilities, of which 5,500 hectares were made up of sportsgrounds. In the Sydney area, this constitutes more than 9,000 parks, of which 1,500 are active parks.

2.19 The NSW Government submission, delineates active sport parks in Sydney being managed as follows:<sup>11</sup>

- Local councils – 82%
- Private entities – 7%
- State Government Trusts – 5%
- State Government departments – 1%

2.20 Although these figures provide an indication of the responsible management authority for sportsgrounds across the Sydney area, comparable data concerning usage in

<sup>9</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006. p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

Sydney and across the State is not currently available. In fact, consistent evidence provided to the Committee by most organisations indicated that one of the major shortcomings for planners and managers of sportsgrounds is the dearth of reliable data on existing levels of provision. This is compounded by the lack of consistency of information about usage and trends and the absence of a centralised database for sharing existing information across the State. This issue will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5 of the Report.

- 2.21 One of the major points raised both in the submission and oral evidence by representatives of Parks and Leisure Australia, a nationally based parks and leisure industry association, concerns the need for a strategic planning focus at all levels of government to enable current and future open space requirements to be met and managed. In relation to sportsgrounds, Parks and Leisure argues that different approaches to managing facilities both at local government and regional levels “cause confusion for sporting clubs that participate in cross-municipal border competitions and inefficiencies and disparities in the level of support to clubs depending on where they reside”.<sup>12</sup>

### School Grounds

- 2.22 Another provider of sportsgrounds in New South Wales is the Department of Education and Training. Most public schools have their own sporting facilities, which are mainly used for school based sporting activities during school hours. The Department’s policy on Community Use of School Facilities “encourages community groups to access school facilities, including school oval and sports fields, out of hours, for appropriate purposes”.<sup>13</sup> This is provided either at recovery cost or a nominal charge, subject to availability and suitability at the discretion of the individual school principal.

- 2.23 Parks and Leisure Australia, in evidence to the Committee, indicated that:

We do also in the submissions talk about new sites, in particular school sites. There is enormous potential to increase supply by developing some common standard set of rules for using these sites. Just by way of example, the working party took a small local government location, small in size, and with the aid of aerial photography we counted the sportsgrounds and then we counted the school grounds. By incorporating school grounds we increased our supply by 20 per cent just in that small desktop research.<sup>14</sup>

- 2.24 Schools, in negotiation with local councils also utilise council sportsgrounds and facilities and, depending on the fees and charges policy of the council concerned, may make a financial contribution. The potential to optimise resources by collaborative arrangements between councils and schools is currently not being fully realised. The Committee recognises that there are issues which must be addressed for shared access arrangements between schools and local councils, as described by Parks and Leisure Australia:

We know...that each site has some unique issues, but most do not. They have similar management issues that would be issues like vandalism to property and mismanagement of the school site. These can be overcome. We just need to remove the burden from the school principal and in a way transfer that obligation to the local government area from

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<sup>12</sup> Submission 11, Parks and Leisure Australia, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, pp. 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p.3.

4pm to 9pm and on weekends. This burden is no greater than what the local government areas already carry through the management of existing sports fields.<sup>15</sup>

- 2.25 The Department of Education and Training has expressed support for the greater availability of school sportsgrounds for community use. In evidence to the Committee, an Education Department representative said in relation to such use of school facilities:

We see benefits at looking at the use of school sporting facilities in relation to community use and we would like to work with that. We would like to be part of developing a robust environment for that to work. We do not currently think we have a robust environment for that to work in.<sup>16</sup>

- 2.26 There is also a practical incentive for schools to allow community access, as it creates the potential for additional development of school grounds in partnership with local councils. Parks and Leisure expressed it in the following way:

There is a lot of development potential for the school resources. School facilities do not have lights, for instance, or amenities. That makes them less than usable for communities, but for what could be regarded as minor investment compared to the cost of purchasing those facilities, there is great potential there to increase the resources. As I said, there are some very good examples but it is just not a consistent approach.<sup>17</sup>

- 2.27 Soccer NSW reinforced this approach to maximise the benefit of using school grounds for schools, councils and sporting organisations:

The submission we are putting to you really is that to get co-operation from the Department of Education is not going to cost them anything. In fact, it will actually save them maintenance and it will keep the ground secure because the proposal we put up quarantines the school facilities, the buildings, from new facilities which a council would have to do, but it is worth it because the council would save up to a million dollars a ground, schools would save on annual maintenance and they would gain on security with people being around after school and at the weekend.<sup>18</sup>

- 2.28 Evidence was also taken in relation to the potential for grounds owned by non-government schools and institutions to be added to the pool of venues available for community sporting use. Representatives of AFL NSW/ACT made reference to this in their appearance before the Committee, indicating that some negotiations have already taken place:

We are looking at potentially trying to develop some grounds with some of the independent schools if we can, which will give us greater access, not only for our school competitions, but also for our clubs on Sundays.<sup>19</sup>

- 2.29 Soccer NSW has also examined the potential for non government school access:

...we can negotiate separately with the private schools. We have an example on the western side of the Manly Warringah Pittwater area where there is a private school, which

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<sup>15</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p. 12.

we are working with in exactly this way. We give them an annual maintenance fee, they provide the ground.<sup>20</sup>

2.30 This is a welcome development and the Committee supports sporting organisations entering into negotiations with institutions such as private schools and universities to alleviate shortfalls in areas experiencing overuse of existing venues and inadequate provision of sportsgrounds.

### Crown Land

2.31 The other major source of open space for the provision of recreation and sporting activities is Crown land. While the Department of Lands ensures that Crown reserves are managed under the auspices of the Crown Lands Act 1989, they are generally administered by corporations such as local government councils, local volunteer boards of management or other corporate trust managers. Local governments as trust managers provide the majority of sportsground infrastructures and management on Crown reserves.<sup>21</sup>

2.32 Local councils have the ability to approach the Department of Lands to determine whether there is Crown land available for recreational purposes, where a need for additional sportsgrounds is identified. However, in densely populated local government areas, such options may be limited.

### **Management and Access Policies**

2.33 As outlined above, the major provider of sportsgrounds for community use is local government. Individual councils manage these grounds under the provisions of Section 36F of the Local Government Act 1993. The core objectives set out in the Act are to:

- encourage, promote and facilitate recreational pursuits in the community involving organised and informal sporting activities and games; and
- ensure that such activities are managed having regard to any adverse impact on nearby residences.

2.34 The diversity of administrative arrangements applying to individual councils has resulted in a range of different approaches to managing sportsgrounds across the State. Some councils, such as Holroyd City use a system of delegated authority provided by Section 355 of the Local Government Act 1993 to establish Parks Committees, who are charged with responsibility for providing care, control and management of council parks and facilities in accordance with policies and procedures adopted from time to time by council.<sup>22</sup>

2.35 Such committees and delegated bodies appointed by individual councils are authorised by council to collect fees for the facility hire and to use the fees for maintenance and improvements of the facilities. According to Lake Macquarie City Council “this model empowers groups to self manage their facilities according to the community needs and relies heavily on the commitment of volunteers”.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Submission 57, Department of Lands, p.2.

<sup>22</sup> Submission 51, Holroyd City Council, Appendix 2, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Submission 69, Lake Macquarie City Council, p. 2.

- 2.36 Other councils manage sportsgrounds and facilities themselves, in consultation with local sporting groups and residential users. In some instances, this results in councils conducting negotiations with sporting associations and, in other cases, directly with local clubs, further illustrating the lack of consistency in administrative arrangements and practices. Variations in leasing and access arrangements range from annual applications by clubs and associations to 15 year agreements entered into on the basis that the club concerned makes financial and maintenance contributions to upkeep and the provision of additional facilities.
- 2.37 The nature of leasing arrangements and diversity in lengths of tenure on grounds for various sporting groups can create notions of ownership by sporting clubs of their home grounds. Such arrangements can impede more flexible options for shared use and reduce the capacity to adapt facilities for changed or emerging sporting activities.
- 2.38 The basis on which councils provide access to their grounds and facilities is extremely variable, reflecting local politics and priorities. While some councils have well advanced generic plans of management and policies for the hire of sportsgrounds, others still adopt a historically based approach favouring standing commitments to long established sporting clubs and associations. This is further complicated by arrangements entered into with certain clubs who have made major contributions to maintenance and upkeep over the years.
- 2.39 Whereas most council policies in relation to sportsground access are historically based, the changing nature of sporting participation and the pressures associated with overuse of grounds and facilities have resulted in an expressed desire for a more comprehensive examination of local needs and the adoption of empirical planning principles. Councils who made submissions to the Inquiry have all acknowledged the necessity for improved strategic management of resources, particularly in view of the increasing environmental and legal constraints impacting on good governance requirements.
- 2.40 The Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) argued that the considerable changes in recreation activities necessitate a flexible and multi-use approach to the supply of appropriate facilities. As increased leisure time puts greater pressure on open space, “rigid standards for provisioning is not always appropriate”.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, open space planning should include social and environmental goals and examine the quality of available space for a more diverse sporting population. WSROC in further evidence stated that:
- We would argue that there are three major areas that should be considered in the formulation of any open space plan, the recreational needs, but also the social and environmental requirements of the area, and in terms of the social goals it is not just the provision of recreation opportunity. We believe that access is an important consideration, community focus, the history or the heritage of an area, the identity of a particular area and education. They are all factors that come into play here.<sup>25</sup>
- 2.41 Other council submissions have made specific reference to including disadvantaged groups in their community consultation process for increased access to grounds and facilities. Holroyd City Council has many such groups including 14% of residents over

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<sup>24</sup> Submission 27, WSROC, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 37.

65 years, 36% from ethnic backgrounds, 16,500 people with a disability, 5,000 low income families, 16.8% young people and an influx of newly arrived migrants and refugees.<sup>26</sup> The concern expressed is that sporting organisations and facilities management committees have an emphasis on providing access for mainstream abled groups.

2.42 According to the submission from the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils “The lack of social/physical opportunities relates to issues of isolation and access to and involvement in community life...Social capital is seen to be a major factor in the development of stronger and more viable communities”.<sup>27</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by the City of Canada Bay Council, which ensures that one of the criteria for use of its sporting facilities is “demonstrated adherence to State legislation”, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

2.43 The Committee considers that some critical improvements can be made in management arrangements for sportsgrounds within the existing available infrastructure.

2.44 A fairer and more equitable allocation of sportsground access requires councils to standardise arrangements with each sporting association in their region.

2.45 The Committee recommends that councils create standard “plans of management” for use by sporting associations to provide usage and participation data for strategic planning. Such templates are already in use by some councils. In addition, regional groups of councils may wish to adopt common plans of management templates so that sports which have greater regional needs and activity levels can be documented across council areas. As noted earlier, councils may wish to have different hiring rates and charges for specific grounds in their local area. Nevertheless, those policies should reflect the projected demands that those councils face. Hence the Committee recommends:

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:** Council Provision of Sportsgrounds

The Committee recommends that each council, in conjunction with sporting clubs/associations in its area, should develop a strategic plan of management, demonstrating partnership arrangements with other clubs to manage increasing demand on facilities and acknowledge shifting sporting requirements across the community. In addition, the Committee recommends that councils, when conducting negotiations with sporting organisations in relation to hiring sportsgrounds, adopt consistent and transparent hiring policies reflecting current and projected demand based on sporting category.

2.46 A further related issue is the sporting community’s access to and relationships with other possible sportsground providers (including non council providers). Councils should be encouraged to integrate the use of other sportsgrounds in their area, such

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<sup>26</sup> Submission 51, Holroyd City Council, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Submission 27, WSROC, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Submission 45, City of Canada Bay Council, p. 2.

as those on school grounds, to meet increased community demand. The State government must facilitate this arrangement. Hence the Committee recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Schools Provision of Sportsgrounds**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training develops a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local government, to facilitate joint arrangements between school principals and local councils in relation to the use of school grounds for community sporting activities. Such arrangements would have to take account of practical issues related to shared maintenance costs, security, safety and public liability. In addition, the MOU should stipulate that school principals ensure that grounds are made available for community use to the greatest extent possible, without detrimental impacts on the grounds themselves.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Private School Sportsground Access**

The Committee recommends that councils, as part of their strategic plan of management and in consultation with sporting organisations, investigate options to increase the availability of sportsgrounds by negotiating with private schools and other educational institutions.

2.47 A final concern relates to the growing needs of particular sportsground user groups. The Committee has been told that these groups need special consideration and hence recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Special Needs Planning**

The Committee recommends that local council strategic management plans take account of the specific requirements of groups with special needs, including disability and socially disadvantaged groups in determining access to sportsgrounds in their local area. This policy should be developed in consultation with community and sporting groups and based on available demographic and sporting activity data, reflecting current and future demand.

2.48 The question of individual and social well being is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 and the importance of more comprehensive data collection and shared responsibility for planning initiatives is discussed in Chapter 5 of the Report.



## Chapter Three - Funding and Revenue Sources

- 3.1 As previously discussed, the responsible authority for the majority of sportsgrounds is local government. The diversity in approaches adopted by local councils to financially manage sportsgrounds and facilities makes any direct comparisons of effectiveness or efficiencies of strategies employed difficult to assess. However, all councils are accountable for recurrent and capital expenditure for sporting grounds and facilities under their control as part of their budgetary process.
- 3.2 According to the Shore Regional Organisation of Councils (SHOROC), whereas councils allocate “significant budgets to recurrent costs...(they) recover only a small fraction of those costs in user charges. The average annual cost recovery on maintenance for sportsgrounds in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater is 3.4%, compared to approximately 15% in Mosman”. Furthermore, “a review of other local government areas in Sydney and Melbourne identified the target cost recovery on user charges for maintenance ranged between 11% and 40%”.<sup>29</sup>

### Fees and Charges Policies

- 3.3 Although maintenance of existing sportsgrounds and facilities is a major cost item for councils, fee setting policies seem to be developed on an ad hoc basis based on historical practices not reflecting the true cost involved. The general argument of councils that charge nominal or zero fees is that residents expect the facilities to be provided as part of a council’s obligations to its ratepayers.
- 3.4 The erratic nature of fees policies across council areas is a cause for concern for many sporting organisations. AFL NSW/ACT told the Committee that:
- Another issue that your Committee is looking at is the appropriateness and fairness of pricing principles for facilities. As we know, there are so many councils in Sydney and New South Wales that all the policies do vary. In some council areas our clubs are charged a higher fee than others. The higher fee is through the roof. It might be \$10,000 for a junior club for a winter season. It puts the pressure on us as a State league. As Simon said, we are trying to grow participation. So we have actually had to subsidise our players to keep them in sport. That is just one example of the challenges for us as a State league organisation.<sup>30</sup>
- 3.5 Strategies to defray council costs by relying on volunteer and financial contributions by sporting clubs are a cause for concern for Rugby New South Wales. In its submission to the Inquiry, the organisation stated that “...those sports with greater financial resources are seeking to purchase access to grounds by offering councils higher leasing fees and greater contribution to capital upgrades as part of a strategy to displace traditional, but none the less poorer custodian/tenants”.<sup>31</sup>
- 3.6 Cricket New South Wales have indicated in their submission that “cricket bodies are willing to consider making financial contributions to the construction of new grounds, and the upgrading of existing grounds, in return for guaranteed ground tenure”.<sup>32</sup> Such statements are indicative of the current uncertainties regarding continuing and future

<sup>29</sup> Submission 41, SHROC, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Submission 43, NSW Rugby, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Submission 34, Cricket NSW, p. 2.

Funding and Revenue Sources

access to grounds and the lack of clarity and consistency in guidelines and pricing policies applied by local councils across New South Wales.

- 3.7 The following examples illustrate the range of approaches taken by individual councils.
- 3.8 Some smaller councils such as Kempsey Shire Council, do not require groups to pay for use of their fields.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Sutherland Shire Council has “a long held position of not charging any Shire based community sporting club or school to use its sportsgrounds”.<sup>34</sup> However, in Sutherland, user groups pay for electricity consumption and other associated facilities and are expected to make in kind or financial contributions to upgrade or develop ground facilities. This is in keeping with Sutherland’s philosophy, as it “supports one of the Council’s key strategic directions and fosters a co-operative approach between Council and sports in facility development”.<sup>35</sup>
- 3.9 Campbelltown City Council does not charge schools or juniors (under 18 years old) for the use of their sportsgrounds or facilities, spends \$1.4M annually on maintaining grounds and facilities and receives \$65,000 (4.6%) in annual income from sporting organisations and other users for hire. This represents an annual subsidy of \$1.3M to maintain sportsgrounds and supporting amenities.<sup>36</sup>
- 3.10 In an attempt to provide greater equity for its users, Campbelltown has recently introduced a system of sportsground categorisation to restructure fees and charges for sporting organisations with senior teams. This means that some clubs and associations will pay more in the way of seasonal fees and charges and some less. The contribution made by sporting organisations, however, is not only financial as members also volunteer to provide services such as line marking or mowing, which assists in defraying council costs and in improving the condition of the grounds. Such organisations are known by Campbelltown Council as preferred hirers and have established seasonally based usage patterns on grounds from year to year.
- 3.11 At the other end of the scale, Hornsby Shire Council recovers approximately 25% of the costs of sportsground maintenance from user fees. According to its submission, “Hornsby Council’s hire fees are amongst the highest in the region and Council is conscious of not setting fees at such a level that it becomes a barrier to community participation in sport”.<sup>37</sup>
- 3.12 When asked about the variety of such fees and charges, representatives of AFL NSW/ACT told the Committee:

I think it comes back to what the representatives from Parks and Leisure Australia were saying, which is a co-ordinated approach across councils to look at their higher fees and what they are providing for their higher fees...It makes it extremely difficult when we have two clubs 20 metres apart and one is charging \$150 a kid and the other one is charging \$60 a kid. We are trying to get uniformity in prices so it is affordable to play.

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<sup>33</sup> Submission 56, Kempsey Shire Council, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Submission 48, Sutherland Shire Council, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Submission 46, Campbelltown City Council, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Submission 36, Hornsby Shire Council, p. 4.

Clubs are not putting up fees to make money, they are putting up the fees to cover the council charges. It makes it extremely hard. I do not know the answer of what they should be but uniformity or consistency across all local government areas would be.<sup>38</sup>

- 3.13 The variability in policies governing user charges and fees, the wide range of financial models used to calculate equitable offsets for maintenance liabilities and the reliance on a variety of volunteer contributions to reduce council outlays leads to a lack of consistency and equity in the administration of sportsgrounds across the State. This is compounded by the haphazard nature of access to grants and assistance programs for sportsground capital works provided by State government through various funding mechanisms.

## Grants and Assistance Programs

### Capital Assistance and Regional Sports Facilities Programs

- 3.14 One of the major sources of revenue for construction and enhancement of sportsgrounds is administered by the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation. As well as providing information and advice to local councils and sporting associations regarding infrastructure support and planning, the Department provides funding under the Capital Assistance and the Regional Sports Facility Programs. These programs assist with the construction of community based local and major sport and recreation facilities. The State Government has provided more than \$42M under these programs in the past six years.<sup>39</sup>
- 3.15 The aims of the Capital Assistance Program (CAP), as described by the NSW Government is to “increase the opportunities for the community to participate in sport and recreation by:
- increasing the availability of facilities for use by the community;
  - increasing the multi-use or shared capability of sport and recreation facilities;
  - improving the safety of facilities which are used by the community;
  - improving opportunities for the community to participate, especially those that traditionally face difficulties in accessing facilities; and
  - contributing towards the shared use of public resources”.<sup>40</sup>
- 3.16 Examples of projects eligible for funding include fixtures and fittings, watering systems, sun protection shelters and construction of outdoor courts.
- 3.17 The Regional Sports Facility Program (RSFP) “assists local councils and not-for-profit sport and recreation organisations add to the range, availability and quality of sport and recreation facilities throughout NSW...All projects must improve access for the general public and under represented groups in the community”.<sup>41</sup>
- 3.18 Examples of projects supported include playing fields, lighting for sportsgrounds and disabled access.

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<sup>38</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p. 13.

3.19 The Regional Sports Facilities Program provides matched funding of up to \$400,000 (grant \$200,000) on a dollar for dollar basis for major sporting facilities of regional significance. The Capital Assistance Program also provides dollar for dollar funding for the development of sporting facilities, although the average grant under this program is approximately \$10,000.<sup>42</sup>

3.20 The following Table summarises total annual allocations under these programs:

**Table 5**

Program	2000/01 \$m	2001/02 \$m	2002/03 \$m	2003/04 \$m	2004/05 \$m	2005/06 \$m
CAP	3.9	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.0	3.8
RSFP	2.2	2.2	4.0	2.4	1.9	3.3

3.21 There is criticism of both these programs in terms of the amount of funds available and the flexibility in the application of the grants. There is therefore great variability in access by councils to these grants, partly determined by the capacity of councils to submit successful grant applications. Where funding is achieved, the amount of money available does not provide extensive construction or upgrading opportunities. Additionally, the overall quantum of these grants in New South Wales seems to be less than similar funding in other States.

3.22 According to Parks and Leisure Australia:

The New South Wales Sport and Recreation grants per capita are the lowest across the country. They are not targeted and are too small for the greater focus. If the grants remain low, we then need to look at partnering and partners willing to put their hands in their pockets to match the grants. Therefore, we would need some form of innovative funding options. To ensure greater value we need to invest our money into a series of projects that actually focus our attention, rather than spread it wide. We need to capture what we currently have through some form of electronic data base and build some reliable ongoing data bank that we in the industry can refer to as a common set of data, instead of the mountains of information that is available across the local government areas.<sup>43</sup>

3.23 This sentiment was reinforced by AFL NSW/ACT:

In terms of funding for facilities, that is another issue that your Committee is looking at. It has already been mentioned by Steven that certainly at a State level there is not enough funding for sports development. When you compare what New South Wales through the Department of Sport and Recreation puts into funding facilities compared to other States, Queensland gives nearly five times as much, Victoria nearly three times and Western Australia nearly twice as much.<sup>44</sup>

3.24 When the Department of Sport and Recreation was questioned by the Committee about the levels of funding provided under these programs, Departmental representatives stated:

<sup>42</sup> Submission 48, Sutherland Shire Council, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Transcript of evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

In the regional sports facilities program, for example, last year I think we were able to allocate about \$3.5 million and the request was for about \$12 million. From memory, we got about 140 or 150 applications and we were able to fund up to about 30 applications. With the capital assistance program, generally we get twice the number of applications that we are able to fund. We are looking at somewhere between 400 and 500 that we can fund each year, and as a rough guess it is twice that number of applications that we actually receive.<sup>45</sup>

- 3.25 Upon further probing by the Committee Chairman regarding the lower levels of funding in New South Wales compared to similar programs in other States, Sport and Recreation replied:

That is true, but again, I guess, as far as the State Government is concerned it is a question of priorities. We are allocated a certain amount. We deal with that. There is no chief executive officer or Minister worth their salt who is not in there asking for more money all the time, and we are doing that along with everyone else.<sup>46</sup>

- 3.26 Further clarification of the utilisation of expenditure as a proportion of the full budget allocation provided by the Department was answered in the following terms:

We allocate the full amount. Whether it is used is up to the organisations who actually get it, and we monitor whether it is actually spent. Part of the guidelines say that the funding has to be spent within two years, and if we do get a request for funding, then we ask the organisations whether they are going to spend it, and they may say, "Yes, but we are held up by council approvals", or something like that, and we make a decision that, "Yes, you can keep that. We will come back to you in 12 months time", and if it is obvious that it is never going to be spent, we take it back and we put it back into the pool...The question also had the other part to it that if in one electorate say there is only \$15,000 funded, is the money allocated elsewhere. The answer to that is yes.<sup>47</sup>

- 3.27 Another mechanism provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation to assist councils and sporting organisations develop sporting facilities is the Sporting Grounds Improvement Fund, which is a low interest loans scheme currently providing 12 loans to an approved value of \$7.6M. The Department also administers the Sporting Bodies Loan Guarantee Act 1977 with 18 loans in place to an approved value of \$7.9M.<sup>48</sup>

#### Section 94 Contributions

- 3.28 Councils, in investigating avenues for accessing funds to construct and improve sportsground facilities in their local area, also have recourse to other potential sources of revenue, as described in the evidence presented by Leichhardt Council:

We are looking at various options. There is, of course, the finance that we get from the State Government in terms of the grants and applications for the regional sports grants and capital opportunity grants. Without those local government would not be able to provide the type of facilities that we do provide. So those are critical, but we also need to be looking at other avenues of funding streams, and we have been looking at the possibility of working with the clubs on fund raising initiatives, but as you will be aware they too have significant problems with regards to volunteers and the time of volunteers and also club finances, and sponsorship is also very hard to come by. So a lot of the emphasis is on local government to provide those facilities, and also reliance on the

<sup>45</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 58

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, p. 62

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>48</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 14.

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State Government. Reviewing section 94 plans needs to be done annually I believe in terms of having a look at where needs are, so it is reflective of the needs, and housing developments associated with developer contributions is critical as well.<sup>49</sup>

3.29 As indicated in Leichhardt Council's evidence, infrastructure funding for sporting facilities can also be gained by use of developer contributions under Section 94 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979. Under this scheme, where a council is satisfied that a development (including the subdivision of land) will (or is likely to) generate a demand for public services, facilities or infrastructure, it may grant consent to the application subject to a contribution towards the cost of providing that service or amenity. This contribution is known as a Section 94 Contribution. It is intended to ensure that the existing ratepayers are not required to meet the cost of providing for infrastructure such as new roads, community centres, libraries, open space & recreation facilities, the need for which arises from incoming populations occupying new developments.

3.30 The Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, 1979, places a number of requirements upon council's use of development contributions, including:

- the contributions levied by Council must be in accordance with a contribution plan;
- contribution plans may only relate to the provision of basic services, facilities, and infrastructure for incoming populations; and
- funds must be spent on the purpose for which they were collected.<sup>50</sup>

3.31 Although this scheme was amended to increase the flexibility of its application, most councils have expressed reservations about its ability to meet local needs, particularly in relation to the provision of sporting and recreational facilities in areas of increasing population growth.

3.32 In its submission to the Inquiry, Sutherland Shire Council claimed that as s94 funds are typically tied to specific areas, they may not be a viable option "depending upon the rate of accumulation of funds and the specifics of the plan under which the funds were collected.... In general, S94 funds are not necessarily related to immediate demand or opportunity".<sup>51</sup>

3.33 Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils told the Committee:

There have been a number of deficiencies that have been earmarked in the way that councils in our region have been dealing with open space in the past and some of the problems are associated with the lack of upfront funding with section 94 funds in order to acquire land, infrastructure, works and embellishment. It is a particular problem for councils in new release areas, because contributions lag behind development and local government cannot control the timing of the development and consequently the receipt of income. Section 94 does not cover recurrent funding expenses and this can often form a much larger financial burden than the initial capital cost of these services. The large upfront cost of open space land acquisition is becoming a huge issue for our councils with the land prices soaring. Due to the absence or at best limited control over the timing of the developments it is generally not possible to prioritise expenses through

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<sup>49</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> Shoalhaven City Council, Information Sheet, 14/01/04

<sup>51</sup> Submission 48, Sutherland Shire Council, p. 8.

section 94 funds in a strategic way. Local government does experience significant difficulties in levying contributions for Crown development and the loss of this contribution can only be made up from non-section 94 sources. In our region there is generally a much wider open space provision in terms of size in the newer residential areas of Western Sydney as a result of the section 94 contributions than is found in the older established areas of the region, but the issue of retrofitting open space in older areas which are undergoing urban renewal is proving difficult for local government in the region to resolve, acting on its own.<sup>52</sup>

- 3.34 The Committee makes recommendations in relation to improving the provision of sportsgrounds in new and rezoned developments in Chapter 5 of the Report, which deals with planning issues.

### Regional Partnerships Programs

- 3.35 The Federal Government's Regional Partnerships Program provides another source of potential revenue for councils and sporting organisations. This was referred to by representatives from the Department of Sport and Recreation:

One of the things that the Federal Government does have in place now is that under the Department of Transport and Regional Services they have the regional partnerships program that actually has funds available for the upgrade of sporting facilities across Australia. In New South Wales quite a number of organisations around the State are making application under that program for funding and at the same time they will also be making applications under our regional sports facilities program.<sup>53</sup>

- 3.36 According to the Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services, The Regional Partnerships program is an Australian Government initiative supporting the development of self-reliant communities. The Regional Partnerships program funds projects that help communities:

- provide opportunities for economic and social participation;
- improve access to services;
- plan their futures; and
- make structural adjustments.<sup>54</sup>

- 3.37 The Guidelines stipulate that funds can be accessed for projects which deliver broad community benefits and stimulate growth in regions by providing more opportunities for economic and social participation, including community infrastructure projects such as sporting facilities. As this is a new funding initiative, it remains to be seen how well funds can be accessed under this Program to meet the sporting and recreational needs of local councils and sporting clubs and associations.

### Additional Federal Funding

- 3.38 The capacity of current funding mechanisms to adequately resource local governments in their duty to provide and maintain sportsgrounds for current and future use should be further examined at Federal government level. A suggestion has been made that the Federal government, as part of its responsibility for national health and well being could provide funding for sports facility development based on a capitation grant to Federal electorates of up to \$1M each. This would involve a total outlay of some

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<sup>52</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>54</sup> DOTARS Regional Partnerships Guidelines, Commonwealth of Australia, July 2006

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\$150M per annum for local councils and sporting organisations to access for improving availability of sporting facilities by not relying on other matched funding options, which councils find difficulty to secure.

3.39 As discussed above, one of the major problems with accessing grants under the Regional Partnerships Program, according to the Department of Sport and Recreation, is that:

If you apply under the Federal program, they say you will have to get matching funds from the State Government, and that is an issue that we really need to take up at the Federal Government level, which we are about to.<sup>55</sup>

3.40 One of the benefits of a specific Federal program providing targeted funding for sportsground development and access would be to enable applications to be made without having to secure matched funding from another source. This would greatly assist councils who feel constrained by an inability to raise additional funding through State based grant processes and are reluctant to increase fees and charges for their own ratepayers.

3.41 A suitable model for such a program is the Federation Fund, established in 1997 to mark the Centenary of Federation. Grants were provided to projects of national significance by a process of consultation between the Commonwealth and State governments. This was based on a process of nominated projects and subject to agreed selection guidelines. The adoption of Federal electorates as a base for applications would assist in making selections for funding reflect regional priorities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

3.42 The Committee considers that the lack of consistency in current council fees and charges imposed on sporting organisations can be improved. However, a provisioning system involving granting preferred hirer status to clubs contributing funds to grounds maintenance, could prevent access and user opportunities for emerging or growing sports which do not have long standing in the area. Some scope for standardised fees or minimal contribution charges within a council area should be considered for equity reasons. At the same time, a regional or standard council fees structure across the State would not be appropriate, given the diversity of council constituencies.

3.43 The main conclusion from the evidence gathered is that fees and charges revenue obtained from sporting organisations are not a viable or adequate source of funds to cover the needs of sportsgrounds currently or in the future. Hence, State and Federal funding must be better accessed and to this end, the Committee suggests some reforms.

3.44 In addition, there appears to be no justification for NSW to be the lowest per capita sports funded State in Australia. The Committee recommends enhancements to NSW Government funding to move NSW per capita resource distribution closer to the level in other jurisdictions.

3.45 A further issue is that fund “matching” appears to be a key structural component to various sources of funds made available by Government. In the case of State funding, the CAP and RSFP both require “dollar for dollar” contributions from the local council / sporting association. The Commonwealth funds similarly require “dollar for dollar” co – contributions” for any project undertaken.

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<sup>55</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 61.

- 3.46 Although matched funding does provide some benefits in increasing the total pool of funds, the difficulty with this approach is that those council areas and sports that are most disadvantaged are less able to generate their portion of contribution to get funding access. The Committee believes that decoupling of “matched” funding should be explored and initially suggests this be taken up at a Federal level.
- 3.47 The Committee further considers the benefits from enhanced sporting facilities and activities as a critical factor in terms of national health and community outcomes. Hence, in keeping with its national responsibilities, the Committee urges the Federal government to adopt a greater role in this area and has recommended a substantial enhancement to its existing commitments. Hence the Committee recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** Increased State Funding

The Committee does not consider current levels of funding provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation under the Capital Assistance and Regional Sports Facilities Programs to be adequate for meeting the programs’ objectives. For this reason, the Committee recommends that funding for the Capital Assistance Program be increased to \$8M per annum over the next 2 years and that funding for the Regional Sports Facilities Program be increased to reach \$16M per annum over the next 4 years.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** Increased Federal Funding

The Committee recommends that the Federal government make available annual funding of \$150M, based on a maximum of \$1M per Federal electorate, for sporting facilities applications to develop new grounds or to improve existing facilities for groups and organisations with unmet needs.



## Chapter Four - Community and Environmental Issues

### Health and Well Being

- 4.1 The Inquiry's terms of reference require the Committee to examine a range of matters related to sportsground use directly impacting on the health and well being of local communities. As well as the positive individual and collective benefits resulting from physical activity and the greater social cohesion generated by teamwork and group collaboration, increasing use of facilities also creates the potential for conflict between participants and adjoining residents. This can manifest itself in unwelcome noise and antisocial impacts and increase traffic and pedestrian activity in the area.
- 4.2 As with all such issues, there is a need to balance the ability of community members to enjoy the benefits of sport and recreational activities without impinging on the rights of other members of the community or imposing undue penalties or inequitable restrictions on groups who participate in organised sport. The key to these potential conflicts is constructive consultation and the establishment of mechanisms to enable the equitable resolution of conflicts as they arise. Proactive planning strategies need to be consistently applied throughout local council areas.
- 4.3 This Chapter canvasses the background to these concerns and draws on evidence presented to the Inquiry to base suggestions for further reforms. The second part of the Chapter deals with environmental sustainability and improved physical management of sportsgrounds.

### Health Outcomes

- 4.4 A recent article in GovernmentNews highlighted the current emphasis in health campaigns on combating obesity in the general community. The cover story in the August 2006 issue, reported on recent research as follows: "Seven million Australians are overweight, and two million of us are now obese. Our well-rounded figures indicate that two in three Australian males aged over 25 are now overweight, and lack of physical activity is the second biggest risk factor for disease in this country, second only to tobacco smoking. The financial cost alone is estimated to be more than \$1.2 billion each year".<sup>56</sup>
- 4.5 In New South Wales, the pattern is similar with approximately 67% of men and 52% of women aged 25 years and over considered to be overweight or obese. Additionally, one in four children are overweight or obese, with incidence figures accelerating from 11% in 1985 to 20% in 1997 and 25% in 2004.<sup>57</sup>
- 4.6 Government campaigns in the last decade have promoted the economic, social and health benefits of physical activity and participation in sport, such as reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and attendant problems caused by obesity and a sedentary lifestyle, reduced anxiety and depression and increased social interaction. While the focus of public education campaigns has been to encourage the number of people engaging in sporting activities and to increase the operational and management capacity of clubs, the provision of suitable sporting venues and facilities to meet the increased demand has not been adequately addressed.

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<sup>56</sup> GovernmentNews, Vol 26, Issue 7, August 2006

<sup>57</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 16.

- 4.7 The NSW Department of Sport and Recreation has initiated a set of programs targeting obesity prevention for school children at primary school level. These include the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Young People – NSW Government Action Plan 2003-2007. Under the Youth in Sport Program priority is given to projects which focus on healthy lifestyles incorporating physical activity and nutrition education. The program targets youth at risk, with funding of \$300,000 per annum.<sup>58</sup>
- 4.8 At the Federal level, the Council of Australian Governments has developed a recent action plan as part of its Better Health for All Australians initiative. Under the banner of promoting good health, prevention and early intervention, on 1 July this year all governments commenced the implementation of a four-year \$500M national program to promote good health and reduce the burden of disease. One of the elements of this program is the promotion of healthy lifestyles, which includes the “promotion of healthy eating and physical activity...to create environments that facilitate and support healthy lifestyle changes”.<sup>59</sup>

#### Social Cohesion and Community Development

4.9 The New South Wales Government is working in partnership with appropriate agencies to develop complementary State based programs to participate in the Federal strategy.<sup>60</sup> A key element of this approach is the involvement of indigenous communities. According to the NSW Government submission, sporting participation is a crucial part of contemporary Aboriginal identity and well being and is “a measure of functional and resilient families and communities...The provision of sport and recreation activities and infrastructure can help ameliorate key aspects of disadvantage in Aboriginal communities. There is some evidence and research that sport and recreation can have the following benefits:

- increasing youth support and space, to address boredom and increase social interaction and self-esteem;
- improving health outcomes, including building physical strength, preventing chronic disease, reducing symptoms of stress and depression and, in some cases, preventing the take up of smoking and illicit drug use;
- improving learning and attention, and better academic performance;
- reducing crime; and
- promoting teamwork and social cohesion”.<sup>61</sup>

4.10 While the benefits described above are particularly important for indigenous communities, they apply in equal measure to other community groups, particularly those experiencing social, physical or financial disadvantage. The overall message promoted by governments that increased physical activity is of individual and collective benefit must be followed up with improved planning mechanisms to provide an adequate supply of sportsgrounds and associated facilities, together with mechanisms to ensure equitable access by all participants. This point is developed further in the following Chapter of the Report.

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<sup>58</sup> Background information provided by NSW Sport and Recreation, 10 October 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Source: <http://www.coag.gov.au/meetings/100206/index.htm>

<sup>60</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 16.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

- 4.11 Submissions from smaller local council areas also stressed the importance of sporting facilities as providing one of the few physical exercise opportunities within their communities. Sportsgrounds provide extended networks of friends and support and are, in the words of Gwydir Council “an important aspect of life as it provides a framework for activity and social interaction which makes this community a place you want to live”.<sup>62</sup>
- 4.12 WSROC, in its submission, highlighted the importance of strategically targeted planning measures to create safe and convenient locations to encourage greater use of sport and recreation facilities for local residents. However, safety and accessibility also have to be balanced against “the risks imposed by heavy traffic, open drains, aggressive dogs as well as closeness to residential areas and parking provisions”.<sup>63</sup>

#### Residential Amenity

- 4.13 A range of submissions stressed the importance of community consultation and collaborative planning exercises to balance the needs of sporting groups and the preservation of adjoining residential amenity. The impacts of after hours training and the conduct of games and competitions attracting large spectator numbers affect residents living in close proximity to grounds and venues due to increased noise, traffic volumes and the potential for anti social behaviour.
- 4.14 Noise can take a variety of forms and is specifically referred to in submissions such as that from the NSW Netball Association in relation to whistles during matches and the use of public address systems by the City of Sydney. Location of grounds is a planning issue and subject to impact statements before construction or enhancement of facilities. Most council grounds, however, were built before current restrictions were implemented and must be managed cooperatively between councils, sporting organisations and local residents.
- 4.15 The Committee does not consider that residents who move into established areas with existing sportsgrounds and facilities and who benefit from proximity to the grounds should be given undue consideration if they subsequently complain about any inconvenience caused by this proximity.
- 4.16 Large professional sportsground facilities are subject to regulation by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act in the issuing of prevention notices limiting noise levels and hours of operation. Smaller sportsgrounds and neighbourhood parks operated by local councils are subject to the authority of council officers. In order to assist councils to manage noise problems and interpret policy and legislation, DEC has published a Noise Guide for Local Government, which assists consistent management of this issue.<sup>64</sup>
- 4.17 Parking impacts also create concerns in urban areas where residents rely on street parking and crowds attending games place pressure on available parking capacity. Options used by councils to address this include enforcement of parking regulations by city ranger patrols and the encouragement of public transport and car pooling.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Submission 49, Gwydir Shire Council, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Submission 27, WSROC, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 25.

<sup>65</sup> Submission 50, City of Sydney Council, p. 4.

Where new sportsgrounds generate significant traffic volumes, they are subject to traffic impact statements under the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP11) as part of the development application. In this process, the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has an opportunity to make representations and may suggest changes to traffic management, such as traffic signals, turn bays and additional turning lanes.<sup>66</sup>

- 4.18 Most councils manage to address the residential impacts of sporting activities through community consultation and dispute resolution processes, in conjunction with their own sportsground hire and use policy documents. In some instances, this may mean curtailing the length of games at night, persuading sporting organisations to work collaboratively with local residents to schedule training and other activities at mutually negotiated times and limiting the hours of use of floodlights on grounds.

### Competing Users

- 4.19 The growing demand for organised sporting activities creates significant limits to sportsground accessibility for the non-sporting recreational community. In local council areas where there is no excess open space available for recreation, the pressure on established grounds is very high. Some councils, such as Ku-Ring-Gai Municipal Council have dealt with this conflict by a process of differential allocation and “restricting seasonal hirers to a maximum of 15 out of 22 Sunday dates that sportsfields can be used”.<sup>67</sup>
- 4.20 There is general acknowledgement that more flexible approaches to planning for a greater variety of sporting and recreational interests must incorporate a multi-user approach to current and future facilities. Bega Valley Shire Council encourages a mix of active and passive recreational use of their sportsgrounds, with the proviso that “restrictions on the types of activities such as horse riding, golf practice, archery and companion animal activities vary at different venues”.<sup>68</sup>
- 4.21 In the same way, Baulkham Hills Shire Council is updating its recreational strategy to “define future policy/framework directions in terms of access for both active and passive recreation. In broad terms, sustainability and compatibility principles are to be incorporated, to maximise access whilst minimising impacts between user types and resources”.<sup>69</sup>
- 4.22 These approaches reinforce the need for a comprehensive and consistent planning framework to manage existing resources and to anticipate future demands, taking account of the characteristics of the local area and developed in consultation with residents and user groups. This issue is discussed in greater detail in the following Chapter of the Report.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

- 4.23 A critical aspect of sportsground management concerns the maintenance of the physical state of playing fields and the impact of extended wear and tear on surface conditions. The combined effects of prolonged drought conditions, extended playing

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<sup>66</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> Submission 55, Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council, p. 15.

<sup>68</sup> Submission 18, Bega Valley Shire Council, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Submission 17, Baulkham Hills Shire Council, p. 8.

seasons, inadequate regeneration of turf and compacted soil create additional physical and administrative problems for councils, sporting organisations, individual players and the community as a whole.

### Water Conservation

- 4.24 According to Parks and Leisure Australia, “the extended drought conditions and the arbitrary water restrictions imposed on the green industries have had considerable impact on the sustainability of sportsgrounds”.<sup>70</sup> Most other submissions also cite water conservation and ground surface management as two of their highest priorities in the maintenance of sportsgrounds under their control.
- 4.25 Based on the particular characteristics of their local area, councils are looking at a range of options to conserve existing resources and to harvest additional available water sources. These include alternative approaches such as stormwater harvesting schemes, sewerage and grey water recycling options, water retention basins and use of bore water for irrigation.
- 4.26 Ku-Ring-Gai Council, for example, is developing several stormwater harvesting schemes designed to “reduce Council’s reliance on potable water supply for the maintenance of sportsfields...and provide an additional supply of water in case further water restrictions prohibit the use of potable water for parks and gardens”.<sup>71</sup> Many councils have raised the high cost involved in designing and implementing such alternative approaches to water management.
- 4.27 Some, such as Kogarah Council, have managed to access financial support under the \$130M Water Savings Fund established in 2005 by the NSW government, which is designed to:
- stimulate investment in innovative measures to save and recycle water;
  - save significant volumes of drinking water across Sydney (and in the future Central Coast) ; and
  - increase public and industry awareness of the importance of saving water and the financial and resource savings that can be made.<sup>72</sup>
- 4.28 The following table illustrates the range of projects currently funded under this strategy:

**Table 6**

<b>Council</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Scheme</b>
Camden	\$200,000	Tapping into Sydney Water’s new recycled water pipeline to irrigate Ron Dine and Hayter Reserves
Kogarah	\$1,000,000	Sewer mining to irrigate Beverly Park Golf Course, sports fields and public facilities
Manly	\$1,600,000	Diversion of treated effluent from North Head STP to Manly Golf Club, Manly Council Depot, Keirle Park, LM Graham Reserve and Manly Swim Centre

<sup>70</sup> Submission 11, Parks and Leisure Australia, p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> Submission 55, Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council, p. 10.

<sup>72</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, pp. 19-20.

Sutherland	\$881,000	Reticulate treated effluent from Cronulla STP to 2 state high schools, 14 public sporting ovals, Cronulla Sutherland Leagues Club, Cronulla Golf Course, Woolooware Golf Course and Thies Toyota industrial complex
Baulkham Hills	\$28,000	Harvest rainwater for irrigation of 2 playing fields at Kenthurst Park
Willoughby	\$1,881,143	Water conservation, reuse and stormwater mitigation project that uses a total water cycle management system to supply water to regional cultural facilities at Civic Place Chatswood, to a major Westfields retail centre and to 2 public sporting fields (Chatswood Oval and Beachamp Park)
Campbelltown	\$70,000	Harvest stormwater at Kooringa Reserve for fire fighting, watering playing fields and for refilling council's water tankers
Wollondilly	\$45,000	Utilise bore water to irrigate Tahmoor Sports Ground
Mosman	\$140,000	Harvest stormwater to irrigate Balmoral Oval, Balmoral Foreshore Reserve and Hunter Park
North Sydney	\$300,000	Harvest stormwater from Warringah Expressway to irrigate Cammeray Golf Course and Cammeray Oval soccer field

(Source submission 75, page 20)

4.29 The New South Wales government has also issued sets of guidelines for local councils on ecologically sustainable irrigation practices such as the "Use of Effluent by Irrigation Guide" and "Managing Urban Stormwater: Harvesting and Reuse".<sup>73</sup> However, these are advisory in nature and not mandatory or regulatory tools. This raises other issues in relation to the impacts of alternative irrigation practices, such as the potential for increased salinity, contamination of grounds and the question of the quality of water required for sportsgrounds.

4.30 In evidence to the Committee, representatives from Kogarah Council expanded on their project:

New South Wales EPA have done guidelines on sewer re-use and the required standards that have to be met before you can use it for irrigation purposes is actually not quite the same as drinking water. So the answer to your question is: No, you do not have to treat the water to drinking water standards, but in terms of gaining the community's confidence, the cost of treating the water to a little bit extra is not that huge anyway, so in Kogarah our treatment objectives for our sewer plant are a bit more stringent than what the EPA had specified, only because when we talked to potential technology suppliers they said there is not any big difference in terms of the potential of producing bacteria, that is the difference between drinking water and irrigation water. So we added those objectives to our treatment target. It did not really make much difference in terms of our operating costs for the final plan but what it did was it helped us in selling the idea to the community.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 30.

- 4.31 The NSW government must address the question of suitable water standards for sportsgrounds as part of its initiatives to maximise the efficient use of this increasingly scarce resource. In addition, the government's application of its current water restriction regime on council sportsgrounds has been raised as a problematic issue in submissions and during the Committee's tour of inspections of facilities.
- 4.32 The Lifestyle Horticultural Council, representing a range of horticulture and landscape professionals, in a paper submitted as part of the submission of Parks and Leisure Australia has highlighted the different approaches adopted to watering restrictions by water authorities in various parts of Australia. For example: in Perth restrictions are based on times when irrigation can occur; in Melbourne it is based on the type of landscape to be irrigated; and in Sydney restrictions are determined by time and the method applied. In the current Level 3 restrictions in Sydney, the permitted hand watering and drip irrigation methods do not assist in optimising plant and soil conditions, particularly for open space grounds, according to the Council. "The restrictions also actively prevent the use of smart technology such as weather based irrigation controllers, soil moisture monitors linked to automatic systems and new sprinklers similar to water saving shower heads".<sup>75</sup>

#### Sportsground Surface Quality

- 4.33 While good irrigation practices can assist in maintaining ground quality to some extent, the impacts of overuse caused by extended playing seasons and inadequate turf management create costly and unsafe sportsgrounds, resulting in a financial drain on councils and potential injury hazards for players.
- 4.34 Sporting organisations such as AFL(NSW/ACT) made reference to the hardness of playing surfaces as a direct result of water restrictions enforced by Sydney Water. According to their submission, AFL(NSW/ACT) claimed that "ground hardness is a critical issue because AFL players spend significantly more time jumping than other football codes in preparation for taking a mark or catching the ball. This exposes the player to greater forces when landing on a hard ground and the risk of injury is greater".<sup>76</sup>
- 4.35 In evidence, this position was reinforced by an AFL witness:

Lastly, as mentioned previously, I know the Committee is looking at environmental issues, including water conservation. You picked up in your report that we mentioned that as a result of the drought the hardness of grounds is a real issue to us. There are standards that Melbourne have nationally to test the hardness of ground. One of our issues is we cannot implement that here in Sydney New South Wales. If we did set standards it is likely we would not have a competition to play because it would not meet the standards. So we are all for looking at and working collectively to find an answer to the water problem.<sup>77</sup>

- 4.36 Submissions from turfgrass specialists stressed the importance of professional turf maintenance and research to "benchmark playing characteristics against player satisfaction...to set standards for NSW conditions". According to the submission from Dr James Hull, proper selection of appropriate turfgrass and good maintenance

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<sup>75</sup> Lifestyle Horticultural Council Discussion Paper, April 2006.

<sup>76</sup> Submission 19, AFL NSW/ACT, p. 6.

<sup>77</sup> Transcript of evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 11.

“reduces erosion and dust issues, minimizes the possibility of nutrient loss, minimizes weed infestation and consequent herbicide applications, minimises the possibility of player injury... maximises the effect of water applications and reduces any potential wastage of water”.<sup>78</sup>

4.37 The question of the appropriateness of turf cultivars and the benefits of further investigation of grass species for local conditions was also raised in the Committee’s tour of inspections in Penrith and Liverpool.

4.38 Another contributing factor to poor surface quality is the tendency for sporting clubs to extend playing seasons and to share the use of grounds with a greater range of participants. WSROC made reference to this problem in their evidence to the Committee:

A particular concern in our region is the lengthening periods of participation in sports that in the past were only conducted in either the winter or summer seasons. This overlap in demand is tending now to cause undue wear on sports fields and it is a very difficult thing for our councils to handle.<sup>79</sup>

4.39 Parks and Leisure Australia expressed their concern as follows:

One of the key drivers of all of this is the sports groups. Again, from a Parks and Leisure point of view, we believe that the sports themselves need to get themselves a little bit more organised but also lower their expectations, especially under certain operating conditions. As an industry we cannot actually supply the SCG to your local park under drought conditions with the numbers that we have got marching on top of them at present. We have sports that are extending seasons; there is limited time for recuperation. So the standards have to be lowered by the sporting community, which is us, the general public. We have got to lower our standards. We cannot expect full grass coverage under these conditions.<sup>80</sup>

4.40 There is a tendency for councils to try to accommodate the needs of all sporting groups in their community by allowing access and encouraging multi-use of facilities. This may be neither cost effective nor equitable in the long term and councils must demonstrate that they are taking a strategic planning perspective in relation to the responsible use of available grounds. Although some councils do impose limits on usage and allow periods of ground resting between seasons, this policy is not uniformly applied and leaves individual councils vulnerable in terms of injury liability and risks of litigation. It is up to individual councils, sports committees and sporting organisations to recognise the limits to the durability of playing surfaces and to encourage restraint on the part of participants, based on the state of the available grounds.

#### Safety and Public Liability

4.41 Although some councils have highlighted the costs of litigation of sports related injuries in submissions, most have reported a reduction in claims since the introduction of the Civil Liability Act 2002. Additionally, most sporting clubs and associations now carry their own public liability insurance for player injuries and

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<sup>78</sup> Submission 61, Independent Turfgrass Consulting, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 38.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*, p. 7.

thereby reduce the risks to councils from such claims. Soccer NSW detailed their arrangements in evidence at the public hearing:

The other thing is public liability. We have noted in the document there that we carry a \$25 million cover for public liability on any ground we use, any ground that is scheduled to be used for training or for weekend playing, and that is for any one incident. There could be three incidents in a day. We are covered for up to \$25 million for each of them. If necessary, we can extend that, if that is a requirement, but I think it is getting near the top end. Certainly it is more than most councils require, but we had a nasty experience a decade or so ago where a young fellow was hit by lightning up in the Manly Warringah area and we only had a \$3 million cover at that time, and of course it is something up to a decade or more before this can get to court. That was settled within our limits, and we did not mind because it was a terrible kind of injury. So that is why we have increased the cover, and we can increase it again if that is what your Committee would want.<sup>81</sup>

- 4.42 Two significant sportsground fixtures have been raised in submissions in relation to safety and usability of grounds by a wide range of participants, namely, floodlights and goal posts. Floodlighting and portable goal posts have the potential to increase usage of available fields and therefore exacerbate already existing pressures on sportsgrounds. At the same time, they can also contribute to safer playing conditions, provided that they are installed to appropriate standards and codes.
- 4.43 Dee Why Lions Rugby Football Club raised lighting as a major concern in their submission to the Inquiry. According to the Club, “community sportsgrounds are inadequately lit to the corresponding Australian Standards...councils have ignored and/or refused to adhere and abide to the Australian Standards for lighting...and this automatically leads to and exposes the potential invalidation of insurance cover and further directly exposing volunteers to potential personal liabilities, should an unfortunate event occur”.<sup>82</sup>
- 4.44 This point was reinforced by AFL(NSW/ACT) in their evidence at the public hearing:
- At the end of the day, with the lack of funding for facilities, some of the critical things like lighting has been overlooked. If you looked at the lights across New South Wales and Sydney probably 80 per cent, maybe higher, would be below Australian standards. That is a safety issue for our players.<sup>83</sup>
- 4.45 The recommendation from the football club is that every ground used for club competition and match practise should be lit to a minimum of 100 Lux, as mandated in Australian Standard: AS 2560.2.3-2002.<sup>84</sup>
- 4.46 Soccer NSW have also, in evidence, promoted the installation of lighting in smaller grounds for training in order to take the pressure off larger venues. However, this raises residential amenity and funding issues for the installation of these lights. In the Committee’s view, this must be resolved at the local council level and subject to appropriate community consultative processes as part of development applications. It is important to stress, however, that such lighting should be installed to the appropriate Australian Standard to meet safety and duty of care obligations.

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<sup>81</sup> Transcript of evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 17.

<sup>82</sup> Submission 35, Dee Why Lions Rugby Football Club Inc., p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Transcript of evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Submission 35, Dee Why Lions Rugby Football Club Inc., p. 5.

- 4.47 A further consideration in relation to lighting is the placement of the lights on the grounds, resulting in well lit areas receiving greater use and consequently greater wear of the playing surface. As well as taking account of the glare rating of the lights and its impact on residential amenity, lights should also maintain horizontal illumination across the whole ground, thus encouraging even use of the available playing surface.
- 4.48 Another safety issue on sportsgrounds concerns moveable soccer goal posts. The Committee has received a submission from the NSW Department of Commerce detailing developments in the design of soccer goal posts following inquiries into the safety of such posts conducted by the Office of Fair Trading's NSW Products Safety Committee. As a result of injuries and deaths both in Australia and overseas, a new regulation was gazetted in New South Wales in February 2005, requiring "moveable soccer goals that are over 28kg and not designed to be used solely indoors to meet stability requirements".<sup>85</sup>
- 4.49 Manufacturers, clubs, associations and officials have been sent strong messages that inappropriately secured moveable soccer goals are dangerous and should be replaced over time with those installed in the ground. The Committee strongly endorses this message and reinforces the importance of player safety in relation to the use of moveable goal posts.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.50 The Committee believes that greater recognition of the health and social benefits of participation in sport and passive recreation is required at all levels of government. Links need to be established between key national policy initiatives such as counter obesity programs and policy delivery capacity at the local community level.
- 4.51 As levels of demand for venues and facilities increases, new challenges will be faced in providing sporting access to particular groups in the community, such as an active ageing population. Every increase in participation impacts on the surrounding community and the local environment and these impacts must be anticipated and ameliorated.
- 4.52 The most pressing concern arising from this Inquiry is the environmental management of sportsgrounds. Water is a critical factor in keeping grounds functioning. At the same time, the need for water conservation across the community is paramount. The Committee considers that the State government should provide practical and policy support to local government in order to identify the most efficient processes for water management. Hence the Committee recommends:

### **RECOMMENDATION 7:** Sportsground Irrigation

Given the expressed support for alternative sources of irrigation and the current investigations undertaken as part of the NSW Water Savings Action Plans, the Committee recommends that the NSW government examine, as a matter of priority, the potential for alternative irrigation methods and optimal watering time cycles to improve surface conditions at sportsgrounds.

- 4.53 The Committee also considers that local councils should not be left to independently determine best practice solutions for turf management and further recommends:

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<sup>85</sup> Submission 54, Department of Commerce, p. 1.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** Improved Playing Surfaces

The Committee recommends that the NSW government, as part of its water conservation strategies, provide funding to investigate alternative turfgrass options for sportsgrounds in order to optimise playing conditions and potentially reduce watering and maintenance costs.

- 4.54 Responsibility for conservation must be shared across the community and, to this end, sporting organisations relying on and receiving direct benefits from their use of sportsgrounds must play a significant role. Therefore, the Committee urges local government to seek cooperative agreements with sporting associations, with built-in safeguards to enable better conservation of grounds.

**RECOMMENDATION 9:** Reduced Playing Seasons

The Committee recommends that councils, as a condition of hire of sportsgrounds and facilities, require sporting organisations to agree to schedule their seasonal use of grounds so as to enable grounds to be rested for a minimum of two weeks.

- 4.55 While it is desirable to provide maximum sportsground access to meet increased community demand, the Committee believes that critical areas of safety should not be compromised. In particular, adequate lighting of fields should be provided. The Committee suggests that where lighting is provided, it should meet the minimum Australian standard. Where there are budget constraints, upgrading of existing lighting should take priority over the provision of new lighting.
- 4.56 The Committee also considers that flexible lighting placement should be employed to divert night activity to low wear areas of fields to reduce the acute wear and tear on high use areas of sportsgrounds. Hence the Committee recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** Improved Sportsground Lighting

The Committee recommends that grounds designated by councils as requiring lighting and used for club competition and match practise should be lit to a minimum of 100 Lux, as mandated in Australian Standard: AS 2560.2.3-2002.

In addition, standards should include ratings for maximum glare to minimise residential impact and horizontal illumination to encourage even use of the playing surface of the sportsground.



## Chapter Five - Existing Planning Framework and Future Planning Initiatives

5.1 While the relationship between sport and recreation facility provision, national health priorities and State planning responsibilities intersect, the primary responsibility for management of individual sportsgrounds is the province of local government. However, Council management plans and consultative processes tend to address local issues only and do not attempt to take account of the broader planning impacts at a State or national level. Given the range of factors which have contributed to the current shortage and overuse of available grounds described in earlier chapters, there is need for strategic collaboration between all organisations with an interest in providing improved facilities. The creation of better partnerships between governments and sporting groups to alleviate current inadequacies requires a framework encompassing research and data coordination, strategic funding initiatives and collaborative regional planning to meet current and future demand.

### Planning Processes

- 5.2 Historically, local and State government planners have tended to use a “standards of provision” model to determine the level of infrastructure provision for certain areas. This has meant that a designated area of open space / specific sporting facility has been provided for every 1,000 people in a community. In the Blue Mountains in 1974, for example, the council adopted a standard of 1.8 hectares of sportsgrounds and a further 1 hectare of parkland per 1,000 people. An examination of usable open space was undertaken as part of the 2000 Recreation and Sport Strategy, which revealed that only 0.5 hectares of sporting open space per 1,000 people is actually available.<sup>86</sup>
- 5.3 In addition to providing active sportsgrounds and parklands, councils also have the option of allowing available small local parks, otherwise known as pocket parks, to be used for training or other informal sporting and fitness activities. While these may be useful in taking the pressure off larger facilities and enable some sporting groups to take advantage of additional opportunities for practice, their use and availability tend to be haphazard in nature and they do not contribute substantially to improved sportsground capacity.
- 5.4 The practice of setting aside a standard amount of space based simply on population was widely discouraged from the mid-seventies in countries such as the UK, USA and Australia, when it became apparent that such an approach was simply not adequate to address the varied sporting and recreation needs of different communities.<sup>87</sup>
- 5.5 Planning constraints on the construction of dwellings have also undergone major shifts in recent times. The traditional quarter acre house block in many developing areas of cities and towns is a relic of the past. Instead, many homes are now built on sites around 640 square metres in size (20 metres wide by 32 metres deep), or 0.1532 acres. While some new house block sizes are larger, many measure only 400 square metres. In addition to smaller blocks, houses are also getting bigger and many

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<sup>86</sup> Blue Mountains City Council *Blue Mountains Recreation and Sport Strategy*, 2000, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup> Marriott, K., “Nothing is Standard Any More”, *Australian Leisure Management*, Aug / Sept 1999, p. 18.

new homes now comprise four bedrooms, an office or computer room, a home cinema room and a covered deck for indoor / outdoor entertaining.<sup>88</sup>

- 5.6 This trend means that many houses are two stories high to accommodate all of these features on the one block, leaving very little space for lawn, garden or open space. These changes prevent children being able to go outside and play or engage in outdoor activities in their own home environments due to the limited size of backyards. In order for people to take part in these types of informal recreational activities, they have little option but to go to their local sportsground, park or other areas of public open space.
- 5.7 The Department of Planning NSW has identified one of the key planning issues for providing sport and recreation opportunities in the Sydney area as dealing with increasing residential densities. Large populations in urban centres put greater pressure on available open space for a range of passive recreational pursuits such as dog walking, casual activities such as outdoor fitness training and other non-organised, spontaneous activities. This creates competitive pressures on available facilities and raises issues of compatible use due to the cumulative impact of all activities on existing sportsgrounds.
- 5.8 The development of joint sporting precincts in local government areas is a response designed to maximise limited resources, establish clear recreational zones and to encourage the shared use of grounds and facilities. Rather than sporting clubs using dedicated facilities located in geographically different areas, local government authorities have been actively encouraging sporting clubs to relocate and to utilise shared grounds. In areas with declining populations, this may involve sporting clubs from outlying districts moving to larger towns in the municipality to share facilities. Increased use of facilities, however, brings with it the need for regular reviews to assess maintenance adequacy and capacity to handle greater activity levels.<sup>89</sup>

## Major Players

### Federal Government

- 5.9 The three tiers of government all have an interest in adequate, sustainable and effectively managed sporting facilities to meet the health, social and environmental needs and objectives of the Australian community. The Federal government, through its funding mechanisms, policy initiatives and public education campaigns can take a national leadership role by coordinating and sharing data across State and local boundaries. An appropriate vehicle for such coordination is the Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council (SRMC). The Council provides a forum for co-operation and co-ordination between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on matters relating to the development of sport and recreation in Australia and, more recently, in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. SRMC is comprised of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers with responsibility for sport and recreation.

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<sup>88</sup> Parks and Leisure Australia, Capacity and Sustainability of Sportsgrounds Scoping Project, November 2005, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

### NSW Government

- 5.10 The NSW government, which has major carriage of planning at State level, can provide greater support to local councils in the setting of State and regionally based priorities and use its regulatory and planning instruments to influence improved allocation of sporting and recreational resources. Parks and Leisure Australia offered the following comments to the Committee in their public hearing evidence:

In regard to management, good management decisions need good management data. Yet we have found across the metropolitan area comparable data is limited. Many local government areas are not planning new sites. Besides being too expensive, the primary reason is that local government areas are not driving demand; they are merely responding to other agendas. The three levels of government do not have any co-ordinated approach to planning or provision and most sports do not have a facility plan. Parks and Leisure Australia suggests that we need a recreation planning focus, with key stakeholders identified and requested to be involved. As many different players cover the many different sports, we need some State directed leadership to promote new models of provision. Parks and Leisure Australia believes that we have diminished the potential of the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation to the point of nearly being redundant. This agency has the potential to be the facilitators for the industry if resourced appropriately.<sup>90</sup>

- 5.11 An obvious approach to improved infrastructure provision is to adopt a regional perspective, to rationalise existing resources and to encourage greater cooperation between sporting clubs and associations. Further comment from Parks and Leisure Australia is relevant in this context:

We consider a more regional approach to planning is a very important element. Most local government areas tend to plan just for their particular area, and whilst some sports are contained within that area, many sports actually cross local government area boundaries in particular. So we can see a lot of benefit in a regional approach, which is where I think we overlap with work by agencies such as the Department of Sport and Recreation. We also think that more information, and doing that on a regional basis is really important. We have already touched on the value of partnerships. The other one is once we have better information, understanding just what sort of resources are really required to be able to achieve some of the benefits that we seek from sport...We think that there is a need for some centralising of that information so that it is accessible to all local government areas, and local government areas have differing capacities to be able to undertake that sort of planning or data collection by themselves. This is where we see that industry needs to work with both the Department of Planning and the Department of Sport and Recreation in particular so that we can collate the information on the supply that we need and how to best deal with the demand issues.<sup>91</sup>

- 5.12 The NSW Department of Planning has responsibility for working with local government to ensure that the changing demands for open space and recreation are taken account of in the broader planning process. According to departmental witnesses:

The department is now developing a suite of subregional strategies flowing from the Metropolitan Strategy - there will be ten in all - and a suite of regional strategies for mainly coastal New South Wales, although there is likely to be a strategy for the Sydney to Canberra corridor area. Those strategies in the main cover issues to do with the scale and location of housing and employment growth, but do touch on what makes complete

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<sup>90</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid*, p. 5.

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communities and how we should be better planning for complete communities, and that would of course include open space and recreation areas.<sup>92</sup>

- 5.13 The Committee welcomes State government initiatives and programs addressing local needs by the instigation of proactive planning strategies. One such initiative supported by the Committee is the setting aside of land in areas of limited sportsground availability, as it becomes available for redevelopment, for construction of new sportsgrounds. Such a policy recognises the need for more active sporting facilities to cater for increasing levels of community demand.
- 5.14 Another such initiative would be to ensure that, in new release areas, active sportsgrounds be provided to meet current and future levels of demand. Such grounds should be suitably located away from retention basins and take account of other residential and environmental concerns.

Local Government

- 5.15 Local government councils, through their regional networks, have some capacity to share information and develop management plans, which reflect priorities beyond local boundaries. However, the diversity in approaches adopted by individual councils to manage local issues means that there is no consistency in approach and a lack of standardised guidelines for addressing common concerns experienced across local council areas. Any existing cooperative arrangements tend to be informal and subject to change from time to time. This adds weight to the need for the adoption of an overarching coordinated planning system based on information sharing at State and Federal levels.
- 5.16 Council authorities are required to produce plans of management for areas under their control and to ensure that all community land is appropriately categorised and managed in accordance with identified core objectives, defined in the Local Government Act. A generic plan of management must identify performance targets with respect to the land, along with describing the means by which the targets and objectives must be met and how the Council's own performance is to be assessed.
- 5.17 Information gained through comprehensive data collection obtained from council management plans would serve to improve research based initiatives to rectify current issues associated with overuse and existing shortages of available venues for sporting and recreational activities. A key component of such an initiative would be the development of a centralised collection agency for data research, which could aggregate information about the adequacy of open space venues, usage patterns, standards of maintenance and environmental sustainability, carrying capacity and technological innovation. This would assist in overcoming existing deficits of information in the area of sportsground capacity and sustainability and allow the development of consistent standards.
- 5.18 The creation of a comprehensive data base would also enable greater cooperation and potential collaboration between all major players, including planners from all tiers of government, state sporting associations, educational institutions and insurance companies. This would allow integrated policy development in the areas of community delivery of sporting activities to communities, financing and delivery of new sporting fields and improved leisure planning, education and training.

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<sup>92</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, p. 49.

## Sporting Organisations

- 5.19 Any comprehensively developed sportsground management strategy must also have as one of its aims the active involvement and collaboration of sporting clubs and associations. As the primary users of these facilities, sporting organisations have an already established sense of ownership of the grounds and associated facilities they are leasing. As previously outlined, sporting groups provide varying degrees of maintenance support and other services to improve and manage particular grounds in their local area. Such contributions are based on the financial capacity of the club or association and historical relationships with individual councils.
- 5.20 In relation to issues such as carrying capacity of grounds, length of playing seasons and cooperation in allowing periods of inactivity in order to rest grounds, it is imperative that sporting organisations themselves take a degree of ownership in the state of the playing surfaces they are using. In addition, they are also a source of invaluable information for documenting player participation trends and assisting in managing shared resources with other users. The involvement of clubs in a regionally based framework to reduce pressures on certain grounds and to rationalise use based on regional needs would allow a better rationale for selection and allocation of appropriate grounds. It would also provide information concerning gaps in the current provision of resources and create the potential for improved partnerships between all providers and users.
- 5.21 As an example of a sporting organisation with an interest in building partnerships with planning bodies and providing improved data for planning purposes, AFL NSW/ACT made reference to these issues in their evidence at the public hearing:

Most of our grounds are on local council facilities and I think there has been a lack of planning in the past of looking at this issue...In terms of the criteria that we feel needs to be looked at in terms of allocating facilities and funding in the future is looking at demand, the current demand and also projected. The last presentation discussed the lack of data which most codes collect. Since I have been with the AFL in the last four years we have put a lot of emphasis on our data collection and data basis, and we are certainly on top of where we are at the moment. This year we went through an exhaustive process of planning where we are going to be in five years time. We have staff regionally based throughout New South Wales and basically we have projected where each club is going to be in five years time and where we are going to need new clubs, and I think we have projected about ten new clubs across the State and a lot of other clubs growing.<sup>93</sup>

- 5.22 A successful and practical system of data collection, enabling sharing of standardised information gathered in a consistent manner requires a responsive structure of administration at all levels. This is set out below.

## **Coordination Mechanisms**

- 5.23 The creation of effective coordination mechanisms providing scope for representation and participation by all relevant government and sporting representatives, with shared ownership of identified problems and solutions is one of the key challenges for the future management of sportsgrounds. As previously discussed, such mechanisms must

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<sup>93</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 29 September 2006, pp. 9-10.

be integrated at the local, regional, State and national level in order to create an optimal climate for identifying needs, to facilitate access to financial and expert resources, to manage political and environmental concerns, engage the community and enable informed planning for the future.

- 5.24 The New South Wales Government has produced a set of reports assessing recreation demand and opportunities as part of a State wide planning initiative to “ensure that the changing demand for recreation facilities and sportsgrounds are taken into account in the planning processes.”<sup>94</sup> The most recent planning document is the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, released in December 2005. The Department of Planning is also developing a number of Regional Strategies to set directions for issues such as housing and employment growth, transport and land use, environmental protection and natural resource management. These Strategies will include action to develop and provide open space and recreational opportunities.
- 5.25 Also at the State level, Parks and Leisure NSW Regional Council has established an industry working group, known as the Sydney Sports Capacity Working Group with representation from sporting associations, councils and other sporting industry groups working towards developing research and identifying gaps in planning and delivery of community sporting facilities. The first priority of this recently formed working group is to audit the current state of sportsgrounds, including the following parameters:
- usage patterns based on sporting category;
  - availability of educational sporting facilities;
  - pitch availability;
  - transport and parking availability;
  - constraints on expanded use of grounds and facilities; and
  - opportunities for expanded use of open space.<sup>95</sup>
- 5.26 A mechanism such as that established by Parks and Leisure NSW provides a useful model for industry involvement in the planning process and highlights the importance of creating constructive partnerships at State level to address issues of common concern to planners and users of sporting facilities. Relevant NSW Departments, including Sport and Recreation, Planning, Education and Training, Local Government, Lands and Environment and Conservation have a role in managing various programs and policies impacting on sportsground management. However, there is a need for a lead agency, such as the Department of Sport and Recreation to take a stronger leadership role in coordinating State based initiatives relating to data collection and guiding local councils in regular regionally based planning exercises to improve adequacy, access and sustainability strategies for sportsgrounds. Such regional planning forums should also involve participation by established industry groups and peak sporting bodies.
- 5.27 The Committee was told by representatives of the Department of Sport and Recreation that a working group, convened by the Premier’s Department, has been established to examine the joint use of school facilities for sporting purposes, in the following terms:

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<sup>94</sup> Submission 75, NSW Government, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> Submission 66, Parks and Leisure Australia, NSW Regional Council, pp. 2-3.

Our agency recommended to our Minister that she approach the Premier's Department to establish a working group which would look at this particular issue. That group has been established and has met for the first time. I think it was last week or the week before. The group is convened by the Premier's Department and comprises representatives from the Department of Planning, the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Department of Education and local government at this stage. My suggestion would be that there may be room for other organisations to become part of that working group. At the moment they are charged with putting together some terms of reference and I know that they are particularly interested in the outcome of this Inquiry. So I guess they will take on board whatever recommendations you may make from this Inquiry as well. That would be my suggestion.<sup>96</sup>

- 5.28 This working group mechanism, while assisting in the development of a whole of government approach to managing a specific issue such as the use of school facilities, should be extended to cover all issues affecting sportsground management in the State. In addition, such a mechanism should be permanently established to monitor trends and establish coordinated planning approaches across government departments.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.29 The current distribution of sportsgrounds in NSW has evolved historically and there is a lack of consistency in the current provision of facilities across council areas. The planning for sportsgrounds in the future must be far more considered and strategic than in the past.
- 5.30 Competing land use pressures and contemporary housing trends mean that existing open space is under increasing demand. If current trends, such as reduced backyard space in homes and higher participation in sports continue, new sportsground infrastructure must be created.
- 5.31 Historically, communities have a mix of small passive open spaces in residential areas and larger spaces, including sportsgrounds, suitable for active sports use. The Committee sees opportunities, in some circumstances, to rationalise smaller areas in order to provide larger areas, which are more multifunctional. As has been repeatedly emphasised in this Inquiry, such a decision and financial burden should not be left solely to local councils but must be assisted and supported by State government. The Committee therefore considers that the Department of Planning scope options and develop a framework for the purchase and provision of new land parcels for sportsgrounds in acute areas of need.

### **RECOMMENDATION 11:** Land Acquisition Policies

The Committee recommends that the Department of Planning examine the feasibility of purchasing and allocating land for redevelopment for the exclusive use of community sportsgrounds, in areas where there is a documented shortage of such grounds. Such land should provide sufficient space for two playing fields and should take precedence over the development of smaller parcels of land adding to the currently fragmented supply of pocket parks in local neighbourhood areas.

<sup>96</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 20 September 2006, p. 57.

5.32 Furthermore, sportsground planning in new release areas should be a critical component of initial planning and integrated with other public amenity facilities.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** Greenfields Planning Policies

The Committee also recommends that the Department of Planning, as part of its process of determining land use in new release areas, should ensure that active sportsgrounds are provided to meet documented and projected levels of demand. Such grounds should be situated in suitable areas with access to transport services, taking account of residential amenity considerations and environmental issues, including water retention and sustainable environmental factors.

5.33 Ad hoc government arrangements in the past have substantially contributed to the poor situation faced by communities today in the management and provision of sportsgrounds. Given the social and health benefits to the community that are clearly linked to sporting participation, the Committee believes that a more permanent management and coordination infrastructure should be established. The Committee therefore recommends a State coordination program and a linked national coordination program to improve outcomes, as follows:

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** Industry Coordination

The NSW Regional Council of Parks and Leisure Australia has established a working group to improve sporting industry coordination at State level. This is supported as a useful mechanism to further enhance collaboration and create partnerships between sporting stakeholders in relation to sportsgrounds. The Committee recommends that the Department of Sport and Recreation provide seed funding of \$30,000 per year for two years to enable Parks and Leisure NSW to represent its membership in a professional manner and to provide useful input to government as part of a coordinated strategy for the improved management of sportsgrounds in NSW.

**RECOMMENDATION 14:** Regional Planning Forums

There is a need to establish a permanent structure to address broader sportsground access and availability issues. For this reason, the Committee recommends that the Department of Sport and Recreation establish a network of regional planning forums involving relevant State government agencies, local councils, industry groups and peak sporting bodies to gather data and devise strategic plans for the management of sportsgrounds at State level. This network would assist in the determination of appropriate standards for use of grounds and facilities in New South Wales.

**RECOMMENDATION 15:** National Working Group

At the Federal level, the Committee recommends that the Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council convene a working group to address issues raised in this Report and specifically examine the need for consistent data collection across Australia about current trends in sporting and leisure activity. This should complement current Federal initiatives in relation to obesity and health issues and acknowledge that education campaigns and programs designed to increase physical fitness must link to the provision of adequate resources to meet increased demand for open space and sporting facilities. It should also include consideration of the special needs of an ageing population and people with limited mobility, in order to ensure access and equity across communities.

# Chapter Six - Transcript of Proceedings – 29 September 2006

## **REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON**

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

### INQUIRY INTO SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT

### IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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**At Sydney on Friday, 29 September 2006**

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**The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.**

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### **PRESENT**

Mr K. Greene (Chair)

Ms M. Andrews  
Ms K. Paluzzano  
Mr I. Slack-Smith

**Mr GREENE MP:** I would like to declare today's hearings open and formally welcome Committee members, witnesses and members of the public to this hearing of the New South Wales Standing Committee on Public Works.

The hearing today is taking evidence from a range of organisations who have made submissions to the Committee's Inquiry into Sportsground Management in New South Wales. The information gathered today will enable the Committee to explore in more detail some of the major issues raised as part of the Inquiry's terms of reference. These include: adequacy and access to existing sportsgrounds; funding arrangements; environmental, health and safety aspects of sportsground management; and other planning and administrative issues.

The Committee is pleased with the response to the Inquiry, having received 76 submissions from a broad range of local councils, sporting organisations, government agencies and private individuals. Today the Committee will hear evidence from some of these organisations, including representatives from: Parks and Leisure Australia; AFL NSW/ACT; Soccer NSW; Leichhardt and Kogarah Municipal Councils; Western Regional Organisation of Councils; and NSW Departments of Education and Training, Planning and Sport and Recreation.

I thank representatives from these organisations for attending today to assist the Committee's work and trust we will have a constructive dialogue.

**STEVEN JOHN HEAD**, NSW Regional Councillor, Parks and Leisure Australia - NSW Region, Pittwater Road, North Ryde, and

**STEPHEN LAURENCE BOURKE**, Past National President, Parks and Leisure Australia - NSW Region, Director Community and Recreation Services, Sutherland Shire Council, Eton Street, Sutherland, affirmed and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 333 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr HEAD:** Yes.

**Mr BOURKE:** That is correct.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Did each of you receive an invitation to attend before the Committee?

**Mr BOURKE:** We did.

**Mr HEAD** yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Would you like to make some introductory statements before we ask you some questions?

**Mr BOURKE:** Yes, Mr Chairman. Thank you for the invitation to address the Inquiry. The Parks and Leisure Australia profession are involved in management, development and promotion of the broader leisure industries. We know that sport touches the lives of many individuals and communities right across the State and also the nation. We are also aware that governments are looking more than ever for leisure to play a central role in solutions to community cohesion and urban regeneration and youth engagement.

If you throw into the mix the challenges of increasing populations, higher density housing, government campaigns aimed at increasing physical activity, the introduction of new sports, changing sports participation patterns, drought conditions, water restrictions and the increase in sports registrations, it is all impacting on the sustainability of our sportsgrounds across New South Wales. These are issues that are not only local. These challenges are being experienced in most capital cities across Australia.

The Parks and Leisure Australia profession has been involved in hundreds of different ways in hundreds of different places on a daily basis with these challenges, yet we do not profess to have the secret formula to independently solve the challenges ahead, as the delivery of sport requires many contributors all working together for the best possible outcomes.

This Inquiry established by the New South Wales Government is one of the first positive formal steps taken by any government across Australia. Parks and Leisure Australia commends the willingness of the NSW Government to be involved.

No doubt many submissions have been received. Parks and Leisure Australia has provided two submissions. One was from a national point of view, to give the Committee some background information on what is happening elsewhere. The other is the local NSW Parks and Leisure Australia's submission, which provides historical information on work to date, the Sports Fields Workshop background discussion paper, a concept of establishing a working group to address the current sustainability, capacity and planning issues. That working group has met on one occasion to date with various stakeholder representatives. Really the group is trying to at least get to stage one and that is trying to work out what we have got, what the demand is, so we can then start working on the gaps. We do not have this base information.

The other items of note within our submission are that as a society we place a lot of effort into understanding our investments, especially financial investments in all sorts of provisions, yet we do not put the same effort into understanding the value and/or the benefit that our sportsgrounds and our open space provide to this city and also to the greater metropolitan area. Great cities around the world, of which Sydney is one, market themselves on their natural features, on their amenities, on their open space and their active lifestyles as a means to attract skilled workforce and also large corporations. Leisure and open space is taken for granted in the development of economic models in this regard.

In regard to management, good management decisions need good management data. Yet we have found across the metropolitan area comparable data is limited. Many local government areas are not planning new sites. Besides being too expensive, the primary reason is that local government areas are not driving demand; they are merely responding to other agendas. The three levels of government do not have any co-ordinated approach to planning or provision and most sports do not have a facility plan.

Parks and Leisure Australia suggests that we need a recreation planning focus, with key stakeholders identified and requested to be involved. As many different players cover the many different sports, we need some State directed leadership to promote new models of provision. Parks and Leisure Australia believes that we have diminished the potential of the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation to the point of nearly being redundant. This agency has the potential to be the facilitators for the industry if resourced appropriately.

Talking of resources, nothing goes too far without some form of financial support. The New South Wales Sport and Recreation grants per capita are the lowest across the country. They are not targeted and are too small for the greater focus. If the grants remain low, we then need to look at partnering and partners willing to put their hands in their pockets to match the grants. Therefore, we would need some form of innovative funding options. To ensure greater value we need to invest our money into a series of projects that actually focus our attention, rather than spread it wide. We need to capture what we currently have through some form of electronic data base and build some reliable ongoing data bank that we in the industry can refer to as a common set of data, instead of the mountains of information that is available across the local government areas.

We do also in the submissions talk about new sites, in particular school sites. There is enormous potential to increase supply by developing some common standard set of rules for using these sites. Just by way of example, the working party took a small local government location, small in size, and with the aid of aerial photography we counted the sportgrounds and then we counted the school grounds. By incorporating school grounds we increased our supply by 20 per cent just in that small desktop research. We know this is a very simplistic approach and that each site has some unique issues, but most do not. They have similar management issues that would be issues like vandalism to property and mismanagement of the school site. These can be overcome. We just need to remove the burden from the school principal and in a way transfer that obligation to the local government area from 4pm to 9pm and on weekends. This burden is no greater than

what the local government areas already carry through the management of existing sports fields.

We are well aware participation continues to grow and is being managed as best as possible in many different settings, but the big challenge is actually on the horizon. We hear of sports growth into double digit figures. A recent Exercise, Recreation and Sports study in 2004 indicated that approximately 57 per cent of the population do not participate in organised sport. If we look at a modest improvement in participation, half a per cent to one per cent, it equates to 20,000 to 40,000 people in the Sydney metropolitan area alone. If you want to translate that into sports fields and teams, let us take cricket for example, that 20,000 to 40,000 becomes 2,000 teams. To cater for 2,000 teams you are going to need between 150 and 300 playing fields over and above what we have now, because these are new users.

In summary, sport is important to everyone. Many benefit directly through active participation. For many more the benefits are less direct, but no less important. Many millions are being spent to get people more active. Little effort or co-ordination is happening regarding sustainability of these strategies or future capacities of our sports fields system.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**Mr GREENE MP:** A number of questions come to mind straight out of that, but the first thing I want to clarify is the membership of your organisation, how you are funded, where your members come from and your scope of your activities.

**Mr BOURKE:** Parks and Leisure Australia is a national professional association. It is member funded. The scope of the membership is across the board from parks and leisure provision, planning, management, from academia to senior management to ground staff, from planning open space to acquisition of open space. It has various representatives in local government, universities, private enterprises and State agencies.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Approximate number of members?

**Mr BOURKE:** 1500.

**Mr GREENE MP:** You just mentioned schools and their involvement. Is it fair to say that schools generally use council grounds for their week day sporting activities? In that regard I am thinking of Catholic schools, CHS competitions, PSSA Friday afternoons, et cetera. Generally that occurs at no cost or very low cost but also generally there would be very few school grounds that are available for those same students to use for weekend sport. Is that what you are saying?

**Mr HEAD:** There are a number of really good examples across Sydney where the community generally is provided with great access to schools. I think the difficulty is that there is not a consistent policy. It really gets down to what a local school and a local community are able to do at this stage. I think that just produces a number of hurdles that make it very difficult.

What Parks and Leisure Australia would like to see is that we have a consistent policy that allows local communities to access school facilities on an ongoing basis, so that they are regarded as community facilities that are schools during whatever hours the schools require them, but then they can be accessed more broadly for the community outside of school hours and on weekends particularly.

There is a lot of development potential for the school resources. School facilities do not have lights, for instance, or amenities. That makes them less than usable for communities, but for what could be regarded as minor investment compared to the cost of purchasing those facilities, there is great potential there to increase the resources. As I said, there are some very good examples but it is just not a consistent approach.

**Mr GREENE MP:** When we get to Soccer NSW, I think that is part of their submission from memory. You are agreeing with my initial statement with regard to--

**Mr HEAD:** Yes.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** First of all, can I congratulate you on what I think is a very common sense

proposal. I think you have done a lot of research and a lot of things that you have discovered are things that we have been suspicious of for some time. You mentioned a lack of co-ordinated approach to sport and recreation planning across all tiers of government. Who should be responsible for co-ordinating those sort of reforms and how would those reforms be conducted would you suggest?

**Mr BOURKE:** From a State point of view we believe that there is a primary role there for New South Wales Sport and Recreation to act as a facilitator and that is more towards the programming of open space. There is obviously a role with local governments and the New South Wales Department of Planning for the acquisition of open space and the future provision of it, but once it is provided, there needs to be a role between State, local and sporting organisations themselves on how to go about facilitating the program provision.

**Mr GREENE MP:** How would Sutherland Council see something like that, recognising that Sutherland Council is a very homogenous area and that the sporting organisations there are pretty homogenous as well, in that there is Sutherland soccer, Sutherland cricket, Sutherland hockey, et cetera? What would a council like that see with an oversight body?

**Mr BOURKE:** Besides the majority of our sports being self-contained and large enough to run their own associations, we still have sports that travel and you find the sports provision tends to be more based on the activity of the sporting group within a geographical area, rather than any overarching facility provision within that sport itself. I am not saying that there would not be weaknesses in having a co-ordination role, but there is definitely a role to be played by a central group having at least the bank of data which sporting providers can refer to.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Of course, in a country area we always travel, travelling is part of sport. You have identified a lot of the problems. What would you suggest would be the major priorities? If you had to prioritise, what would you start by doing?

**Mr HEAD:** There are a few major ones that Parks and Leisure Australia has considered. We consider a more regional approach to planning is a very important element. Most local government areas tend to plan just for their particular area, and whilst some sports are contained within that area, many sports actually cross local government area boundaries in particular. So we can see a lot of benefit in a regional approach, which is where I think we overlap with work by agencies such as the Department of Sport and Recreation. We also think that more information, and doing that on a regional basis is really important. We have already touched on the value of partnerships. The other one is once we have better information, understanding just what sort of resources are really required to be able to achieve some of the benefits that we seek from sport.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** When you are talking about the need for more information, are you talking about data collection and research?

**Mr HEAD:** Yes.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** What agency do you think should be responsible for data collection?

**Mr HEAD:** It is Park and Leisure Australia's view that it needs to be all agencies have a responsibility in that. We think that there is a need for some centralising of that information so that it is accessible to all local government areas, and local government areas have differing capacities to be able to undertake that sort of planning or data collection by themselves. This is where we see that industry needs to work with both the Department of Planning and the Department of Sport and Recreation in particular so that we can collate the information on the supply that we need and how to best deal with the demand issues.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Two issues come from that, and I will follow up that one there. Obviously there are developing areas where what you are talking about I would think is a lot easier to do than so-called developed areas, as in inner city areas where obviously land is at a premium. How do you see that being balanced?

**Mr HEAD:** I think that is one of the really difficult issues to manage. You have sporting groups and community groups that have long ties to various facilities. Sports do ebb and flow over a period of time, and trying to get a balance between giving existing groups comfort and security around their particular club and how

you balance new and emerging needs, such as for women and over 35s, which is where we have particular growth occurring in many of our sports, how you deal with those things is partly wrapped up in the supply issue and it comes back to how we can access more broadly some of those surplus Government lands or education facilities and how we better increase the capacity of existing resources to be able to provide for additional access. They are the key issues.

**Mr GREENE MP:** The second point is something you touched on in your opening remarks, and that is drought, and obviously following on from that is the provision of watering and whatever. The AFL mentioned in their submission some tests for the hardness of grounds, but putting that aside, my personal belief from my discussions is the use of potable water is going to be decreased over a period of time, and I am not just talking about three hours on Monday. How do you see this significant issue being addressed?

**Mr BOURKE:** One of the greatest challenges I think for the broader green industry is access to water. Obviously recycling, sewer mining, catchment managements are broader strategies that I suppose need a special focus. How you get grounds to be less of a risk through hardness is something that I do not really have an answer to.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Also, do you think, possibly more encouragement of plant breeding to try and get turf that does not take as much water but also has a good consistency of texture?

**Mr BOURKE:** Horticultural technology will definitely play a part in it. How advanced they are at that is difficult. One of the challenges that we see at the high profile venues now is that we have trouble growing grass inside stadiums and things like that. So to grow grass in the local parks also is going to be a challenge.

**Mr HEAD:** Just to add to that, many of our grounds are being utilised for 35 or 40 and even more hours than that per week at the moment.

**Mr BOURKE:** Try 60 or 70.

**Mr HEAD:** Yes, it is in many sites getting to that. The difficulty is that no matter how good the technology, ultimately we are dealing with a living thing and it can only sustain a certain amount of wear, no matter what the level of construction, no matter what the level of management that we apply. There are sustainable limits to what grass can take.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I just want to bring you back to the water issue though. Sewer mining is one of the issues that we will be raising with Kogarah Council later today. I know they have a project and I understand at Ku-ring-gai there is potential for a similar type of project. One of the issues that I have heard raised about that is the actual standard of the water that is required. Do you have some comments on that?

**Mr BOURKE:** I did a presentation to sport and recreation officers of the State Government forum in Melbourne early last year, and I raised the issue of using recycled sewerage water and there were similar concerns across certain States, like saying it will never pass health requirements, and the gentleman from Darwin stood up and said, "We have been doing it for 30 years". So I think there are some examples out there.

**Mr GREENE MP:** At what standard?

**Mr BOURKE:** I do not know the actual technical detail, but I was informed they have been doing it for 30 years and without incident. So I am sure that collectively in the industry we should be able to source some level of information so that we have confidence in that water re-use.

**Mr GREENE MP:** My understanding is that the standard that is required at the moment is almost a drinkable standard.

**Mr BOURKE:** That is correct.

**Mr HEAD:** There is a number of levels of standard and it seems at the moment the way forward that we are all looking at, industry, local government and State agencies, is a very high quality of water. The costs of getting water from sewerage stage to an almost potable standard, your costs increase quite considerable with

each additional level of refinement that you need to do. Ku-ring-gai's project is probably looking at close to a \$2 million project, which will hopefully supply two golf courses with irrigation into the hundreds of millions of litres. It is a very expensive process to be able to purchase. We anticipate that the ongoing costs of supply of that water are going to be very high compared to the cost of potable water currently but it is a long-term view that the council is taking in that particular instance.

**Mr GREENE MP:** In light of the comments you have just made, could you do some follow-up for us please in terms of the standard that is required in Darwin and provide some feedback or even contacts for us to source?

**Mr BOURKE:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I think that is something we would like to pursue and particularly in light of this whole water issue, and we will be discussing it, as I say, with Kogarah.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** The national submission also cites the lack of adequate training and more professional development for sport practitioners. Have you any idea as to how this training could be provided or who should have the responsibility?

**Mr BOURKE:** Again, it is a multi-delivery stream if you like. In Parks and Leisure Australia we do not believe in re-inventing the wheel. We would rather partner with someone who has already mastered the service delivery and inform them of what our needs are from the training point of view. There are several levels of training that we are looking at and, again, that is trying to develop some certain standards which then lead to some competencies. We have already held workshops in Melbourne and in Sydney with parks operators to try and develop some industry best practice on management of sportsgrounds, which then will lead to a better surface, which will lead to increased capacity.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** How do you see the role of the sporting clubs and associations in influencing priorities for sportsground management?

**Mr BOURKE:** One of the key drivers of all of this is the sports groups. Again, from a Parks and Leisure point of view, we believe that the sports themselves need to get themselves a little bit more organised but also lower their expectations, especially under certain operating conditions. As an industry we cannot actually supply the SCG to your local park under drought conditions with the numbers that we have got marching on top of them at present. We have sports that are extending seasons; there is limited time for recuperation. So the standards have to be lowered by the sporting community, which is us, the general public. We have got to lower our standards. We cannot expect full grass coverage under these conditions.

Also, the expectation of receiving the registrations in February/March and two weeks later turning around and saying "I need six extra fields" is problematic with facility provision. There has got to be a far more rigorous process set in place to be able to manage that and the expectation of communities that Government can respond at a drop of a hat needs to be tempered.

**Mr HEAD:** The industry wants to work with sporting groups and sporting associations to look at things such as modification of rules, modification of games, and in particular modification of training regimes, and what alternatives we can find that will achieve the same outcomes but maybe can free up a little of the capacity of our existing reserves.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Not using the penalty box for every soccer training session?

**Mr HEAD:** That would be a wonderful start, yes.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Country towns have virtually unlimited water to use on their playing fields, 87 per cent.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**Mr GREENE MP:** Before we move to the next stage, I should make the comment, which I am sure will

be supported by my colleagues, that we authorise that all submissions received as part of this Inquiry can be published.

**SIMON LAUGHTON**, Game Development Manager, AFL NSW/ACT, Driver Avenue, Moore Park, and

**CLARE TOIA-BAILEY**, Strategic Projects Manager, AFL NSW/ACT, Driver Avenue, Moore Park, affirmed and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 33 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes.

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Did you receive an invitation to attend before this Committee?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes.

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Clare and I will be doing a joint presentation today. We hope to keep it brief and it is really just a summary of our submission. We commend you on this Inquiry. It is something that we think has been long overdue and we are excited to be here and appreciate the opportunity to talk today.

The lack of quality and the quantity of facilities in New South Wales, in particular Sydney, is one of our biggest hurdles as a code. My role and the main role of the AFL is to grow the code, and what I mean by growth is participation numbers, and that is predominantly at junior level. At the moment we are experiencing relatively high growth on the back of the Swans and a whole range of other initiatives that we have got out there in the market and we are a little bit hamstrung at the moment in some areas, particularly as I said in Sydney, with the lack of facilities. Most of our grounds are on local council facilities and I think there has been a lack of planning in the past of looking at this issue. Hopefully, this will in some way address that problem.

At the moment our demand, as I said, is going through the roof in some areas and not able to cater for all kids. We are actually turning away kids in some areas and that is obviously limiting our ability to grow. One of the high profile examples of this was when Eddie McGuire moved up to Sydney earlier this year, his son Joseph attempted to join the Eastern Suburbs junior football club and was turned away because with their numbers they had no more room on the ground on Saturday mornings. So he got on the phone, "What is going on", and got his way eventually, but there are a lot more Eddie McGuire's sons out there who are not getting their way because they do not have the influence to get on there and get a game.

One of the other problems we have as a code is that we are a late entrant into this market. Even though AFL has been around for a long time, it has been fairly low profile and we are trying to change that, as I said, and as a result, being a late entrant, there are obviously a lot of established codes with grounds. We are trying to get to the same standard. In particular, there are issues around playing surfaces, size of grounds, the quality of lights, the size of amenity blocks. We often share with cricket and cricket has 11 players and we have 22, so the rooms are often too small.

In terms of the criteria that we feel needs to be looked at in terms of allocating facilities and funding in the future is looking at demand, the current demand and also projected. The last presentation discussed the lack of data which most codes collect. Since I have been with the AFL in the last four years we have put a lot of emphasis on our data collection and data basis, and we are certainly on top of where we are at the moment. This year we went through an exhaustive process of planning where we are going to be in five years time. We have staff regionally based throughout New South Wales and basically we have projected where each club is going to be in five years time and where we are going to need new clubs, and I think we have projected about ten new clubs across the State and a lot of other clubs growing. Basically, in junior ranks most of our

competitions have even age groups, 10s, 12s, 14s and 16s and they are starting to now have 9s, 10s, 11s and 13s. So we are doubling the size of existing clubs, which means doubling the amount of access we need on grounds. We have gathered a fair bit of information. I know not a lot of sports have the ability to do that but we certainly are ready to grow and know we need to grow the game.

In terms also of criteria for providing facilities is looking at what capital other sports can put in. We may be in a position in the future to put some money towards facilities. I think that needs to be looked at. As I said, we need to look at trends, emerging sports - obviously different sports are growing at different rates - and the compatibility of user groups. Being a late entrant into the market, we have been thrown into different facilities, which we have got to live with. One of our major State league teams shares with a flying disc association. They are not local representatives, they come from all round Sydney, and they stand there and throw discs and spin their feet around and dig up the ground and we suffer. So the compatibility of sports I think is another issue, and also the level of sport at a venue. Sometimes when councils are looking at the allocation of facilities and the standard of facilities, the level of sport does not come into it. Obviously, all codes have State league competitions and lower standards, and I think that is important to look at when you are allocating facilities in terms of the amount of investment and the quality you are trying to get it to.

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** In terms of funding for facilities, that is another issue that your Committee is looking at. It has already been mentioned by Steven that certainly at a State level there is not enough funding for sports development. When you compare what New South Wales through the Department of Sport and Recreation puts into funding facilities compared to other States, Queensland gives nearly five times as much, Victoria nearly three times and Western Australia nearly twice as much.

At a local level, again there are so many pressures on councils to provide services and there is certainly not enough money invested into sports facilities, development or upgrades. It does vary from council to council. In some councils there is an expectation that if a sport requires an upgrade of lights and an amenity block, then the sport needs to pay for it. In other councils it might be more of a partnership arrangement.

One of the challenges for us as a sport is that in order to justify investing in a lighting upgrade or an amenity block upgrade, for instance, we would want to be able to secure long-term access to a venue, like a lease or a licence arrangement in return for our investment. A lot of councils are shying away from that sort of arrangement. If we were putting money into a facility we would want to have more access to the ground and, again, that sometimes goes against what councils are trying to do, which is to minimise the amount of volume and wear and tear on the playing facilities. So it is a bit of a Catch 22 situation.

At the end of the day, with the lack of funding for facilities, some of the critical things like lighting has been overlooked. If you looked at the lights across New South Wales and Sydney probably 80 per cent, maybe higher, would be below Australian standards. That is a safety issue for our players. There is a lack of funding for maintenance as well. A council, for example, in Greater Western Sydney has 40 grounds and an annual maintenance budget of \$30,000, which is just not enough to correctly maintain a ground.

Another issue that your Committee is looking at is the appropriateness and fairness of pricing principles for facilities. As we know, there are so many councils in Sydney and New South Wales that all the policies do vary. In some council areas our clubs are charged a higher fee than others. The higher fee is through the roof. It might be \$10,000 for a junior club for a winter season. It puts the pressure on us as a State league. As Simon said, we are trying to grow participation. So we have actually had to subsidise our players to keep them in sport. That is just one example of the challenges for us as a State league organisation.

Through observation and experience, we notice that in some councils do it well, ground allocations, in others it is a real challenge. The councils that do it well tend to be better resourced and they have expertise through sport and recreation planners. In others that do not do it well, what we find, as Simon has already mentioned, is that we have incompatible groups sharing together. We might have two or three winter codes sharing together. What we do find is when we are playing higher grades of community sport, the needs of those grades are not met. What some councils are tending to do is - "It's all too hard. We'll just put everyone in the one basket." So again that co-ordinated approach really needs to happen perhaps between councils to provide all those sporting needs.

Lastly, as mentioned previously, I know the Committee is looking at environmental issues, including

water conservation. You picked up in your report that we mentioned that as a result of the drought the hardness of grounds is a real issue to us. There are standards that Melbourne have nationally to test the hardness of ground. One of our issues is we cannot implement that here in Sydney New South Wales. If we did set standards it is likely we would not have a competition to play because it would not meet the standards. So we are all for looking at and working collectively to find an answer to the water problem.

**Mr GREENE MP:** The first thing you talked about was numbers. Where is your growth coming from, which part of Sydney?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** In particular the north west, Baulkham Hills, Pennant Hills, the hills area, and the inner city region, so the eastern suburbs. It is happening everywhere but they are the two highest growth areas.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I know you do not have associations or you tried to get away from the association policy this year by just having a general committee looking after your junior competition.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Pretty much, yes. There are still eight regional competitions in Sydney.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Having said that, St George, Bankstown, and Sutherland play with Wollongong.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** In the under 16 age group, not in the others.

**Mr GREENE MP:** 16s and below?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes, because Wollongong is not mature enough to have a balance.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I think Glebe used to be in that competition too but they have now moved to the eastern suburbs.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes. Under 9s and 12s, each of the eight regions have their own competition, they are self-sufficient, while in the older age groups there has been a cross-over which will hopefully--

**Mr GREENE MP:** Yes, because a club like Drummoyne does not have under 16s this year.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** And a couple of other clubs have lost in the under 16 area. So you have got the growth through the older teams is what you are basically saying?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes, and also in the schools. This year we have gone from about 100 teams in primary school sports PSSA competitions on Fridays to 350.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Are you counting those as part of your growth or are you only counting your clubs?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Part of our overall growth, but we do separate clubs and schools.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So in the figures where you are saying you have 60,000 players--

**Mr LAUGHTON:** That is both the club and school.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So you could be double dipping there.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Our data shows that about 10 per cent of kids are doing both. All sports count participation numbers, not player numbers. So the answer yes, 10, correct.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I know PSSA, particularly in the St George area, have gone to three seasons or whatever, because they have incorporated an AFL component for the first time this year. So there is potentially some double counting.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** There is some.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Steven made the point in his submission, which you would have heard, in terms of expectations. Your comments were sort of at a tangent to that.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** In what way?

**Mr GREENE MP:** He was saying sports have got to be careful not to have expectations that are too great, particularly in terms of facilities for suburban standard sport. I am not talking about SFL type AFL. Your comments seemed to be at a tangent to what Steve was saying.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** We have just developed a preferred standards document from a national point of view in terms of what we see are the preferred standards for facilities at a junior level, at a senior level and a State league level. Whilst we hope that every ground eventually gets to that state, we do not have the expectation that that is going to be achieved. We are realistic in knowing that for a long time still to come the grounds are going to be below the expectation of what we would like, but we would certainly hope to see some improvement. So we are not expecting every ground to be fantastic, no.

**Mr GREENE MP:** But obviously SFL standard?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Trumper Oval and Weigall and places like that are obviously are going to be a different standard to Kelso Park for Bankstown sports?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes, we hope so.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** A lot of the questions I had you have answered in your submission, but club and school. Are there any clubs that can utilise school facilities?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** What happens in a lot of our competitions is that we have to pay for the venue hire for a school competition to try to get them across the line, which is often not that expensive, and the schools, six or seven or eight schools all travel to a park or an existing ground. Not many primary schools have their own facilities to play AFL, especially because of the size of the ground and they do not have goal posts. We purchase an unimaginable amount of portable goal posts every year for a junior level. It is something that we are looking at, and in particular this year we have an independent schools competition which went in between the rugby and the athletics seasons for five weeks and we hired the showground and other venues. We are looking at potentially trying to develop some grounds with some of the independent schools if we can, which will give us greater access, not only for our school competitions, but also for our clubs on Sundays.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** We are aware that schools have good grounds. It is just a matter of accessing them.

**Mr GREENE MP:** They tend to be more the rectangular rugby league/soccer configurations, do not they?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** We have just got into I think four of the eight sports high schools at the moment. I have been to a few of the meetings there. Not one of them has an oval field or we could actually purchase some posts to put up there. So it is really hard.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** You said that councils determine their fees and charges and they are all over the place. How would you propose that councils should determine their fees and charges?

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** I think it comes back to what the representatives from Parks and Leisure Australia were saying, which is a co-ordinated approach across councils to look at their higher fees and what they are providing for their higher fees.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** It makes it extremely difficult when we have two clubs 20 metres apart and one is

charging \$150 a kid and the other one is charging \$60 a kid. We are trying to get uniformity in prices so it is affordable to play. Clubs are not putting up fees to make money, they are putting up the fees to cover the council charges. It makes it extremely hard. I do not know the answer of what they should be but uniformity or consistency across all local government areas would be desirable.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Do you see that some sports have an under-utilisation of areas, some of the traditional sports that may have number reductions or councils are stuck with those allocations?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Potentially but I have more focussed on where we are at and where we are heading as opposed to analysing where other sports are.

**Mr GREENE MP:** But having said that, there is only so much dirt.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** We, for example, this year got a new ground at Concord, Goddard Oval, where rugby league has diminished, and we knew that through our local staff in the area. We have got access to it on Saturdays and they use it on Sundays, so we share there. We find out about it but we have not got a comprehensive report on the numbers in other codes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Is that a park that has a turf wicket?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes, it has. It is a reasonable side for junior football.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** Following on from your comments of how you stumbled across this information, do you think that points to the need for a central point for data collection?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Definitely. We are trying to get a national data base. We are just putting one together across a State-wide data base. To do that across all sports is a monumental job. Especially when there are a lot of sports that do not have full-time employees but have volunteers, to collect that amount of data is extremely difficult, but that would be the ideal thing to try to achieve.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** I just want to put on the record too that AFL is growing pretty rapidly on the Central Coast where I live. Do you have any suggestions as to how we might be able to overcome the water issue? AFL fields are pretty large, are they not, they are big fields?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes.

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** From a technological point of view, I just sat down with a club to try to encourage them to apply for a water grant. Perhaps making that process a little bit easier would be helpful.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** In some places we are able to tap into bore water.

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** There probably needs to be a lot more information sharing between the landowners.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** That is a major issue for everyone.

**Mr GREENE MP:** You made some comment about grants in terms of facilities upgrades. Obviously, the capital assistance program grants that the Department of Sport and Recreation provide are dollar for dollar grants. Do you see much enthusiasm from your organisation for taking those up on the understanding that it is a dollar for dollar arrangement?

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** Most definitely, yes.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** There is not enough money, is there?

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** No, there is not enough to actually apply for.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** My electorate is the second largest in New South Wales. It covers about 150,000 square kilometres and my allocation for the whole is \$40,000. It is pathetic.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Did all those get taken up though?

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** The criteria, no.

**Mr GREENE MP:** That is the point, it is a case of whether the money gets taken up.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Just on that, we do have to assist them in their application process because most of them are volunteers, so it is not an easy job for them sometimes, depending who it is and who is the club.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Again, that comes back to whether you get good liaison with councils as well, because the tendency is all the facilities that are built are on council land and therefore they become council owned facilities, even though everyone has kicked in the money.

The other thing you have alluded to a couple of times is the configuration of grounds and expectations. Often, as you said in your submission, you end up on cricket fields which have got turf wickets in them because they tend to be full ovals, whereas the more specialised soccer and league facilities that are fenced tend to be square and rectangular. I would have thought in developed areas that would be one of your difficulties. In terms of where there are fenced rectangular areas it would be very difficult to retrofit, for want of a better term.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** Yes, it is extremely tough. It depends on the size of the rectangular area. You can obviously put an oval into a rectangle if it is big enough, but even with a lot of the cricket grounds we share we compromise on the length of grounds. I mentioned the first standards document which we produced. It is about 150 metres long for a senior ground and for a lot of our senior AFL competition players it is 130 metres long, so we are compromising all the time, but that is just what you have to do unfortunately.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Having said that, you tend to get some of the better quality grounds because of that, and I am thinking of Trumper Oval, Jubilee Oval, places like that that do have turf wicket facilities, rather than the traditional synthetic or concrete wicket that has dirt on the top of it.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** That does help.

**Mr GREENE MP:** The other thing in talking about ground usage, St George SFL have use of the park, as you are aware. Hurstville Council has provided them with a synthetic cover, which obviously helps with the quality of the standard. Do you have any comments on that as to the usage? Is that working well from your perspective, rather than the traditional 25 by two metres of dirt chucked on the ground?

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** Yes, we are always looking for solutions and that particular club and the other clubs that we know that are using synthetic covers are pretty happy with the surface.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** I am originally from Melbourne and most of the grounds in Melbourne now are done that way with non-turf grounds, so it is almost everywhere.

**Mr GREENE MP:** You are happy with that as a solution?

**Mr LAUGHTON:** As long as it is level. That is the main thing.

**Ms TOIA-BAILEY:** It is not ideal. If they are playing in the premier grade it should be just pure turf.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I hate to break the news to you but the MCG is not level either.

**Mr LAUGHTON:** It is now actually. Sometimes there are foot marks.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**JAMES FORREST**, Vice President, Soccer NSW Limited, Neurants Lane, Glenwood, sworn and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of

reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 33 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Did you receive an invitation to attend before this Committee?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Would you like to give an opening statement before we ask some questions?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes, all right, thank you, Mr Chairman. The main essence of this is that we are somewhat overwhelmed by our own success. For the last two or more decades we have been growing at a very steady rate of about six, seven, eight per cent per annum. It has been quite consistent over that period, no ups and downs, and it is evenly spread, that is the interesting thing, right across the city and in the country areas. In the middle city, inner, outer country areas it is all running at about the same kind of figure, although recently, as the figures will show here, it has been even higher, and as you can imagine we have major problems in the built-up areas, less so in the country, but there it is more the ability of councils to provide rather than anything else.

We try to be flexible about this. We have changed our playing times to seniors on Sundays, juniors on Saturdays to allow for changing work practices. Where permitted by councils, we are introducing night games, especially for teenagers because they work at the weekend, but this is limited, of course, by night lighting and all the various training considerations. It is easier in the country, in fact, than in the city to do that sort of thing. We are limited by councils that want to rest grounds - Willoughby, for example, will not allow us to use both Saturday and Sunday - and those sorts of considerations. So we are looking desperately, not so much for more grounds, that is not particularly the problem, but for relief so that grounds can be rested, although we are running into both problems. In other words, we have got this consistent growth over time and place over a long period and we are running out of space.

We are increasingly frustrated, as you can imagine, by the ability to help councils to help us. Most of them do what they can. They are very good with us, but there is a limit, so this is our problem, and we have turned to the use of school grounds as a possibility, emulating the Canberra situation where they were planned to start with. It is not a panacea, because in the Sutherland region, for example, the Director of Education and the council people had a look at this, and there are only about six or seven grounds in the shire that lend themselves to sports use for planning and such like reasons, but anything is worthwhile. What we are after really is the use of grounds not necessarily for playing but for training purposes so we can spread the load. We could use much smaller grounds for training purposes if we could get night lighting, or even if we cannot, up to say seven o'clock.

What we are doing is we are trying to look here at what I call a whole of government approach to this sort of thing, where it is cross-departmental. The absolute key to what we are looking at is Department of Education and Department of Sport and Recreation co-operation. We do have situations where local principals are willing to help, but the problem with that is it is very sort of ad hoc. Principals change, some principals do not want to do it, others are fine, but councils cannot be involved because of the length of term that this goes on for. Hence our emphasis on the Department of Education as a necessary part of this, but the principals obviously must be involved.

The thing about our proposal here, which we worked out primarily with the Sutherland Council people because they have done a fair bit of work on this, is that it is cost neutral to the Department of Education and it is cost neutral to government, it is a council thing, and you will see from the proposals we have put in here that it costs about \$1.25 million, \$1.5 million to develop a greenfield site, and that is true of the country as well as it is of the city. What they have worked out for us is that it would be about half a million, in other words about 40 per cent of the cost, if a council could go in with a school on an already developed field, separate it off from the school buildings and control the usage of it after school and at the weekend. Then it is about \$10,000 a year. The council would maintain that ground as though it were their own and control the usage.

The submission we are putting to you really is that to get co-operation from the Department of

Education is not going to cost them anything. In fact, it will actually save them maintenance and it will keep the ground secure because the proposal we put up quarantines the school facilities, the buildings, from new facilities which a council would have to do, but it is worth it because the council would save up to a million dollars a ground, schools would save on annual maintenance and they would gain on security with people being around after school and at the weekend.

As I say, it does not suit all schools, because there are planning problems, like parking for example, and there are problems with neighbours, but we gave some examples at the back of our written submission of the way in which we are trying to deal with it and the way in which some councils are dealing with it. We find that if we work with neighbours, we get on reasonably well. They do not always like the gala days, but we try to work with people and we do not dump lots of gala days and whatnot. That is asking for trouble.

Because of those sorts of council commitments, duplicating facilities to quarantine off the school facilities, the key to the whole thing is the Department of Education co-operation, because it has to be - well, I think one council suggested a 21 year term, but we are thinking of a 25 to 30 year term to give them added benefits. No council will commit to this sort of thing for certainly under 21 years and most headmasters cannot give that kind of commitment, and in any case, as I say, it varies from principal to principal whether they want to be in it or not.

The other thing is that we are not trying to put this to you as a uniquely soccer football sort of thing. This would benefit all sports, but all we are asking is a fair share based on need, and this is another little difficulty - you know the old Communist Party dictum: What yours is mine and what is mine is my own. There is a lot of territoriality in this kind of thing, and if we had Department of Education involvement and Department of Sport and Recreation involvement, we might be able to overcome little problems with councils, for example, where it can get quite political at the local council level. We just want everything shifted over to a needs basis; that is all. We are happy to share grounds. If rugby wants to use it in the morning, we could use it on the other half of the day. We would have to add a piece to the goal posts underneath the cross bar, that kind of thing. There are no problems with that and we work with councils on that kind of thing.

The other thing is public liability. We have noted in the document there that we carry a \$25 million cover for public liability on any ground we use, any ground that is scheduled to be used for training or for weekend playing, and that is for any one incident. There could be three incidents in a day. We are covered for up to \$25 million for each of them. If necessary, we can extend that, if that is a requirement, but I think it is getting near the top end. Certainly it is more than most councils require, but we had a nasty experience a decade or so ago where a young fellow was hit by lightning up in the Manly Warringah area and we only had a \$3 million cover at that time, and of course it is something up to a decade or more before this can get to court. That was settled within our limits, and we did not mind because it was a terrible kind of injury. So that is why we have increased the cover, and we can increase it again if that is what your Committee would want.

The other thing is that we are frustrated because Governments at both State and Federal level are bringing out these anti-obesity campaigns. I have spoken with Bruce Baird, the Federal MP, about this because he chaired the obesity committee for the Prime Minister a year ago. It is becoming more difficult for us to provide kids, and adults, especially over 35s for example, with the facilities which they need. We will do anything by way of flexibility that we can, and we are working with councils on this, but we do feel that we get extra flexibility, for example, for young kids' soccer football, mini soccer as we call it, or roo-ball, if we could remove that from the main fields.

I have mentioned in our written submission here that there is a problem with portable goal posts. We have had some terrible experiences with volunteers moving goal posts. You know what it is like - everybody knows what to do and nobody actually does it. If we could segregate those fields in say primary school grounds - the only half field size - from the main grounds, we could gain an awful lot from a health and safety point of view.

That is all I want to say, Mr Chairman.

**Mr GREENE MP:** You talked about the great expansion of the game and one of the areas you noted was Sutherland Shire where there has been, and I think this is symptomatic of a lot of areas, tremendous growth in girls' and women's soccer. Menai Hawks, which used to be the largest soccer club in the southern

hemisphere and is probably still pretty close to it--

**Mr FORREST:** Yes, it is.

**Mr GREENE MP:** --now has something like 30 odd girls' and women's teams, so there has been tremendous expansion. That is, as I say, symptomatic of the growth of soccer. One of the problems that has been highlighted in our discussions with councils is this growth. Whereas 15 years ago the only soccer on Sundays was over 35s because they couldn't fit them on Saturdays, now we tend to have grounds being used from 8.30-9.00 in the morning until 5.00 on Saturdays and also similarly on Sunday, which has put enormous pressure on ground surfaces. Similarly, and through no fault of anyone's, soccer is a very hard user of ground surfaces - it is just the nature of the game, it puts a lot of pressure on - and also training. This is the feedback we are getting and you do not have to be a Rhodes scholar to work it out. I made the comment earlier about people training in the 18 yard box and it ends up--

**Mr FORREST:** No, we are trying to keep them out of there.

**Mr GREENE MP:** We try a lot of things and that is where portable posts are good, but there is a lot of heavy pressure put on there. I will come back to schools, I think that is fantastic what you are saying there, but what is Soccer NSW doing in terms of surfaces and looking after protecting ground surfaces, particularly in an era of drought?

**Mr FORREST:** We are looking at artificial surfaces. This is not an easy one because it is very expensive. The Sutherland Shire District Club, Seymour Shore, is putting down a rubberised base artificial surface. The major benefit of that is that you can increase the pressure of use on such a ground. The difficulty is that that particular one is costing about \$1 million to put down, and I do not know what the annual maintenance figures are. In this particular case that club is enormously lucky because they have a sponsor who is doing the whole lot.

**Mr GREENE MP:** He could come and sponsor my team any time he liked.

**Mr FORREST:** It is hard to get such people but that is the sort of order of cost. That would reduce usage of other grounds, but we do not have any other than that particular one that is being built. We are going to experiment with this. We run into all sorts of things, international body regulations, national body regulations, but we think we can get around that. We are asking the people who are constructing that ground to come and talk to us at Soccer NSW to see if we can extend that into other areas. That is the main initiative.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I take that on board but there is no real benefit to Miranda who play 200 metres down the road on a number of grass surfaces and, as I say, have training and all that sort of thing. What are the options for them?

**Mr FORREST:** The only option we can think of is to increase the number of grounds so that we can spell some grounds.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Spread the usage?

**Mr FORREST:** That is right. Quite honestly, the community use of school grounds in this way is the only major way that we can see of doing that kind of thing in already built-up areas, and it is not just the inner city. Ku-ring-gai is heavily built-up, Sutherland is heavily built-up, even out into the peripheral areas. Northern Blacktown is not developed yet. They have the same shortages. If we could spread the load. The critical thing for councils is to get options, and this is our problem. If we could separate training from playing surfaces, for example; if we could use primary school grounds.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Mr Slack-Smith has asked questions to other witnesses about the whole school issue and one of the comments we took forward is the fact that schools tend to use council grounds mid week for their competitions, PSSA, et cetera. You are basically saying can we also get a bit of a quid pro quo here, an arrangement whereby we can share all facilities evenly. If it is good enough for the PSSA to play Friday afternoons, then it is also a good opportunity to use their grounds. Is that a fair comment?

**Mr FORREST:** I would not like to suggest that it is already happening. In the Canterbury council area, for example, they are using as many school grounds as they can and it is working reasonably well. So the two-way process is working but in many areas it is an ad hoc thing, it depends on the local principal, and they are charged with raising money.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So you are recommending an approach at a Department of Education level?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes, it has to be at that level to give the councils this period of usage which would justify spending money on duplicating facilities and ground development.

**Mr GREENE MP:** You have indicated that Sutherland Council is very supportive of this.

**Mr FORREST:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Have you any feedback that other councils would also be prepared to take on this option, particularly in terms of longer term maintenance?

**Mr FORREST:** We have not gone any further as yet. We were trying to get the Department of Sport and Recreation to co-operate with the Department of Education and trial it, we thought in Sutherland and Canterbury areas, but various things have happened, directors general have changed in the Department of Sport and Recreation and nothing has actually happened. In fact, this Committee is really our first and last chance to get this out into the public arena. From recent reports in the media and talks we had at the northern region of councils recently, it is quite clear that councils would love to enter into formal relationships in this way, not with individual schools but with the department.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** You have made it very plain that there is a very grey area with school principals having to say yes or no on the usage of their sporting facilities. I think there must be something there to have some guidelines through the Ministry to rectify that or to encourage principals to go along with this idea.

Is Soccer NSW looking at the private schools as well as public schools or just public schools at this point?

**Mr FORREST:** No, both but we can negotiate separately with the private schools. We have an example on the western side of the Manly Warringah Pittwater area where there is a private school which we are working with in exactly this way. We give them an annual maintenance fee, they provide the ground.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** It is a win-win.

**Mr FORREST:** Yes, it is. This is exactly what we are proposing. When I went to speak to Minister Nori's people about this, the first thing they asked was, "Do you want money from us", naturally, and I said to them, "No, we don't", and after that the conversation went swimmingly. This is literally what it is. Councils are going to save money by putting money into this sort of thing. Schools will save on maintenance and they will get a better ground either to train on or, if it is large enough, to play on.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** It is interesting too, Mr Chairman, in my area we have a situation where sometimes some of the ovals and playing grounds are being discontinued because more money is being spent on them and in regional and rural New South Wales there are plenty of fields, plenty of grounds and the problem is not there. I can see that looking at the situation here in Sydney it is just a different ball game and that in utilising the school facilities we have a win-win situation.

**Mr FORREST:** If I could make a suggestion there, the problem in the country is not the number of grounds but it is the amount of money that the council has to invest, so that this kind of thing, working with schools, where there is half a million versus a million plus, is still going to be a major benefit for all sports in country areas as well.

Shoalhaven Council has set up three or five grounds for night games, but this is rare. It is very rare because there are neighbours around and about, but it works very well with teenagers, who work at McDonalds or something like that at the weekend, and there has been a major increase in participation because of this, but

we cannot do that everywhere.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** In relation to the arrangements with schools, you are probably looking at a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education and maybe the Local Government Association, are you?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes. I was speaking at a soccer football function about a year ago with previous Minister for Education, John Aquilina, and he made it very clear that involvement of the principals is absolutely necessary. We are asking for the Department of Education to have an overriding say in the whole thing, but the involvement of the principals is very important, because they are charged with developing the school in ways which they were not in my day for example. So it is a personal management thing in part and it is exactly what you say.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** In my electorate we have been able to get funding out of the capital grants assistance for schools and they have been able to make those facilities available to the community. I am interested in the rapid rise of soccer amongst females and I know that that will continue, but does that present any problems by having to change amenities?

**Mr FORREST:** No. With the adults it does but not with young people because most of them come along already changed or they head out to the car and change on the way home. In theory you are right but in practice it is not much of a problem with young people. Young people do not worry too much about these sorts of things. They do not get dressed and undressed out in the open.

**Mr GREENE MP:** They come in their gear.

**Mr FORREST:** That is right and they go home in their gear. We try to separate the venues where we play the women's games. This is becoming less and less possible. They used to play on a Sunday, the males played on a Sunday. Now of course the males are pushing into Saturday and the reverse with the females. The only times it becomes a problem is when there are mixed teams, but we do not have mixed adult male/female teams. They can if they want to, we do not mind, but they do not do it. It goes up to about 12 and then in practice up to about 14 or maybe 15 and then they just go their own way. The same facilities for both.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I note that there has been growth in football/soccer, and in the area of the Nepean there has been growth in both female and also male sport, but also the availability of facilities management when you have a lease sport in your area. In urban areas there is Penrith Panthers, which has just had a massive upgrade, but the for hire soccer is played not on that same stadium. Is there any sort of getting together with the management of those larger facilities to have some sort of co-operation? Would it be in your best interests to have that co-operation? The Committee went to Penrith and did not have a look at the stadium but had a look at where soccer was being played at Cook Park and had a look at the facilities there. Because of the growth and the rise of these stadiums in regional areas, is there any thought of some sort of co-operation between the different codes?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes, we have that but most of the teams, like the Penrith Panther soccer football group, not the rugby league group, they have representative football that they play there on a Saturday, and that is about five teams of a Saturday and the senior teams play on a Sunday. Commonly, we try to get women's super league end on with the men's super league or premier league or whatever it is, so that most of those grounds are in fact used pretty heavily. With five games of up to 18s on a Saturday, each have an hour and a half block, and then the senior women and men on the Sunday, the possibilities are fairly limited. We also have a situation, particularly in the inner to middle suburbs, where we have to put two senior teams onto the same grounds for various reasons, mainly because councils are doing what you suggested, pushing groups together to get maximum use. So in practice we tend to keep the senior grounds for representative and senior women's and men's separate from what we call the park football.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** My question was also alluding to the Penrith stadium being used for NRL nine times a year and training, and with significant both State and Federal money in these areas, is there some kind of work being done between the two codes, especially NRL and soccer/football, about the utilisation for the specific benefit of that?

**Mr FORREST:** I think the answer would have to be no. We run into territoriality problems and in practice there is not as much co-operation among codes as we would like. This is a complaint coming from the codes themselves and various sporting bodies have been set up under the Parks and Leisure and also the sporting bodies themselves, which we hope we you might touch on when you make your report.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** What aspect would you like us to touch on?

**Mr FORREST:** I would hope that you would note this and stress the need for more co-operation and also ask the Department of Sport and Recreation or an appropriate body to set up the mechanism which will require this to happen, not allow it to happen but require it to happen. I do not know whether local government would be interested in it as well, but obviously from a council point of view. This is what I was talking about earlier, what is yours is mine and what is mine is my own.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I do not know about other stadiums but just take the Penrith example, it is on State land on a lease to an NRL limited company. How long those leases go, I know it is up for renegotiation soon. Since the lease was signed off all those years ago, a sports foundation has been formed within the Penrith community but it is still not on usage. It is rather on co-operation and providing networking for funding.

**Mr FORREST:** The best example that we have where this kind of a cross code co-operation works is on the northern beaches, Pittwater, Warringah and Manly, where the three councils have got together to try to depoliticise the pressure, "Let us use it. No, no, let us use it", that kind of thing, and they have set up a sports council there which is representative of all the codes, not of individual clubs but at the district level. They have to be district level.

**Mr GREENE MP:** That is a regional type arrangement?

**Mr FORREST:** That is right. The various councils keep ultimate control of the grounds but this sports council deals with the allocation of grounds. At the moment it is a soccer person who is chairing this committee and all the information we are getting out of this is that it absolutely kills this idea that "We have got this ground. We are only going to use it half a day but we are not going to let anybody else onto it". Everything is up for grabs every year and you have got to demonstrate need before you get to keep the ground or you lose it, but it is done in a way that as long as you can demonstrate need you retain the ground and that is common across all councils, but it is working well in a co-operative way. It does not involve professional code grounds but it involves all the non-professional grounds. It was not in our submission but I can get the Committee additional information on the way it is working. We have got a Power Point presentation actually that we could print out.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So it is at association levels, various associations.

**Mr GREENE MP:** They have sports a advisory council for want of a better term?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** A bit like your sports foundation?

**Mr FORREST:** Yes, but this one is unique in a way in that council does not get involved in any way in the allocation of the grounds.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**AARON CALLAGHAN SENIOR**, Recreation Planner, Leichhardt Municipal Council, 2-7 Wetherill Street, Leichhardt, and

**ANDREW KELLY**, Community Recreation Officer, Leichhardt Municipal Council, 2-7 Wetherill Street, Leichhardt, sworn and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 333 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Correct.

**Mr KELLY:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Did you receive an invitation to attend before this Committee?

**Mr KELLY:** Yes.

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Would you like to perhaps give us an opening statement in light of your submissions?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Leichhardt Council last year undertook a recreation and needs study which covered the whole facet of open space and recreational management in the Leichhardt local government area. We have a net deficiency of open space within Leichhardt. We are a small municipality only covering around 11.6 square kilometres. We have a huge deficiency with regards to sport fields provision, particularly on the training side. The predominant sport in Leichhardt is soccer football. We have not only deficiencies in open space provision of sporting facilities but also across the whole local government area in term of parks and reserves. Our open space deficiency is quite significant.

We have been looking at a number of opportunities for improving open space provision, particularly with regards to working with local schools and sports bodies, also lobbying the State Government for the use of Callam Park. At the present time we do not have access to Callam Park for recreational use and that would be one of the avenues which would help lessen the types of problems that we are currently experiencing.

**Mr KELLY:** We have rapidly growing soccer clubs. I heard the earlier submission. We have similar issues. Women's soccer is growing enormously. It does not show any signs of changing. Basically, with training and playing seven days a week, our sportsgrounds by the end of winter are in a state where they are virtually unplayable. It requires quite a lot of work by the ground staff to get them ready again for the following winter. The summer sports that we have are usually of lesser impact on the surface and despite the warmer months the grass returns ready for another winter of battering.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I notice in your submission you talk about hectares per thousand people, et cetera. It is obviously very difficult to address that or to change that around. I think I also noted in your submission that you say you have had a decrease over the years in sporting areas available for active sport as well. Is that what I read?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** No, not in terms of the areas that are available for active sport. They have not changed. We have been trying to proactively obtain more areas. We have zoned areas for further open space acquisition, but that is not really the answer that we are looking for. It is about providing quality provision rather than quantity, and one of the areas that we advocated in our submission is looking towards rationalisation in existing facilities and what areas there were that we could move with regard to providing quality facilities. It is no longer acceptable to have parks set aside for active recreation and other parks set aside for passive or informal recreation. We need to be looking at multi-purpose facilities that provide for a multitude of different users, and that is the avenue we are trying to advocate at the present time.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So in terms of quality upgrade, if I can use that term, will that preclude the use of some sports though potentially? In other words, what I am concerned about is thinking we have a soccer ground here which has a cricket wicket in the middle but if we put a fence around it it will make it a better soccer ground but therefore you will lose the cricket wicket. That is just one example that springs to mind.

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** No. Once again, we are trying to find multi-purpose facilities and we are looking at demand. One of the problems we have, and we were discussing this the other day, is that we have got a huge growth in soccer but we need to be able to provide for other sports as well. So we are cautious about

that issue, and it is about equity and provision. The majority of demand is for soccer football but we need to be conscious of the fact that there are other sports out there and being able to provide for those as well.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** All the submissions so far have indicated what you are advocating, that is community use of open space facilities that are currently not managed by council, and this includes schools and other institutions. How are these negotiations proceeding and what strategies are you pursuing to gain access to other available grounds for sporting and recreational activities?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** We have been working with two particular secondary schools, one being the Leichhardt campus and the other one being the Balmain campus, Sydney secondary schools. We have been working closely with the Leichhardt campus with regard to multi-purpose use of their facilities. They are at the present time building a new sports oval and we are hoping to develop a community partnership with them with regard to joint community use of that facility after school hours.

We have also been looking at joint opportunities at the Balmain campus. The problem with the Balmain campus is that they face a similar problem as we do in that the open space that they have is limited, and the other issue they have is that it is used during school periods, so it does not really get time to recover and recuperate. That is a considerable issue that we have to take on board, particularly with regard to council looking at a partnership where we meet the maintenance obligations of looking after those facilities.

We have a duty to not only ensure that our parks and reserves and open space areas are being utilised and providing quality open space, we also have an obligation to protect the playing surface, so we are talking about sustainability I suppose would be the right word, for surfaces to be sustained.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** In your negotiations with the school, do your figures stack up? Is that a win-win for both school and council?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** With the Leichhardt High School particularly we have got a win-win situation there with regard to community use. With the Balmain High School, we are looking at that cautiously, particularly with regard to the Callam Park situation. If Callam Park comes on line, that opens a number of avenues for us and financially we have to be prudent in terms of where council invests its finances.

I have suggested to council that we hold off for the next twelve months with regard to the Balmain High School situation and we wait until the next State election with regard to Callam Park. There is a number of fields there that are not currently used. The open space is sitting there not being utilised. We have been negotiating with the Ministry of Health for some time now and the Department of Planning over the use of the fields and unfortunately we are at a standstill. Those particular areas are used for informal recreation but there is no formal active sporting use of those areas, and it is a significant area. We are talking about three major grounds in the Leichhardt local government area there.

**Mr GREENE MP:** There used to be a turf wicket there.

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** There is an artificial wicket on the site but that site has not been used for many years now and it is in a state of disrepair. It is a large area of open space.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** In your submission you mention that funding streams other than s94 grants and rates payments must be developed to enable regular upgrades and continuing maintenance of existing facilities. Can you elaborate on what other streams of funding could be tapped into?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** We are looking at various options. There is, of course, the finance that we get from the State Government in terms of the grants and applications for the regional sports grants and capital opportunity grants. Without those local government would not be able to provide the type of facilities that we do provide. So those are critical, but we also need to be looking at other avenues of funding streams, and we have been looking at the possibility of working with the clubs on fund raising initiatives, but as you will be aware they too have significant problems with regards to volunteers and the time of volunteers and also club finances, and sponsorship is also very hard to come by. So a lot of the emphasis is on local government to provide those facilities, and also reliance on the State Government.

Reviewing section 94 plans needs to be done annually I believe in terms of having a look at where needs are, so it is reflective of the needs, and housing developments associated with developer contributions is critical as well.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I am interested in the regional aspect and having more regional co-operation. I note that Leichhardt is fairly small in comparison to the area I come from, Penrith. With the number of people in the Leichhardt area, it is quite obvious with the growth of sport that people are coming from other local government areas to play. Is there any cross-council co-operation, regional co-operation?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** One of the things that I suggest in my submission is that there needs to be greater emphasis on partnerships between local government areas, particularly in the Sydney metropolitan area. We are so close that it makes sense to be working together and to address problems that unite us rather than labouring over those problem that divide us. I think it is critical that we work together to address those problems. One of the issues that we have found with regard to sportsground use is that clubs are actually shuffling around for the best price. The different local government areas have different price structures for the use of their grounds and a number of local government areas also have different ways they manage the grounds. For example, in the Leichhardt local government area, the majority of our sports fields, in fact all of our major sports fields, the training grounds, are all flood lit. Sydney City, for example, not all of their sports fields are flood lit. So we do get quite a bit of interest from clubs from outside the local government area to utilise our sports fields. So there are some disparities that need to be addressed there and the only way they are going to be addressed effectively is to work in partnerships.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Is your council taking on board any of these issues?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Not that I am aware, no.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Do you negotiate directly with clubs or do you negotiate with associations or both?

**Mr KELLY:** We negotiate with the clubs. The policy is basically prior users have a priority. The clubs have on occasion involved the association in negotiations, but generally we are basically dealing with the club president. The issue is - and it is a policy area of our own - if a club is shrinking over time, they still have priority on a ground, whereas another club is growing, you try to squeeze them in, and then trying to make the tough decision to move on a long term leaseholder or a club that perhaps does not have the need that they had 30 years ago when they were a much bigger entity, I think it has political ramifications which are beyond our brief.

**Mr GREENE MP:** In other words you would negotiate with Leichhardt Wanderers rather than negotiating with Balmain junior league?

**Mr KELLY:** Exactly.

**Mr GREENE MP:** And if Leichhardt Wanderers are losing teams or Balmain juniors are losing teams or whatever, and Annandale soccer club is increasing teams - is that what you are referring to?

**Mr KELLY:** Yes, it is challenging to Leichhardt Wanderers. That is an example. They did have a small spike on the back of the Tiger's success last year, so they are back on track now, but we have squeezed a rugby club onto the ground, and it was not a painless operation. We succeeded in getting a rugby club to share that ground with them and in summer time now there is a baseball club and six a side summer soccer down there. That is one of the challenges of dealing directly with the clubs.

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** The other issue that we have is with regard to exclusivity of the sports fields. A classic example is that we have two grounds within the Leichhardt local government area which are exclusively leased to sports bodies, and one of the problems is that it locks that land up in terms of its availability for other users.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Are you talking about Leichhardt Oval?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Exactly.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So you are not talking about another smaller ground.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** One other aspect that the Committee noted in its skills study was that in certain council areas there are a number of pocket parks that may or may not be able to be used for training. It is not a field site, but it would be enough to do sprint training, skill training.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Or even mini soccer. One that comes to mind in your area is the one near Harold Park, near the canal, at the back of Nelson Street.

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** That is back into Sydney City I think.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I know that traditionally you had your patch, your school sized field and you had your training facilities and barbecue facilities for fund raising, but for training. I know with soccer/football it is winter, so you need the light, but is there any consideration to just have a training spot, because where we saw in Penrith there was training plus games, it was just an absolute clay patch?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** You are absolutely right, and you will find that overseas a lot of councils, particularly the United Kingdom, are moving that way in terms of lack of open space, but they are reviewing parks and open spaces that have traditionally been used for neighbourhood recreation and passive recreation, they are reviewing the use of those and looking at using them for training facilities.

One of the initiatives that Leichhardt Council is about to embark on is a program called Teen Zones, which is principally aimed at addressing deficiencies in recreational provision for teenagers but there is also scope there for utilising those types of spaces for football and soccer and other sports. We are going to be looking at developing multi-purpose games areas, which are hard surfaced areas, full size facilities the size of basketball courts, but also have facilities there for junior and training for football.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So that is in a smaller area for informal/formal operation?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Informal use, yes, particularly when we have periods of adverse weather whereby we are forced to close grounds, facilities like that can be used for training. They are flood lit typically up to nine p.m. at night.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So you have met demand for netball as well, it might have a netball court at the other end?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Yes, and that is what it is all about - it is netball, it is basketball, even cricket practice, and it is multi-purpose, and that is what we need to be doing in terms of providing quality recreational facilities. We need to move away from the traditional active and passive reserves and it needs to be multi-purpose.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Yes, that is right. That is being done in the United Kingdom did you say?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** In the United Kingdom but Leichhardt is embarking on that at the present time.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Are they studying it or have they rolled it out?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** We have a report going to council next month and the program has been taken to a briefing session and endorsed there and hopefully we will be embarking on consultation with young people within the next few months and then we hope to get it into the capital plan.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** It is an aspect of utilisation of those. At the moment they have got "no ball games allowed".

**Mr KELLY:** Can I just add to that? In the small parks, when we originally embarked on the deal with Balmain High flood lighting is obviously an issue for training, and so we suggested that the teams who were

training between four and five could go down there, but there was a reluctance for clubs to head down there just for those teams because all of their resources are in the club room at the main oval. The original idea was to try to get a few teams down there while it was still daylight and it became apparent pretty quickly that without flood lighting in those areas it would be almost a token gesture.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** In your submission you recommend the establishment of a New South Wales green space task force in conjunction with the green space management across Australia. Can you describe in more detail how the green space task force would be constituted and operate and how it would link to the national body also proposed in your submission?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** I would see such a body being representative of local government within New South Wales, made up of local government officers in the majority and becoming champions of a green space administration. As I said earlier, that is about advocating for the use of green space and also managing green space in a proactive manner so that we are all basically addressing similar problems and trying to work together in a co-operative manner to try to address the problems that unite us rather than those problems that divide us. I think we can come up with collective solutions to some of the problems that we are currently facing.

It would need to be linked to the national body for standards and also for quality assurance purposes, but I desperately think that there is a genuine need across New South Wales for a green space task force to address these issues because we have huge problems across New South Wales with increasing population and the urban sport getting more dense. The pressure that that is putting on green space is enormous and it just comes down to not only local government officers in the parks but also the planning sections as well working together to address some of these issues.

We talk about section 94 contributions. We also have to look at the way that parks and open spaces are dealt with in the urban areas. Rather than building the parks or the open space around the houses, the park should be the central feature. The park should be built first with the housing built around that, so everything focusses on the park and the urban space, because to be honest, the open space or the park now is becoming the new backyard for many residents within Sydney. That is the new backyard. There is just not the open space in the backyards.

**Mr GREENE MP:** What you are saying is that needs to be effective open space so that you can have active sporting recreation rather than passive recreation in smaller pocket type areas?

**Mr CALLAGHAN SENIOR:** Yes, exactly. It provides for a multitude of activities, not only informal recreation and passive recreation, but also active recreation. It provides for the needs of the wider community.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**PAUL WOODS**, General Manager, Kogarah Council, 2 Belgrave Street, Kogarah, and

**AMIT CHANAN**, Director, Assets and Services, Kogarah Council, 2 Belgrave Street, Kogarah, sworn and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 333 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr WOODS:** Yes.

**Mr CHANAN:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Did you receive an invitation to attend before the Committee?

**Mr WOODS:** Yes.

**Mr CHANAN:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Would you like to give us an opening address before we ask some questions?

**Mr WOODS:** I had not planned or intended to but I am happy to say on behalf of Kogarah Council and perhaps local government in general that we are looking forward to the outcomes of the Inquiry perhaps in managing the developing concerns and issues that sportsground management has brought about for local government over the last ten years or so. It has been a long time coming. I have discussed these issues in a number of forums over the previous two or three years and it is a big day for local government and sportsground management in general.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I just have to ask the opening question because my colleagues here do not believe me. Could you just tell these good people how much grass is not on the Renown Park and Parkside Drive? They do not believe me when I say that you are lucky if there is 40 square metres of grass on either of those grounds?

**Mr WOODS:** If that. Not only on Renown Park but I think on most sports fields in Kogarah.

**Mr GREENE MP:** One of the reasons we are keen to hear from you today is because of your participation in the water re-use project at Beverley Park and we have already had discussions today with a couple of groups in terms of re-use of sewage, sewer mining, et cetera. Could you give us a brief background on that and where you see this going and the benefits you see this providing to your council and therefore potentially elsewhere?

**Mr CHANAN:** As we outline in our submission, the Beverley Park golf course in Kogarah is the location of our sewer mining project. Like other councils around Sydney, the water restrictions were hurting us as well with regards to sportsgrounds. Sewer obviously provides a very reliable source of water that we could use for irrigation.

In partnership with Sydney Water and the University of Technology we developed a program to harvest the sewage from the sewer system and treat it for irrigation use. There was a demonstration trial that we did earlier this year. That was successful. There is technology now available that can easily treat the sewage to a certain standard so that we can safely use that water for irrigation purposes.

As part of the project we also applied for State Government funding under the water saving fund and we were fortunate to get \$1.6 million towards that project, and that has actually gone a long way in supporting that initiative.

The final plant will be treating up to one megalitre of sewage every day and we will be using that for irrigation of all of our parks and sporting grounds, as well supplying water to our golf course, as well as Jubilee Oval, the home of St George Rugby League Club. In terms of the water cycle management in Sydney, where we are at, the dams are less than 43 per cent, it is absolutely insane if we continue using drinking water for irrigating our parks and ovals. It is an obvious solution. There is technology available. Yet councils themselves may not be able to provide enough capital for the infrastructure needed for a project of this nature and that is why State Government support is absolutely vital and we were fortunate to get that. I think there is potential throughout Sydney to have similar projects.

**Mr WOODS:** The question has always been asked of me: Why is Kogarah in this position? I always say we had the right people in the right place at the right time. Kogarah has some credibility in terms of environmental initiatives over the last ten years or so. Amit has been with us for just a bit over five years and has put together a water cycle management team that is aware of what is required in terms of the water management cycle or water saving initiatives.

Through the agreement with Sydney Water, the University of Technology and the subsequent funding from the State Government we are now in a position to move forward with this. We have had several occasions down at the water re-use site, in terms of media and other functions, where the question has been asked: Why do not all councils do this? If every council had one of these things, their problem is solved. I think what is required obviously is funding, the initiative, the appropriate resources or staff and qualifications, experience and so forth. From there, I do not think there is any reason why all councils could not have something similar.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Just following on from that, earlier today we discussed this very issue with

representatives of Parks and Leisure Australia and they are going to get back to us with some information on the fact that in Darwin they have been doing something similar apparently for 30 years. The reason that came up is because my understanding is, or the Committee's understanding is that the water has to be treated to such a level that it is almost of drinkable standard anyway. Parks and Leisure are going to come back to us on the Darwin model.

Firstly, is it true that it is treated to such a standard and, secondly, do you believe that the standard could be in fact lowered, which would I assume would decrease the cost?

**Mr CHANAN:** New South Wales EPA have done guidelines on sewer re-use and the required standards that have to be met before you can use it for irrigation purposes is actually not quite the same as drinking water. So the answer to your question is: No, you do not have to treat the water to drinking water standards, but in terms of gaining the community's confidence, the cost of treating the water to a little bit extra is not that huge anyway, so in Kogarah our treatment objectives for our sewer plant are a bit more stringent than what the EPA had specified, only because when we talked to potential technology suppliers they said there is not any big difference in terms of the potential of producing bacteria, that is the difference between drinking water and irrigation water. So we added those objectives to our treatment target. It did not really make much difference in terms of our operating costs for the final plant but what it did was it helped us in selling the idea to the community.

What is important is community liaison and education. We spent a lot of time talking to the community and talking to the sports clubs and sports forums through our local members and through our environmental officers. We were able to get rid of the fear of re-use, the fear of sewer that generally is in people's perception, and I think that is partly the reason why the project has run so smoothly with the community.

**Mr WOODS:** In all forms of communication, as Amit has said, we constantly refer to the fact that it is better quality than the drinking water that is coming through your tap. The various forms of communication that we have had with the community have always alluded to that. As Amit said, I think the perception of re-use is probably the main priority or the main issue, regardless of whether it is for irrigation or other purposes. We just found it very useful to take it that extra step.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Just to step back a bit, with the Beverley Park water re-use project, is it predominantly used on the golf course or will it be rolling out on the golf course?

**Mr CHANAN:** It will be all councils parks and ovals.

**Mr WOODS:** But the plant itself is actually situated on the golf course.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So how many kilometres of piping were required?

**Mr CHANAN:** The only piping is from the golf club to one of our reserves which is just across the road and to Jubilee Oval which is about 700 metres away, and we are using our existing stormwater conduits to lay that pipe, we do not have to dig the road again, but for the rest of our sporting facilities we are using council tankers. We fill them up and then we have on-site storage.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Is it on line at the moment?

**Mr CHANAN:** There was a smaller capacity plant on line and operated for about five months but we have stopped that because we want to start constructing the final plant.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** You did mention the megalitres. What would be the capacity?

**Mr CHANAN:** One megalitre a day.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Is it an STP or is it a smaller one?

**Mr CHANAN:** It is not a full scale STP. What we are talking about is something of the size of a shipping container. Technology has evolved so much that you can get a compact STP which is available. It

comes on the back of a truck, you place it on top of your sewer pipe and it starts operating within a matter of a few weeks and you can produce up to a megalitre from a plant of that size.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** The cost - in your submission you say the contribution of council was \$600,000, a grant of \$650,000. Was there another grant as well on top of that?

**Mr CHANAN:** That is right, yes.

**Mr WOODS:** Another million dollars.

**Mr CHANAN:** Another million dollars on top of that.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** And that was from?

**Mr CHANAN:** The State Government.

**Mr WOODS:** Additional funding. The megalitre is adequate to provide irrigation for Kogarah's sports fields. In discussion with general managers or directors at larger councils who would feel perhaps that that is fine for Kogarah because we are a smaller area, there is no reason why you cannot have several of these things for a larger area and each could provide a megalitre a day, that type of thing.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So a megalitre a day, how much would your parks require? Recognising that it does rain occasionally, how much water would you need to irrigate your parks generally?

**Mr CHANAN:** We have done a very detailed breakdown analysis of all our parks' demands and at the moment our peak demands are around 700 kilolitres a day. It is not even one megalitre. We have the capacity in excess of what we need, but with the recycled water also we want to increase the efficiency of our irrigation system as well, so council is working with the Co-operative Centre for Irrigation Futures, which is based at the University of Western Sydney, to look at how we can better manage our irrigation systems as well. So it is not just the fact that we can provide a whole lot of water. We want to make sure that we are using that water efficiently. There are a couple of PhD students already working on those urban irrigation issues with us.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** A megalitre of water is very small. It is not a lot of water, so it is interesting that you can utilise that. Is that without supplementary water from anywhere else?

**Mr CHANAN:** That is correct.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** That is quite amazing, and to supply irrigation of course.

**Mr CHANAN:** At this stage that is what we have, yes.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Have you also applied for the Federal community water grants and been successful with them?

**Mr CHANAN:** We did apply and unfortunately we were not successful in getting Federal funding.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Also your submission discusses fees and charges. How are your fees and charges compared to local government areas and what is your policy in relation to the use of facilities by groups outside your council area who use your facilities?

**Mr WOODS:** Kogarah Council decided only a few years ago to delete fees and charges. We do not charge any sports clubs for using our fields. It was a political decision at the time.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** With what impact?

**Mr WOODS:** That is right. We obviously have associations and clubs wanting to use our fields because they are free. It has not had too much of an impact because it maximised the usage of these fields anyway. The same clubs had been using the majority of our fields for decades and there is not much room to move, not

much flexibility in those things. It has not had too much of an impact, although where we can squeeze clubs in or social groups in, we do.

I suppose the results of deteriorating surfaces and so forth have made us rethink those things over the last couple of years. So we are starting to fall back on social users, non-competition on these fields, but at the end of the day everyone is keen to use fields at Kogarah because they are free. There are obvious positive political ramifications of that but in terms of what it would bring in though is perhaps minimal. The fees and charges that we did have on our fields would only go some way to providing additional facilities and so forth. If we were to go back that way, we would obviously be looking at increasing those. I would imagine council would look at increasing fees.

**Mr GREENE MP:** You would have been lucky to receive \$50,000 a year?

**Mr WOODS:** That is right, very minimal.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** How much does it cost per megalitre?

**Mr CHANAN:** To produce the water?

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Yes.

**Mr CHANAN:** It is costing us about \$1.65 a kilolitre.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** There seems to be a general feeling in all the submissions about the need to co-ordinate information or data about the state of sportsgrounds around the State. Who do you feel should co-ordinate that? Do you think there should be a peak body co-ordinating that information or the data? Do you have any suggestions as to who that should be?

**Mr WOODS:** In terms of collecting, and I suppose driving those decisions, yes, it should be a peak body. The reason I say that is in terms of regional planning, management and collection of data, all of the things that will be required for the appropriate outcome, it is difficult enough amongst individual councils in the same region. That has been attempted over the years with a number of things, apart from sportsground usage or recreation, and it is difficult and I think you would need something or someone or a body to drive it.

**Mr GREENE MP:** One of the other issues that has been raised is the potential involvement of school grounds and the co-operation between local schools, the Department of Education and local government authorities to try and upgrade school facilities and potentially bring them on line into council areas. Have you got a comment on that?

**Mr WOODS:** I think that is the only way to go. In terms of Kogarah, we have no more open space for sportsgrounds. There is the balance of various forms of recreation that you have obviously been told about and are aware of, and the only way we have got to go is into schools. Again, it is difficult and we would need someone to actually lead and administer that on behalf of councils at State Government level with schools. It is difficult and you have obviously heard about the issues there in terms of public liability and the differing cultures or personalities at each of the schools and at each of the councils. So it would be good if there was a uniform way of working through that process. But definitely for Kogarah that is the only available open space that we have.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Just to conclude that point, schools however do use your grounds?

**Mr WOODS:** That is right.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Consistently throughout the weeks?

**Mr WOODS:** That is right, yes. Apart from the sports clubs, schools are obviously our next biggest user and increasing. The other thing, apart from schools, social or non-competition groups are increasing as well. We have large numbers of informal groups that turn up on weekends, perhaps of an evening, and use the grounds. 90 per cent of the time most of our sportsgrounds or squares are being used by whatever level of user.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Going to back to the re-use project, a bit of a passion of mine, was it primary or secondary contact that DEC is requiring and what quality do you have?

**Mr CHANAN:** The standards are called Guidelines for Use of Effluent by Irrigations. But what we have put in as objectives for our particular plant in terms of some biological objectives are a bit more stringent than even the DEC standards, which are called the Guidelines for use of Effluent by Irrigation.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So it can be used on areas where people would have a contact sport?

**Mr CHANAN:** That is right. That was the reason why we did that, because we are using it on Jubilee Oval, as well as other sporting fields that we have for rugby league and rugby union, contact sports, a lot of falling on the ground. That is why we wanted to make sure that any perceived risk should also be managed and that is why we decided to have stringent controls for biological parameters as well.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** And it will eventually be rolled out to irrigate your other parks, your passive recreation spaces, is that right?

**Mr WOODS:** That is the plan at this stage.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** That would be more picnic areas, playgrounds, toddlers running around?

**Mr WOODS:** That is why we have gone for the better quality water than currently what we are drinking. I think that is what we have to do. It is better quality water than is coming through the tap.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So effectively what is being irrigated onto your passive parks at the moment?

**Mr WOODS:** Exactly.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I like the way that your strategic focus is looking at sporting grounds across the State and looking at having an audit of what is there and what kind of parks are using what model, and also getting back to the pocket park, what we noticed in a question we asked other people as well was looking at training facilities rather than passive recreation that it is now, no ball games but it could be used for fitness training for your soccer. Is there any thought of that for your area?

**Mr WOODS:** The concerns we have there I suppose are that again it would involve the community consultation process. We would have to bring the neighbouring residents on board with those things. It is the balance of the various types of recreation that we have. They are the two issues I suppose. It is bringing the neighbouring residents or the adjoining residents on board with the change of use of that site. They are used to nice, quiet, passive recreational use of that area, there could be bushland adjoining, all of those things, and the next minute they have got training, and winter sports obviously need lighting as well. That is the other issue. Lighting, parking, pedestrians, noise, all the issues that come with training will come to your local neighbourhood park that you have been living next to for 30 years. That is the issue.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Also what struck me with your submission on sports was your statement that you do not ask any club to pay. Out our way in Penrith they do pay. There is obviously the Department of Sport and Recreation grants that require dollar for dollar. How are you finding that rolling out in Kogarah? What is the expectation of putting the contribution dollar for dollar for any funding or grants that might be available if they are getting the ground for free?

**Mr WOODS:** It really has not impacted in that way. Council's general funds are used. We have a good set-up with our sports clubs where we regularly communicate with them, we have a sports forum, our staff assist them with sport grant funding applications and so forth. Each application that goes through is supported by our staff and funding. Those projects tend to be fairly minimal anyway. We are talking \$20,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000 at each time, so it is not a big deal.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So there has not been any impact from that on the clubs?

**Mr WOODS:** No, there has not. You asked the question before, and it has been very positive obviously. Apart from the fact that they are not paying anything, the raffles, the canteen, those things that parents work very hard to put together, now can go back to the facilities and grounds and whatever else, and so it has obviously been a very positive thing for Kogarah.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Reference was made in your submission to the potential role of sports clubs in managing playing surface quality and monitoring of playing conditions. How does the council currently negotiate and co-ordinate sporting activities and sportsground usage with sporting clubs and does that cause any conflict?

**Mr WOODS:** There is always potential for conflict, in that clubs are growing at varying rates. Kogarah will have a report that will go to council in coming weeks for the first time suggesting that we allocate grounds in terms of numbers of the clubs. Before it has been traditionally a certain club has had a certain field, where over the years perhaps some clubs have declined in numbers and some have grown. It is realised it is about time we need to do something about that. The report will be suggesting that grounds be allocated in terms of numbers at the club. We have just asked for a whole range of information from the clubs, numbers, times, dates. It is always difficult to get that information from clubs, and hopefully we are getting the truth, we are getting the right information through so we can make informed decisions. That is where we are at the moment.

Again, the parents are running these things and we understand that. They put a lot of time into it, as we are told on a regular basis. There are very strong lobbying groups, as you can imagine, as well. There is a lot of people, there is a lot of parents involved. I am regularly down on sports fields with our local members and councillors trying to sort through the issues. Clubs want a bit more space over here, they have got a bit more space over there, we feel they have got this and that, or if they have not got that, what is going on, so it is all of that. We are in the middle, and our parks manager and the staff involved in it are caught up with the issues of sportsground management, and that is developing and becoming more of an issue than obviously it was ten years ago.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** And also with the powers of delegation, that is your job.

**Mr WOODS:** Exactly.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Kogarah Oval, who plays there?

**Mr WOODS:** The St George Dragons lease that from council and we have some schools that use it for sporting athletic carnivals, the actual main field itself, athletic carnivals, various other representative--

**Mr GREENE MP:** And junior league?

**Mr WOODS:** That is right, and junior league, and various other representative groups. So it is not just the St George Dragons that use that. We have playing fields surrounding the oval itself, Kogarah Park playgrounds and so forth, but it is used primarily by the Dragons.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** This is a question I have been asking other people that have given submissions. With the plan of management of that area is there any thought of increasing the usage?

**Mr WOODS:** There could be. There is the potential.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** What is its management structure?

**Mr WOODS:** In terms of managing Jubilee Oval itself?

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Yes.

**Mr WOODS:** We meet regularly with the board from St George Dragons.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** They have the lease?

**Mr WOODS:** Yes, they have the lease and they have had the lease for many years and I imagine that will continue.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Since 1950?

**Mr WOODS:** Exactly.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** How long does the lease go for?

**Mr WOODS:** It goes for another nine years, but we are looking at reviewing that lease currently. \$15 million has been allocated over the last two years towards development of Jubilee Park. The third stage of that is about to commence. So in six months time there would have been close to \$15 million State and Federal Government money put into Jubilee Oval. It is a significant facility for Kogarah and as a result we are reviewing the leasing license.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** What happens in summer?

**Mr WOODS:** In summer it is not used a lot, Jubilee Oval itself.

**Mr GREENE MP:** It did have summer soccer there but there were problems.

**Mr WOODS:** We had issues with that.

**Mr GREENE MP:** They are looking at some other options at the moment.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** You utilise summer to recover the grass.

**Mr WOODS:** That is right. It would be good if we could do that with all of our sports fields and I imagine most councils are in the same boat.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** As part of the redevelopment, was that mainly infrastructure or playing surface?

**Mr WOODS:** Infrastructure.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Playing surface?

**Mr WOODS:** Minimal.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**SHARON RUTH FINGLAND**, Assistant Director, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Limited (WSROC), 30 Cumberland Avenue, Castle Hill, affirmed and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 333 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** That is correct.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Did you receive an invitation to attend before this Committee?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** I did.

**Mr GREENE MP:** In light of the fact that you have made a submission, would you like to make an opening statement before we ask you some questions with regard to that submission?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Yes, I would like to, thank you. The basis of our submission essentially was trying to draw out some of the issues that are particularly relevant to Greater Western Sydney, the area which I represent,

which encompasses an area of one in eleven of the Australian population or 1.8 million people. It is an area that has experienced an incredible amount of growth over the last decade and it is proposed that it will accommodate over half the population growth in New South Wales over the next 20 years, some 600,000 people. Yet many parts of our region are still having to deal with backlogs and continued under-investment in infrastructure provision. I always talk about open space and sportsgrounds as being human service infrastructure and that is certainly something that is at great risk in terms of the backlog in our region still. It has been for many years and I think it will remain so.

We are concerned that as more urban consolidation and urban expansion takes place in Western Sydney the distribution of parks and playing fields will become more crucial to serve the needs of all age groups, but particularly young people, since they have less and less outdoor space associated with their homes in which to gain exercise. We would argue that in assessing the open space needed for the future community, consideration should be given to widening the definition of the need for open space as involving more than simply the supply of space to exercise or play organised games. The social and environmental contributions made by properly designed and located open space provides benefits beyond easily defined and quantifiable active uses. We would argue that open space should be planned to accommodate needs which complement and reinforce diverse recreation provision.

We would argue that there are three major areas that should be considered in the formulation of any open space plan, the recreational needs, but also the social and environmental requirements of the area, and in terms of the social goals it is not just the provision of recreation opportunity. We believe that access is an important consideration, community focus, the history or the heritage of an area, the identity of a particular area and education. They are all factors that come into play here.

We also recognise that there can be conflicting objectives in the provision of recreation activities in order to protect environmental values, and councils in our region have been attempting to match the recreation focus with the reservation of sufficient space within all categories of open space to meet environmental goals. It is a difficult balance.

We would argue that the assessments of the quantity of open space in the older established areas of Western Sydney actually often point to a shortfall in active open space provision, inadequate distribution of open space relative to the population and the need for a minimum optimum size of parks for maintenance purposes. There are also a number of factors which influence the type of recreation provision required. It is not just the population age groups, but also there are differences in terms of gender, the length of time residents have lived in a local government area, ethnicity, educational qualifications, the hours they work, their incomes, the type of dwellings that are in the area and vehicle ownership.

A particular concern in our region is the lengthening periods of participation in sports that in the past were only conducted in either the winter or summer seasons. This overlap in demand is tending now to cause undue wear on sports fields and it is a very difficult thing for our councils to handle.

We have set out some design principles that we think are important in terms of designing sports complexes. We think they should be capable of accommodating future changes in sporting activities which reflect community need. Where possible we should group together activities to maximise land efficiency and reduce embellishment costs through economies of scale, in order to maximise use of amenities and allow for shared use of facilities, car parks and so forth, and where possible sportsgrounds should utilise flood prone land and retention basins in the form of waste disposal sites. WSROC has done some work in the past in relation to the use of these areas, but there are problems that arise with that and we do recognise that embellishment and site selection can play a major role in reducing maintenance requirements. So getting that sort of balance between using land that is not particularly usable for anything else and assuming that it can be used for a sportsground is not always an easy thing to do.

Obviously, use of drainage land can reduce the land take of residential land and reduce land purchase, which is an important feature nowadays, but there are problems that have resulted from dual use of land in the past, in that the provision of open space has lacked variety, there is a poor distribution of open space throughout our release areas, limited usability of the resulting reserves for recreation purposes, destruction of vegetation and bushland habitats, drainage and hydraulic design parameters inappropriate for sites and there is a lack of consistency in the application of planning and design principles.

There have been a number of deficiencies that have been earmarked in the way that councils in our region have been dealing with open space in the past and some of the problems are associated with the lack of upfront funding with section 94 funds in order to acquire land, infrastructure, works and embellishment. It is a particular problem for councils in new release areas, because contributions lag behind development and local government cannot control the timing of the development and consequently the receipt of income. Section 94 does not cover recurrent funding expenses and this can often form a much larger financial burden than the initial capital cost of these services. The large upfront cost of open space land acquisition is becoming a huge issue for our councils with the land prices soaring. Due to the absence or at best limited control over the timing of the developments it is generally not possible to prioritise expenses through section 94 funds in a strategic way. Local government does experience significant difficulties in levying contributions for Crown development and the loss of this contribution can only be made up from non-section 94 sources.

In our region there is generally a much wider open space provision in terms of size in the newer residential areas of Western Sydney as a result of the section 94 contributions than is found in the older established areas of the region, but the issue of retrofitting open space in older areas which are undergoing urban renewal is proving difficult for local government in the region to resolve, acting on its own. As a result of increasing levels of litigation, councils have recently been subjected to extensive insurance claims and while the number of claims is now reducing, local government is put in a very difficult position in relation to the provision of playgrounds and sportsgrounds, maintenance of equipment and so forth.

I would just like to conclude by saying that given high population densities and the stresses of modern life, along with increased leisure time, the value of metropolitan open space cannot be overstated, but the issues for our councils are the maintenance of the quality of the open space and the conflicting priorities between the maintenance for safety and bushland conservation.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Just picking up one of the points you have raised there, the week before last the Committee was looking at a number of areas, one of which was Penrith, and we had some discussions at Mark Leckie Reserve at St Clair in regard to the use of retention basins for sporting fields and one of the problems that was raised there was the fact that when these retention bases were constructed and used for sporting fields, and I think in that case it was done in the 1970s as part of a Landcom development, they basically took the top straight off, which was the subsoil, and left clay type substances in which now there are very short root of grass, et cetera, and that has presented a number of problems. You were talking about the benefits of these retention basins. How would you address those problems? Similarly, that afternoon, after leaving Penrith, the Committee went to Liverpool and similar thoughts were raised there.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** I did say there were some drawbacks. As a principle it is very good to use drainage land wherever possible, but just to assume that all sports facilities should go into drainage land I think is a major mistake. You have to understand the structure of the soil in the way you are building, the nature of the riparian vegetation you may need to replace, how much money is going to be spent in capital cost of provision to provide adequate drainage and so forth. So it is not a simple situation of just saying use drainage land for open space because it cannot be used for anything else. There are a lot of issues involved there and particularly the longer term maintenance issues are of considerable concern.

A decade or so ago councils were very much encouraged to develop land in these areas and leave the other land more suitable for residential development simply to be used for that, but I think there have been problems that have arisen, not least because of using the higher land for residential development, particularly as open consolidation happens. The urban run-off that is resulting from the high level of impermeable material that you have on the upper parts of the land is actually increasing urban run-off into these lowland areas and increasing the problems that the councils are finding. So there is a very fine balance there.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Because the water gets there a lot of quicker because of the efficiency of the stormwater which creates problems?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Exactly. Speaking as a town planner, I have always argued that you need to get a balance between having some of the open space at the top end of the catchment so that some more water is absorbed higher up in the catchment rather than letting it all run down and sour out creeks and whatever.

**Mr GREENE MP:** The other thing I noticed in driving through Bonnyrigg is that there are a lot of areas that are not used for sports fields but are just open areas, if there is such a term, desolate grass areas, between housing estates, so there was a non-use of those areas.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Exactly.

**Mr GREENE MP:** No trees, nothing.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Exactly. I refer to them as areas of open and space, and that is all you can describe them as, no quality whatsoever, and those particular areas generally require a huge amount of maintenance even if they are not used for anything, which is an incredible problem. Often councils in the past did not think terribly strategically about the location of open spaces, so often those areas of open space are in areas that are not accessible in terms of the community being able to use them and they are often areas that are just there because they were not much use for anything else, but that does not necessarily make them useful as sportsgrounds or even passive recreation areas.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So basically it is the planning that needs to be looked at in the development of these greenfield sites.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** I believe so, yes, and I think that councils in more recent years have been much more serious about the way that they have taken on open space. They have not just been prepared to accept any ad hoc piece of land that has not been able to be used for anything else as open space. They are getting more strategic in their understanding that open space can play a much more important role, as I have tried to say in our submission, that is much wider than just simply somewhere to kick a ball around.

**Mr GREENE MP:** And also the provision of soils that are appropriate.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Absolutely.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Ian Aquilina Reserve is one area that comes to mind in which there is a lovely open space, but there are not too many trees around, and I am just quoting that as an example from your area obviously, being at Blacktown. One of the other things that has been discussed, particularly in terms of industry areas, and I note your point about developed areas in WSROC, do you believe that in your area there is a possibility for work between councils and schools for the use of land that they have?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Certainly as a principle, and as a planner who has worked a lot on developing new release areas, I have always argued that it is very important to co-locate facilities wherever possible to be able to maximise their use. But one of the difficulties that you do find, particularly in new release areas, is that a council can spend a lot of time working with other agencies in terms of developing master plans or structure plans for release areas, co-locating facilities, making sure that the pedestrian routes and cycleways and parking and everything else is all worked out and then something major can happen, like the Department of Education can suddenly decide, "Well, we are not going to give you that school site after all". In Baulkham Hills this happened four times in West Pennant Hills Valley. The school site changed, which affected the whole structure of the planning for the area, and in the end no school was built in West Pennant Hills Valley at all. That was an enormous problem for the council trying to get a decent plan for that area.

The second thing, if I could just add, in terms of schools is the issue that I raised in terms of councils having difficulty in getting section 94 contributions for Crown development. This actually means that if you provide a lot of your sportsgrounds facilities in conjunction with schools, there is no additional money to pay for the parking which is required. That is an issue as well, and it can be. I suppose councils are always talking about cost shifting but that is a small example of that.

**Mr GREENE MP:** What we were talking about is schools that have sportsgrounds already, not in greenfield sites, in older areas where they do have sporting fields and trying to access and use those. Do you see there is potential for that?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** There is certainly potential for that, although another drawback can be that whilst the Department of Education might say it is a good principle and councils might agree that it is a good principle--

**Mr GREENE MP:** We wish they would say that but we are waiting for this afternoon to ask them.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Yes, we are waiting for the question.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Sometimes the decision is up to the school principal and that can vary, that can be a limitation.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** In your submission you were talking about a need for co-ordinating information on the state of sports fields and usage and what have you. Do you feel there is a need for that information to be co-ordinated in a central body and do you have any suggestions as to how that should be done?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Certainly I think there is a need because individual councils tend to work as islands and they do not actually know what is happening outside their borders, which is a problem, although in WSROC we try to get around that particular issue. Secondly, in terms of when you are looking at the provision of sporting facilities, I do not think there is one council in Western Sydney that provides a wide range of sporting facilities in terms of all of the codes. Some facilities are provided in some local government areas, others in others, and there is recognition that people move between different local government areas, in the same way that you have home and away teams. Clearly that could lead to a situation, without some sort of overall co-ordination, that some codes may be well catered for. I know for many years there was an argument in Western Sydney that sporting facilities were very much geared towards the needs of males and not females, although I think that balance is actually changing a bit now with girls playing soccer and all these sort of things, but there are a lot of issues there.

The third thing I would like to mention as a reason for it is I think it is really important when you are dealing with multicultural communities that you have a better understanding of the specific needs of those multicultural communities, which may differ across a region, and therefore I think there should be some body that co-ordinates that.

The other reason I think there should be an overall body is that, particularly with environmental issues such as global warming occurring, there needs to be more research done into how issues like playing fields, the issues of water, issues of maintenance, issues of appropriate vegetation, all of these need to be thought about more and it would help councils if there could be one body that could actually provide some more guidance in terms of all of this.

The final one is that WSROC has done a lot of research and made submissions to inquiries about urban salinity in our region. It is an issue that has been highly neglected, particularly urban salinity which is affecting areas like playing fields, and it is raising issues in terms of insurance and risk. That is another major issue for a region like ours that an individual council would have difficulty with.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Salinity in Western Sydney is worse than any other place in New South Wales.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Yes, it is.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Including my electorate. It is interesting that you did mention in your submission and just a while ago about plant selection and grass species. Has WSROC done any research into different species or have you had consultants in looking at different grass species and turf for your playing fields?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Not specifically in relation to playing fields. As I mentioned, we have done some research in relation to salinity and I think it may have talked a little bit about that but it would be fair to say we have not really done anything in great depth about that issue, no.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Coming from an electorate within the WSROC council, you have noted in your submission the need for a regional approach and there are aspects in your submission about section 94 and being local government area based, but with the review of section 94 and being able to do a cross-council plan, is there anything further you would like to add from WSROC in relation to what they have discussed in relation to either the Metropolitan Strategy or the changes to section 94?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Firstly in terms of section 94, the issue of being able to levy across local government boundaries is an important one. From the point of view of sportsgrounds it is important because quite often a large proportion of the drainage catchment can be in one local government area and the actual facility can be on the border. So that is a particular issue.

In relation to the Metropolitan Strategy, one of the things that I would like to comment in relation to that is that whilst large areas of land have been set aside in Western Sydney for Western Sydney Parklands, one of the submissions that WSROC has made is that whilst that is a very large area of land, it is WSROC's councils' views that there should be greater connectivity to that open space land and the inclusion of more open space corridors to actually link into that, one in terms of conservation of the vegetation that is in those areas, particularly along the creek systems, but also because local councils in Western Sydney now are spending a lot of their resources on building cycle ways and pedestrian networks to try to link together the facilities within their local government areas. More extensions in these areas would actually assist in their efforts to try to reduce the awful level of car dependency that we have in our area and try to get people to exercise more and to actually access these facilities. So that sort of connectivity, that is why I was talking about access, is a really important thing for open space as well.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I have discussed with the council linking the Great River Walk to the parkland, the river, Western Sydney Parklands in parallel and how you get that kind of connectivity.

The other thing you mentioned in relation to the planning for open space, and quality open space, is you outlined the traditional retention basins and high tension wires. In Penrith we have got it all. Is there any discussion within WSROC and across the councils about planning to have quality open space, not just open space, a retention basin, or the mistake, as it was outlined in Glenmore Park, of having the open space under the high tension lines which they cannot use so there is a negative open space?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** WSROC over a number of years has actually been pointing to the lack of high quality open space in Western Sydney, whether it is in the form of playing fields or in terms of the lack of reasonable picnic spaces where people can meet. In relation to that particular issue I think it is particularly important in multiculturally diverse regions such as Western Sydney that the whole provision of open space is looked at in a much broader sense in terms of its education function, in terms of its social development function and in terms of its environmental protection qualities.

We spoke earlier about in the past open space being open and nothing else, it had no quality. One of the community development tools, for example, in councils like Fairfield and Liverpool, is that they run sports activities to actually bring different cultural groups together. It has been identified that whilst there may be quite a degree of interaction between specific cultural groups in Western Sydney, particularly those that do not have good English language skills, there is very little interaction between groups and so sporting facilities are important, but also civic spaces. High quality open space in Western Sydney is at a premium.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I couldn't agree with you more. There is about 50 squares adjacent to the railway station at Penrith that is surplus land that is being negotiated at the moment. Quality civic open space in an area like Penrith is probably a quarter of a pocket park, apart from the river. There is no park in Penrith, apart from Jamieson, which is for sport, but civic space, I couldn't agree with you more.

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Some of the research that we have done in WSROC points to the fact that different cultural groups view open space in a very different way. We ran a project a few years ago called People's Places and looked at retrofitting of open space in Cabramatta, in Fairfield, in Katoomba, in Blacktown and in Auburn, and what was very interesting from the survey work that was done in that was to see how different groups actually viewed open space. Their aspirations for open space were very different and I think that needs to be understood. One of the things that was interesting in Cabramatta, for example, was the older Anglo-Saxon community which lived there, when asked what sort of provision they would like in their open space, were very much talking about specific facilities like playground equipment and seats and things like that, whereas particularly the communities from a South East Asian background were talking about experience - sound, water, quality, smell, colour. There is a great deal more work that needs to be thought about in relation to some of these differences.

**Mr GREENE MP:** One of the other things that has come up is the Department of Sport and Recreation grants, where they have regional grants. If there was an increase in the quantum of those grants, would your councils be able to match a dollar for dollar arrangement, would they be able to match those if they were increased?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** I do not know that I am really equipped to be able to talk on behalf of all our councils in relation to that, but I would caution that even with an increase in grants some of the other environmental issues that are emerging may well reduce the amount of it because they would have to spend it on more effective drainage, as we talked about earlier, and some of those things. It might still cause some problems.

Certainly, if you look at the findings of the Percy Allen inquiry into the financial sustainability of local government, it is finding difficulties in dealing with managing the assets that it has at the moment, particularly the infrastructure that is in the ground. This is a considerable burden on councils. So I think that should be thought about when you are thinking about trying to get--

**Mr GREENE MP:** What you are basically saying is that because you are increasing the amount that you receive, you have obviously got increased depreciation costs in the maintenance thereof?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** Exactly.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** You mentioned older established areas, which is another particular passion of mine. Within the brownfield sites within those older established areas has there ever been any discussion or research about having a city-wide section 94 plan to encompass those brownfield sites across the WSROC councils?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** There is certainly research that is going on at the moment. In fact, WSROC are involved with the University of New South Wales in an ARC grant funded project to look at socially sustainable urban renewal in those areas. What has been highlighted is the very great difficulty in retrofitting open space in those areas and what financial mechanisms need to be thought about. The research is in its early stages but it is something that we are actually seeking to tease out some sort of solution.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Just getting down to what should be there if you had the money, coming from Penrith City Council in my previous life, having a city-wide section 94 plan and the nexus that is needed in those brownfield sites, we got there in the end on a number of categories. Is there any discussion across the WSROC in regard to the fact that within all those WSROC council areas there is a great deal of brownfield, it is not just greenfield in Western Sydney?

**Mrs FINGLAND:** There certainly has been discussion and some of the subregional planning exercise that is going on at the moment is trying to deal with that issue. But one of the very great difficulties is whilst you might have the mechanism in terms of section 94, there is the issue of site amalgamation, because in order to retrofit, particularly in sports field provision, it needs to be of a reasonable size and who is the body who is going to be responsible for doing that site amalgamation to make open space happen is one of the issues. It is not only in terms of the cost of doing it, but it is also what level of responsibility, because it is a local council. At the moment local councils find great difficulty in achieving something like that.

**(The witness retired)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**BERYL JAMIESON**, General Manager, Asset Management, NSW Department of Education and Training, Bridge Street, Sydney, affirmed and examined, and

**WILLIAM CHARLES ANDERSON**, Assistant Director Strategic Initiatives, NSW Department of Education and Training, Bridge Street, Sydney, sworn and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 333 and 334 which relate to the

examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Ms JAMIESON:** Yes.

**Mr ANDERSON:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Would you like to make any opening comments?

**Ms JAMIESON:** We are here and we can only really talk on behalf of Government schools to this Committee. We have a large number of sports fields in Government schools, primarily in high schools. These fields are not always up to competition standard. Sometimes they have been built to nearly competition standard. They might be a bit of an odd size, depending upon the site. There are existing relationships between many of our high schools and local government and other sporting bodies for use of the fields outside school hours, and indeed the other way around, from the school to community facilities to use them for community sport.

We see our schools definitely as part of the community in which they live and they generally see themselves in that way. Most of the deals are worked out on a local level, in fact all on a local level. Our principals are seen as the site manager and the relationship is usually between that principal, that site and that sporting event. Sometimes those relationships do not endure past personalities and sometimes they go on for a long time.

We have an existing policy document about the community use of schools. It is well suited to some arrangements, but slightly less well suited to sporting arrangements because it does not cover long periods of time and we think that when people are making commitments over long periods of time they need a bit more certainty than that.

We see benefits at looking at the use of school sporting facilities in relation to community use and we would like to work with that. We would like to be part of developing a robust environment for that to work. We do not currently think we have a robust environment for that to work in.

We are happy to answer the questions. We see a bit of a future for this. There are issues on the school side about security and fencing and all of those things which are important but we think we could work those through over a period of time.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am happy to hear that, because it is one of the things that has come through in a number of submissions, particularly those from councils, also Soccer NSW this morning, and they are looking to run a pilot program in Sutherland Shire where they have identified six or seven schools as having potential to be able to use school grounds and work with the council on that. You indicated that the principal tends to have the role of site manager. What sort of encouragement is the Department of Education prepared to give to school principals, and even to school regions, to work with the their local government areas?

**Ms JAMIESON:** I think we need to provide them with a framework to work in so that they understand the issues around insurance, what it might cost them if it is going to go on being used more extensively, what some of the limitations might be. Limitations might be after hours lighting, sometimes DAs are required around the parking arrangements, so working through those issues, making sure the fields get top dressed and there is an adequate fee paying relationship, so that the schools are not making a killing on the event but it is not actually wearing out the school's grounds without thinking about the students, making sure the school has the first call on the school grounds, working out how a dispute mechanism might work, working out the kind of licensing arrangements. All of those things we think we would have to start almost from the beginning and look at and we have not done that consistently. So we think we should provide them with more assistance in working that through and some encouragement to do it, so it is telling them it is a good idea.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So you would be prepared to encourage that sort of co-operation. I notice your comment in regard to fee structures, et cetera. There would be a recognition, and I cannot say categorically but certainly generally, that schools use local council grounds, whether it be for CHS sport on Tuesdays Wednesdays and Thursdays, or PSSA sports on Fridays, they use those generally at no cost to the school, and rightly so. Would there be a recognition in constructing a fee policy with councils of that existing relationship?

**Ms JAMIESON:** The students at those schools primarily have parents who are ratepayers in those areas. So the kind of use as a community facility seems to relate to that. In relation to the schools--

**Mr GREENE MP:** Can I just cut in there to say that those same ratepayers also potentially have to pay a fee when the ground is used by their sporting club on the weekends.

**Ms JAMIESON:** I understand that. In relation to the school grounds, the schools in their capital funding and in the construction of the oval, it has been constructed for school use and it is currently funded in a way that is for school use. So the Education Department would be expecting that there would be some financial arrangement that covered the arrangements that were in addition to school use. I will give you an example of this.

Currently, we have been going through a process of fencing some of our schools in highly vulnerable areas. Some of those schools have fenced the oval and some have not, and where they have fenced the oval they generally have not fenced the school from the oval, and that might be something that needs to happen because we would be concerned about security. We would also be concerned about the access to amenities, the toilets and whatever. Sometimes they are going to be okay and be available with the oval and sometimes they are going to be inadequate and some arrangements would have to be undertaken to work that out. If it needed lighting, we generally would not have lighting. So we would need to work out how those things applied.

The Education Department would not be expecting to be paying for those additional things, because our primary concern is about teaching and learning and all that stuff. So that is where we would be wanting to start.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Part of Soccer NSW's submission, and I assume this has come from discussions with Sutherland Council where they were looking to trial this, was in terms of provision of some of those things. They particularly note the security fencing where you may have a perimeter fence, and this may have to be within the perimeter as part of the field, and the provision of change rooms/toilet facilities and also maintenance of the field could be provided by council, because for them to provide a greenfield sporting venue would be a considerably greater cost than providing those facilities on the school ground. That would then have an advantage for the school. If Billabong High School were playing sport there they could actually use those change facilities when they were playing against whoever else.

**Ms JAMIESON:** We are not expecting to make a financial advantage out of it but we are expecting it to be fair and reasonable. The other thing that occurs to me is there is a difference between something that exists now and something that might exist in the future. If we were to go down this path, we might want to rethink what we did in our future sites and how they worked in those arrangements and I think we are open to all those discussions.

**Mr GREENE MP:** So that would be the planning?

**Ms JAMIESON:** Yes, how the facilities might be planned, because we are victims of our own industry. We do what we do, we do it well, but we could think about it differently.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** As the Chairman indicated, Soccer NSW came in with their proposal and it was a win-win for both the councils and the schools. The maintenance, whatever, the school would get that for nothing and it would be a win-win situation. All the submissions indicated that this was something to look towards. They did indicate that they were a little bit concerned about principals changing and different attitudes from principals. Some councils might change their attitudes too from time to time. Would you agree that when sharing facilities, not only would it standardise the playing surface conditions and usage levels, but do you think it would also reduce vandalism in some of the schools?

**Ms JAMIESON:** I think use of facilities nearly always does reduce vandalism and it also gets some kind of ownership relationships, but we would be concerned about the security. Some of the things that people would be concerned about would be the hypodermics and they are also rather interested in the habits of people's dogs on open playing fields. So those sorts of things could become a real irritation to the school and we would want to make sure that we took care of that in the first place.

We think there needs to be a much more formal memorandum of understanding than "We get on very well and we know each other", because we think it should endure past single principals. Otherwise people put in investments and--

**Mr GREENE MP:** Obviously a council is not going to spend \$50,000 putting in a toilet block, dressing room block and next year the principal says you cannot use that any more.

**Ms JAMIESON:** Yes, and we think that would be a good way to go.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** I am pleased to hear that the department is agreeable and is going to encourage the shared use of school facilities, particularly the sporting areas. You did make the comment that a robust environment did not exist at the moment. Could you elaborate on that?

**Ms JAMIESON:** We have got the document called Community Use of Facilities, which is really aimed at people making annual agreements with people to do things, like conduct a ballet class or something in the school. It is not aimed at where another person would put an investment into the process, and the document encourages people to make it annually. Where that does not work, we encourage people to make agreements by licence, but we probably offer less information on how to do that. I think there would be instances where people did very well out of using schools sports facilities, where people did adequately out of it and where people did rather badly out of it. We want to go down a path where everyone gets a good outcome and I think that takes a bit more planning than we have probably done in some arrangements. I think there are probably different arrangements in the country and the city too really, and I think we need to find out what works well and work on it from there.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** The submissions have all brought in an element of planning as well and I note your submission said the same thing. Getting back to planning and planning for schools in an area, say a greenfield site, what is the allocation of land now for, say, secondary or primary schools?

**Ms JAMIESON:** It is generally somewhere between five and seven hectares for a high school, depending on what we are going to do, and it is three for a primary school. We have schools standards about that and that is about the size of the school. As we move down the path of looking at some of the infill arrangements, we often have existing schools with smaller sites. We might have schools that have come down in size or have sold a part of their site. Just in the general wear and tear of grass, we will wear out the grass on an oval, a five hectare site with 800 children on it. So in just keeping it up to the standard, it is really difficult to make that work.

We often are not looking after our sports fields in a way probably which councils look after them. It is seen as an annual event because of how they are used. Where it has worked quite well, there has been a different regime of maintenance on the field. I expect that we would need to do that.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** We have been discussing brownfield sites against greenfield sites. In my area in Penrith there is a range of State high schools and primary schools, some are very old, some are 15, some 20, some 25 years old. Has there been an increase or decrease in the allocation of space in schools?

**Ms JAMIESON:** There has been a standardisation of the allocation of space. In the past we purchased what we could but we now have come to the view of how much we actually need. We entered into an arrangement with a developer recently in a new school that we are building on a smaller site on the understanding that the provision would be made by local government for the use of the site, but that was on an understanding in the first place that it would be shared between us and another school. When that arrangement collapsed, then it did not turn out so well for us in the sense of who would maintain the site. So there is a whole lot of devils in the detail here, and while that looked really good to start with, as it went down the track we felt we kind of lost control of it. In the future, we are not opposed to doing that but we have probably learnt from that process about how we might want to make sure that that worked properly.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** You said the hectares were standardised. How did you come to the three, four--

**Ms JAMIESON:** I have been in my role for a couple of months, so bear with me. We have a unit that

we share with Commerce, which undertakes research on schools and school sites, and we investigate what works and what does not, what is best practice across the country and we investigate the performance of the classrooms and the playing fields, and from that we have come to a determination of the size that they should be. We have also got an idea about how big a school would be and we generally construct a school to the size we think it will end up being in about ten years, which means it is under the size for what we need now and over the size for what it will need to be in about 20 years.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So some of that is green space?

**Ms JAMIESON:** We try and work that out in the first place. The school will have other open spaces apart from playing fields, it will have free playing spaces, it will have places to park vehicles, it will have places for kids' bikes, it will have passive space and active use space, and all of that is worked out within our standard arrangements, but then there is always the market for land and so sometimes we are a bit constrained by that.

**Mr GREENE MP:** In the last decade there has been development by the department of sports high schools. I recognise Endeavour High's success in winning the Right for Life cup for the third time. Being a sports high school, one would think that they would have slightly better sports facilities. Is there an opportunity for a closer relationship for schools such as those with their community in terms of usage?

**Mr ANDERSON:** I guess that sports high schools operate in principle the same way that other high schools do, which is that they develop local relationships whatever it might be, whether it a technology high school, whether it be an arts high school or whether it be a sports high school. Our sports high schools, Westfields, Hunter, Endeavour, Hills, Illawarra, all have local relationships with sporting clubs, whether they be the cricket clubs, the rugby league clubs, the AFL or whatever it might be. I think there are some really good examples, and these examples exist, of schools working in consultation with the local community and local sporting clubs and local councils to make their playing fields available. I have no doubt that in some instances we could probably do it a bit better and we could provide better advice to our principals in relation to strengthening and reinforcing that this opportunity is available, but my understanding is that particularly the sports high schools were working very well with local councils and the local sporting clubs for the use of an interchange of fields.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I note your point that you are encouraging schools to do that and certainly I can see that that is one of the areas--

**Mr ANDERSON:** Clearly we are touching on a lot of the issues. In principle, the department's position would be that it is a good idea and that our schools are parts of councils. It is certainly something that could be achieved. It is a matter of working through the how and what are the issues that each school experiences. I doubt that there would be any directive that schools would have to do this, because schools at the local level know best what their local needs are and what the use of their fields is and when they use it and if they use it of a weekend and so on. So I guess that each school is in a position, with encouragement and with support, to be able to base a decision on what sort of arrangements they can enter into, but we could certainly reinforce that with them.

When we have spoken about some of the issues, I think the critical one is not just the school. There is a group of people who live around the school, the neighbours, who I think sometimes can also be a bit resistant to things happening at the weekend and things happening at night and lights being put up and all those sort of things. So I would just put into the mix that sometimes neighbours are also another factor.

One of the critical factors that the school principal needs to consider is who in fact he deals with. There needs to be a clear pathway established. You cannot just have every sporting club coming to the school and saying, "We would like to use your field for this and we would like to use your field for that". There needs to be some centralised way in which all of that can be managed, and maybe it is the local council and sporting groups that need to work with their council, whether it be church groups or competitive or whatever it might be, to work with the principal to see how the school can best be used.

**Mr GREENE MP:** The comments that we have received so far today indicate that that would need to be a council because the council ultimately is providing the sporting facilities, whether they be to associations or whether they be to individual clubs, but the idea being to take the pressure off the councils in terms of the

over-usage of their ground, whether it is sporting clubs or schools mid week, that the council be able to work up a relationship, and I think we would all agree with you that there needs to be a central point. You do not want the president of the tiddlywinks club coming this week and the president of something else coming the next week, and obviously there would need to be a recognition. Councils have also indicated that whilst they tend to deal with clubs, they also like basically to deal with associations, who are oversight bodies, rather than having specific individuals.

**Mr ANDERSON:** I think one of the issues too is that some of our fields are multi-purpose fields and they are not set up just for rugby league or hockey or whatever, but they are multi-use, which is okay for us at the local level for schools to be able use them in a variety of ways, but sometimes with sporting associations, they require a field that is purely designed for their own needs.

**Ms JAMIESON:** The other thing that we would have to consider in the first place is that some schools have ongoing relationships with an association or a particular sport, and I think we would probably have to work out how that would change over a period of time.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I think that everyone accepts that there are going to be individual relationships between individual schools and whomever, but it is a case of one making sure there is an encouragement, and in fact possibly a bit more than an encouragement, although I am not sure what the stronger word is at the moment, from the department's perspective, but also a recognition that there will be local input into that, because no two schools are the same, as no two councils are the same, as no two sporting organisations are the same.

We have had presentations from different sporting bodies. Some made the comment earlier that in Sutherland Shire there tends to be Sutherland Shire this, that and whatever across all sports, but in the inner city that varies greatly, whether it be Petersham or Randwick cricket club which obviously has different boundaries to the Sutherland cricket club as an example. There are going to be different parameters and that is accepted I think.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**NORMA SHANKIE-WILLIAMS,** Acting Executive Director, Metropolitan Planning, NSW Department of Planning, 22-33 Bridge Street, Sydney, and

**MARK ALEXANDER TAYLOR,** Open Space Program Co-ordinator, NSW Department of Planning, 10 Valentine Avenue, Parramatta, sworn and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 333 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** That is correct.

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Would you like to give an opening address before we ask you some questions?

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** Yes, if that is acceptable, I would like to make a brief opening statement and maybe provide some additional information to the submission that was submitted to the inquiry. I would like to touch on the department's strategic role in terms of planning for recreation are in open space and talk about the department's role in grants and funding of open space and recreation areas and give some information on access and demand for open space in New South Wales.

To start with, the Department of Planning plays a major role in regional open space acquisition, development and funding in Sydney. Through the Sydney Regional Development Fund the department acquires regional open space for transfer to local government or for national parks across the metropolitan area, and, in addition, the department works very closely with local government across New South Wales to ensure that the changing demands for open space and recreation are taken account of in the broader planning process.

Through the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, which I think you have been provided with as part of the documentation for the inquiry, and other regional strategies and subregional strategies which flow from the Metropolitan Strategy, the department has developed specific objectives for open space and these will be further refined in consultation with local government in that regional planning process as it goes on through the months and indeed years.

The department has undertaken specific regional studies, such as the Open Space and Recreation Guidelines for local government - that was back in 1992 and we are hoping to refresh and review that document next year - and developed resources such as the Sydney Open Space Inventory to assist local government and other State agencies to better plan for open space.

In terms of the Metropolitan Strategy, it was released in December 2005 and outlines provisions for Sydney over the next 25 years. One of the major objectives of the strategy is to increase access to quality parks and public places. The strategy includes actions to provide access to regional open space in Western Sydney, improve the quality of regional open space and investigate future options for open space provision and management.

The department is now developing a suite of subregional strategies flowing from the Metropolitan Strategy - there will be ten in all - and a suite of regional strategies for mainly coastal New South Wales, although there is likely to be a strategy for the Sydney to Canberra corridor area. Those strategies in the main cover issues to do with the scale and location of housing and employment growth, but do touch on what makes complete communities and how we should be better planning for complete communities, and that would of course include open space and recreation areas.

The regional strategies will provide clear and detailed guidance on matters of regional significance that is to be reflected in local government's own plans, the LEPs, the local environmental plans, which will flow from the strategic regional plans, and the regional strategies will include actions in relation to consideration of open space and provision of recreational opportunities in the development of these areas.

Not only do we provide that strategic planning guidance context for local government, we also provide specific planning resources for local government, for example the Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Guidelines that I referred to, 1992. We have also amended section 94, which is that part of the Planning Act that allows councils to draw developer contributions in response to development proposals, and we have made this more flexible so that this will assist councils in delivering new sporting and recreational facilities.

We are in the process of simplifying the planning process overall through the issue of the standard LEP template, which is the model that councils will be using henceforth in their new local environmental plans. As part of that new standard LEP, there is a compulsory provision for local government which relates to the community use of educational establishments, which is Clause 29 in the standard instrument, and the key objective of that clause is to allow the use of educational establishments, including their sites and facilities, for other community purposes.

That follows from a Section 117 direction, which is currently number 8. The S.117 direction is that direction under S.117 of the Planning Act for the Minister to guide local governments in their LEP making. The objective of that direction, when councils are making their LEPs, is to ensure that planning controls do not prevent community use of schools.

There are also the new provisions under Part 3A of the Planning Act when a matter is of State or regional significance, the larger development proposals, which is aimed at streamlining the whole approvals process.

I will just touch briefly on financial assistance and grants. The Department of Planning with the SRDF, the Sydney Region Development Fund, has historically bought land for regional open space and it has been transferred to local government to provide active and passive parklands for Sydney residents. Since its inception about 50 years ago, the SRDF has acquired over 35,000 hectares of land for open space and related purposes.

Early on, the open space acquisitions were focussed on the inner areas of Sydney, and, maybe predictably, Sydney Park, Kelly's Bush, areas around the foreshore, but now the current acquisitions are focussed on Western Sydney, with the Western Sydney Parklands comprising some 5,500 hectares of regional park land, servicing the residents of Greater Western Sydney, including Blacktown Fairfield and Liverpool, and the provision of land for the Western Sydney Olympic venues, which continue to operate today, for example the Blacktown Olympic Park. The department is supporting new sporting facilities within the Blacktown Olympic Park with a New South Wales Government commitment of \$20 million, new fields and facilities for soccer, AFL and cricket.

We are also currently focussing on acquisitions around South and Ropes Creek corridors, with some 1500 hectares being acquired for recreation and environmental conservation. In addition, we have the Metropolitan Greenspace Program. The department currently provides \$5.8 million annually in financial assistance to local government projects that involve improving foreshore access, recreation trails, ecological improvements and so on.

The Metropolitan Open Space Team of the department, of which Mark is a member, has developed a city-wide GIS system, an open space inventory, of all public open space and in 2004 we worked with all 43 of the metropolitan local government areas to produce regional recreational demand studies to assist in subregional and regional planning. I think that has been made available to the inquiry.

In 2005 we worked with all 43 metropolitan local government areas again to produce a regional recreational trail network for Sydney, and these recreational trails are becoming increasingly more important I think, particularly in inner city areas where the new acquisition and creation of large sports fields and so forth is becoming increasingly difficult, whereas the linking trails provide opportunities for recreation such as walking, jogging, cycling and so on. So they are becoming increasingly important in the metropolitan area.

In terms of the adequacy of provision of quality sportsgrounds to meet community needs across New South Wales, in 2003 the Sydney region had more than 10,300 hectares of active parks, that is parks containing active sporting facilities, and around 5500 hectares of this is made up sportsgrounds and their ancillary uses. There are more than 9000 parks in Sydney, including almost 1500 active parks. Data from the 2003 open space inventory highlights in terms of the active sports parks that 82 per cent of these are managed directly by local government in Sydney, with about 7 per cent by private entities, 5 per cent managed by State Government trusts, like the Centennial Park Trust, and 1 per cent by State Government departments.

Although the Department of Planning does not provide specific funding to sports field, we do however support recreation and access to greenspace through funding programs. In many cases the department is funding improvements to parks and reserves which include both active sports and passive recreation. Through the Metropolitan Green Space program, the Department of Planning provides financial assistance to projects that involve a range of benefits, including recreational trails, environmental improvements and so on.

Green space funding programs are generally 50/50 with local government and examples of these are: the \$1.8 million through Metropolitan Greenspace Program to deliver improvements to open space and recreational areas with a focus on these regional trails; \$0.5 million of the \$2 million per annum for five years for the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access program to provide upgrades and recreational facilities and improve public access to Sydney Harbour; \$1.5 million a year for the coastline cycle way to extend coastal bike paths; and \$2 million over four years for the Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program to enhance the natural environment and boost recreational opportunities and public access.

I could go on to talk about the access to and demands for open space. It is another brief bit of assisting information, if you would like me to do that, and then I will conclude my opening remarks. Is that going to be useful?

**Mr GREENE MP:** Whatever you are comfortable with.

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** The department prepared regional recreation demand studies in 2004 in consultation with local government to identify what the future demands for open space in Sydney will be, including demands for active open space. The study has had input from over 120 local and State Government planners and reviewed over 400 existing studies and plans for recreation and open space prepared by local

government and various State agencies.

As a result the department recognises the need to balance between structured (ie organised sports) and unstructured recreation (eg. Walking, cycling and so on). There is evidence of strong growth in individual non-competitive recreation options, including walking and cycling, which I am sure we all do. Across the city the highest demand for recreational opportunities are improving not only for sporting uses, they are for an expansion of the recreational trails network, including the facilities for families in urban parks, (to be able to enjoy picnics and being outdoors), continuing to improve sporting field infrastructure and improving and managing the current access to water.

Whilst facilities for large family gatherings have got universal appeal, the decline of some of those traditional sports, such as lawn bowls and tennis, presents new opportunities shall we say. Bowling greens have already been adapted to junior soccer fields, for example, and dog walking areas in different parts of the city. So we have adapted these open spaces to new demands, and new uses that the community is seeking.

Currently, we are facing both an increase in the active ageing population and the continuing demands from young people for traditional team based sports. It is a real demand to meet the needs of both these user groups, the active aged or ageing and the increasingly active younger people coming through. There has been a particular rise in soccer in this country as a result of the World Cup and so on.

Despite generally falling national participation rates for organised team sports, based on demands expressed to local government, Sydney continues to have a strong demand for playing fields. Recent registration data is now showing new growth, but the demand is not uniform across the city. The demand is lower on the central coast, but higher on the northern beaches and in the inner west. Promotion and the growth of youth participation in sports such as soccer, as I mentioned before, are one factor fuelling this demand.

Various resident surveys in North Sydney have shown that the use of sports facilities is high. For example, 66 per cent of adults and 77 per cent of children in Warringah have used outdoor sports facilities in the last year. (Warringah Council report in 2001) so it is a wee bit outdated. It may be more than that now. At the upper level the supply of national and regional recreational facilities and open spaces in Sydney has improved over the past decade, particularly with the Olympic legacy, with the Sydney Olympic parklands, the International Regatta Centre and the Blacktown Olympic Park.

There is an issue about water conservation, but I should say that the department does not have specific policies or advice on water conservation in sports fields. That would not be something that we would consider in our bailiwick.

I would invite Mark Taylor to supplement that. That concludes my opening remarks and additional information I thought would be useful to the inquiry.

**Mr GREENE MP:** One of the issues that has come out in terms of developing areas and new areas is the previous policy in the creation of new housing estates of putting playing fields in retention areas. One of the things that happened with those retention areas was taking six inches of top soil off the top of the ground and leaving basically clay subsoils there that were not much use for any grass growth, and obviously that causes ongoing problems for those facilities and the councils who inherit that.

What is the Department of Planning doing in terms of new housing estates that are currently being developed and will be developed in terms of provision of sporting areas and not using that previous policy?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes, it is a valid issue. In my experience of being in Western Sydney, we have been dealing with the day-to-day issues of a sports field being closed for three weeks after a little bit of rain. In the 1970s and 1980s there were dual use policies, and you heard from WSROC earlier on that the principles of that are great, it can provide good quality fields, but the development of those fields means that you have to have excellent drainage on the surface so that the field can return to being used.

It is a matter of having diversity in your open space system. All the work that we have done through the recreation demand studies, talking to councils, suggests that you need to have that diversity. If all your open space is in flood liable, filled land you are going to have a whole lot of management costs and problems that

comes with it. We are changing our environmental approach to open space. Ecological values are dramatically increasing, particularly in Western Sydney when projects are developed. Water sensitive urban design comes into that.

The department is involved in the Western Sydney Parklands and that project is basically living those principles by making sure that we are developing open space of high quality.

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** I suspect that the Open Space and Recreation Guidelines that we are hoping to review next year might in fact cover this very issue in terms of advising local government how best to plan for their new open space recreation areas.

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes, and particularly in Western Sydney where the growth sectors are. A lot of the open space is in that flood line corridor. So it is a matter of having some good quality facilities in open space within the residential communities and also finding that facilities that are dual use can actually work as dual use facilities. A lot of it is in the detail of how it is actually structured. I think we have learnt from past mistakes in Western Sydney in particular.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am particularly impressed, for obvious reasons, to see in the New South Wales Metropolitan Strategy the comment "investigate innovative and efficient joint use of Government property consistent with the inquiry into joint use and co-location of public buildings". I am particularly impressed because that was our inquiry. Where is that going and how is it going?

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** These sorts of policies will be further developed in the subregional strategies. The Metropolitan Strategy sets that broad over-arching strategic direction for councils, but the more detailed work will come through in the subregional strategies that flow from that, and so we will be encouraging that sort of outcome in the work we do with councils and in their local environmental plans as they are delivered under subregional strategies. It is a matter of working vigilantly through these sorts of issues to deliver the good outcome at the end.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** With the information that you have, you seem to have a lot of data at your fingertips in the department. Some of the suggestions from various submissions has been the need for a co-ordinated approach towards the management and the resources and who is using what facility, and I think it was said that that should be co-ordinated by one particular body. Do you think that might be a role that the department could play? You seem to have a lot of the data there already.

**Mr TAYLOR:** Certainly the metropolitan open space team has taken a fairly broad approach to open space, not just focussing on sport but the recreational trails or networks. I suppose we would see that our inventory and other data could be utilised by councils and other agencies. Department of Sport and Recreation can use it and certainly others can use it. The ROC's in particular are another mechanism which has been looking at this possibility with their councils.

It is probably just a matter of developing a framework encompassing the more of the day-to-day detail. The Department of Education have the same issue. We could not have clubs coming to us every day for where it is. But using the inventory you can use more electronic forms of data base and share it.

Particularly in our discussions with councils, they are quite willing to work with us on this sort of information. They have identified it is a problem and there are probably various ways of coming up with a solution of how that is stored but it would be a good outcome.

The recreation demand studies looked at if you could have a central data base of a lot of this information, it would be a lot more consistent, a lot more comparable and it would allow councils to work together across boundaries, which is often difficult.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I am particularly interested in the greenspace funding programs and generally obviously the Metropolitan Strategy. With the regional recreation demand strategy, the upshot of that was the need for diversity of open space. You have partly answered it, but is there any link to putting that into a policy or guidelines? We have been talking to councils over the number of inquiries that we have had. If it is not in the Act, lots per hectare, where does it fit? Does open space fit into what is left?

**Mr TAYLOR:** It is a difficult question. In growth areas and when we are developing new release areas, there are a lot of open space planning principles that have been historically passed down and councils deal with those and the State Government deals with those in a broad sense. I suppose open space is always a difficult issue because we have to try and balance the increasing density of the city in urban areas and we need to find good quality open space.

A lot of claims we have had are that it is not so much quantity but quality, but when it comes to sports fields in particular there is a limit to how much use you can get with traditional practices. So it is a mixture of having good quality recreation open space planning and good quality facilities that meet the needs. Parramatta Council is one example of a council that used the section 94 funding to increase the quality of its sporting facilities, but also its pocket parks, to a high standard. It dealt with a lot of increased density in that.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I have an area that has greenfields, not just brown fields, section 94. So if I am looking into the future with the open space program and I am sitting at my lot at Penrith Lakes what should I be able to expect with regard to recreation?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Certainly at a regional level Ropes Western Sydney is blessed with open space reservation, particularly Penrith Lakes, South and Lakes Creeks, Western Sydney Parklands. On a regional level you are well endowed with opportunities for water based activities as well as sports fields and passive.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I am sitting in my lot at Penrith Lakes, how do I get to the Western Sydney Parklands?

**Mr TAYLOR:** The recreation trails framework has a link through the ADI site to the top of Eastern Creek and then across to Blacktown. The framework when we were working with local government was looking at the east west links, street corridors running north south, people want to move east west through the transport corridors.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** But how do I get up to Castlereagh Terrace from Penrith Lakes? I mean I am sitting in Penrith Lakes. Do I still have to get in my car, put the bike in the boot?

**Mr TAYLOR:** I hope not. Places like Sydney Olympic Park are a great example of where you can integrate trail networks into the centre.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** It is an interest of mine. Is the green space funding that you have outlined funding the Great River Walks?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes, the Great River Walks have had a couple of rounds of MGP green space funding over the last couple of years and it has an application in this year. So we have worked with Penrith Council to deliver those first links around the river itself.

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** Was your question about really having a standard that you could rely on?

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Yes.

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** So you are having a figure of these many people in a particular area, therefore you need this much open space.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Yes, or what has been evidenced in today's inquiry is quality, not just open space, but quality open space.

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** Yes, which is what Mark just said.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** It is not just the historical aspects of what has happened within the retention basin or under the power lines. My constituents are living that recreational space, I am living that recreational space. What are we doing in the future, especially in areas of greenfields where we would like to replicate Centennial Park, those walking tracks along the foreshore which I drive past. I can walk my dog or ride my bike

on certain aspects of the Nepean River, but there is not a lot of space, not a lot of area.

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** In developing these new communities, particularly in Western Sydney, the work is done in collaboration with our State agency colleagues and local government. Local government will bring their ideas to the table about where they would like to see new open space, they will seek funding from us to make that happen and that will be then embedded in the precinct plans of the growth centres or within the new LEPs that the councils will be delivering. So there will be local strategic planning that will result in some meeting of the aspirations of the local communities in terms of open space, linking trails and so forth.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** But within Penrith Lakes, the community is not there yet, so how can they aspire to the open space if it is not planned for them, if they walk in there ten years later and they think "I have got to walk my dog but where can I"?

**Mr TAYLOR:** In Penrith Lakes there is a massive amount of open space planned. There is a planning process under way at the moment to do precinct level planning and also a planning process for the open space and it builds in all those issues about connectivity, cycling and walking activities.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I certainly would not like the community to have that open space in the flood area, the area that is needed for the one in 100.

**Mr TAYLOR:** The figures on Penrith Lakes from memory are around about 800 hectares of open space.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** But wetland, there is 700 hectares of water.

**Mr GREENE MP:** That is more than the whole of Sydney I think.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** A lot of it is water. The essence of my question is: What sort of policy or legislation framework do we have, because we legislate for lots per hectare, we have a framework for lots per hectare, but the communities are living the recreational aspects of that, and even within the Metropolitan Strategy--

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** That is where I was going to point of course.

**Ms PALUZZANO:** In your subregional plan to do with the Metropolitan Strategy, when you are looking at areas like a regional city like Penrith and then you go down to the little areas, does open space form part of those documents?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes.

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** It is a part of the overall planning for a place. It is an integral part of how you create a community. Certainly in the building of new communities in Western Sydney, open space, access to it, quality, active and passive, that would all be part of the overall planning, guided by this Metropolitan Strategy, which talks about providing a diverse mix of parks and public spaces to our communities, as you will see in that document, and subsequently through the subregional strategies that are being delivered right now there will be that strong message throughout, that continuity of the message, this is part of the picture, it cannot be a forgotten part and it cannot be so subsidiary that it is the land left over, if you like.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Is the department looking at a planning strategy at the moment for non-metropolitan New South Wales?

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** Yes.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Because there is a common consensus in Sydney that nothing is happening west of the ranges. You look at cities like Dubbo, Tamworth, Wagga, Orange, Bathurst, even a little place like Narrabri, there is a building boom going on and development is going crazy. So you are planning, and if that is the case, when is this going to happen?

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** Yes, you are quite right that the focus for the formal regional strategy work

has been in those high growth areas on the coast of New South Wales, but there is also, as I mentioned, a focus of strategic planning between Sydney and Canberra, but having said that, there is not zero strategic planning happening elsewhere. That is still going on in terms of the Department of Planning working with the constituent local councils in their regions. We have a regional network of offices in the Department of Planning and there is a lot of good local strategic work happening right now as all 152 councils in the State have to within the next five years formulate new LEPs, new local plans under the reforms. So there is currently strategic work happening in terms of those major regional centres and the broader local government areas, and the provision of open space and recreational areas will be part of that strategic work. It is not formal, you are quite right, in terms of--

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** It is much easier in those areas too, isn't it?

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** There is not such constraint as we have in metropolitan Sydney of course where you just cannot instantly release new recreational area.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** The draft strategic plan for the Central Coast has been released and it has been well received. Apart from that, I wanted to know if the department has any plans under consideration to assist councils with water conservation and environment amenities of their sportsgrounds? Have you got any thoughts of assisting councils in that respect?

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** The Department of Planning of course runs the BASIX scheme for residential energy, efficiency and water conservation, but in terms of sportsgrounds and water conservation, I am not sure that we can point to anything specifically in the department.

**Mr TAYLOR:** No, not specifically. Local councils, as you heard before, have been accessing Commonwealth and State Government grants through the Department of Environment (Federal) and other departments.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I noted that you mentioned the management, and this is looking at management of sporting grounds, the management of what is the use of the majority, about 80 odd per cent of local councils--

**Ms SHANKIE-WILLIAMS:** A managing sites, yes.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Looking at the aspect of trusts, considering there is the Western Sydney Parklands trust and other trusts like Parramatta, the roll-out of good co-operation between those trusts, I know that Parramatta looks after - does it look after the sporting field as well?

**Mr GREENE MP:** No.

**Mr TAYLOR:** No, not the trust. The Department of Sport and Recreation manages all those trusts. They may be better placed to answer that question.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**DARYL CLOUT**, General Manager, NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, 6 Figtree Drive, Sydney Olympic Park, sworn and examined, and

**JOHN EGAN**, Director, Programs and Partnerships, NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, 6 Figtree Drive, Sydney Olympic Park, affirmed and examined:

**Mr GREENE MP:** I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a copy of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 332, 333 and 334 which relate to the examination of witnesses. Is that correct?

**Mr CLOUT:** That is.

**Mr EGAN:** Yes.

**Mr GREENE MP:** I know you have listened to a lot of the submissions and the questions that we have asked of the various witnesses today. We also appreciate the fact that you have put in a submission. I understand that that submission also has a co-ordinating focus within State Government. Would you like to start with an opening statement or are you happy to go straight to questions?

**Mr CLOUT:** If I could just make a brief opening statement and talk about one of the more important issues that has been discussed here today, and that is the joint use of facilities run by the Department of Education. It is an issue that has been raised with us over the last couple of months in various forums. The Parks and Leisure Australia people who were here are keen to see something happen in that regard and a number of sporting organisations have been talking to us about this issue as well.

Our agency recommended to our Minister that she approach the Premier's Department to establish a working group which would look at this particular issue. That group has been established and has met for the first time. I think it was last week or the week before. The group is convened by the Premier's Department and comprises representatives from the Department of Planning, the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Department of Education and local government at this stage. My suggestion would be that there may be room for other organisations to become part of that working group. At the moment they are charged with putting together some terms of reference and I know that they are particularly interested in the outcome of this Inquiry. So I guess they will take on board whatever recommendations you may make from this Inquiry as well. That would be my suggestion.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Following on from that opening statement, what level of representation is there from the Department of Education? The reason I ask that is that obviously in their submission today we did not hear about that at all.

**Mr CLOUT:** It has only been recently convened. I was not at the first meeting. John was there. I am not quite sure what level people came in at, but our recommendation, again, is that the committee as it progresses gradually fulfils its number with as high a level of officer as it can possibly get, so that decisions can be made along the way.

**Mr EGAN:** Beryl, who appeared before the Committee earlier, was at the first meeting of this working group.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Again, from your department's perspective, and I suppose having put together a joint submission on behalf of the Government or overseeing that submission--

**Mr CLOUT:** We co-ordinated the comments and passed them on to the Cabinet Office who provided the final submission.

**Mr GREENE MP:** There have been a number of issues raised today in terms of usage of grounds, in particular concerns with regards to over-usage in inner city areas. Also the concerns related to the development and planning of grounds in growth areas, Western Sydney, South Western Sydney, et cetera. One of the other issues that has dominated today is co-location or co-usage of school grounds. Do you have any comments in terms of those other issues though, particularly the over-usage, and as much as anything because of increased playing numbers, increases particularly in women's sports?

**Mr CLOUT:** Other than to say we are aware of them through evidence from sporting organisations, we do not have a direct role in any of those areas. We are happy to pass on the anecdotal evidence we get about all those issues to appropriate agencies, such as Planning, local government and others. We know it exists but we do not have a role in addressing those issues, if I can put it that way.

**Mr EGAN:** They are obviously issues that are not going to go away. When you look at, say, the AFL who appeared before you this morning, they have got a target of 100,000 AFL registrations within New South Wales by 2010. At the moment there are 60,000 I think and they are looking at growing that over the next few years. So they are looking at a growth rate of about 7000 or 8000 per year. If you look at, say, rugby union, they have developed a strategy for growing rugby union within Western Sydney; if you look at rugby league, they want to set up a Western Sydney rugby league academy; cricket in New South Wales grew 24 per cent last year.

So what we are going to see over the next few years is increasing participation numbers across all the major codes. If you look at women in football, that is growing somewhere about 30 to 35 per cent per annum. So it is a major issue and it is obviously going to put demand on the use of sporting fields.

**Mr CLOUT:** And, as I say, all we can do as an agency is pass on that sort of evidence that is coming to us constantly.

**Mr GREENE MP:** One of the areas that the Department of Sport and Recreation has considerable impact in is through its capital assistance programs and also its regional grants programs. Are those applications over-subscribed? I know the answer to that before I ask it but I will ask you to answer it anyway. And, if so, by how much on a regular scale?

**Mr CLOUT:** In the regional sports facilities program, for example, last year I think we were able to allocate about \$3.5 million and the request was for about \$12 million. From memory, we got about 140 or 150 applications and we were able to fund up to about 30 applications. With the capital assistance program, generally we get twice the number of applications that we are able to fund. We are looking at somewhere between 400 and 500 that we can fund each year, and as a rough guess it is twice that number of applications that we actually receive.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Some of those also would be under-funded. For example, a soccer club asks for \$30,000 and they get \$20,000.

**Mr CLOUT:** That is true. We have an assessment process. We try and do the loaves and fishes act with both of these programs. Sometimes we go back to the applicant and they might want \$10,000 and we say, "Will \$8,000 do", so we can try and spread it across as many organisations as possible. So the answer to that is yes. Generally speaking, if we give them less than they ask for, they have to go out and find some in kind support for whatever capital works they want to do.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Or they cut back on the work?

**Mr CLOUT:** Yes.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** What is the figure for that?

**Mr CLOUT:** For capital assistance?

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** Applications for capital assistance in New South Wales?

**Mr CLOUT:** The number of applications.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** What is the dollar figure?

**Mr CLOUT:** \$4 million is what we have each year.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** But what is the supply?

**Mr EGAN:** In 05/06 under the capital assistance program we had 519 applications. 347 applications were funded.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** How much was asked for?

**Mr EGAN:** The total requested was \$6.3 million.

**Mr CLOUT:** And that varies from year to year depending on the number of projects that people apply for.

**Mr EGAN:** Under the regional sports facilities program in 05/06 there were 144 applications. 32 were awarded funding and the total requested was \$15.8 million.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** And you supplied 12?

**Mr CLOUT:** We supplied 3.5.

**Mr EGAN:** 3.3 million. What that clearly shows is that the demand out there for assistance for enhancing the sporting infrastructure is huge.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** I think most sports have an idea that maybe about \$40,000 they would allocate to--

**Mr EGAN:** Yes.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** If that was raised, of course, we could expect that the applications would be even higher.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Also, because they are dollar for dollar programs, you are automatically receiving twice the capital return. For every dollar put in you are actually getting \$2 worth of results.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** We just had a submission from the Department of Planning, and obviously planning at a local level would require input from key stakeholders. Does the Department of Sport and Recreation link into master planning or planning at a council level or where there is a significant area like Olympic Park or Penrith Lakes?

**Mr CLOUT:** We are represented on the CEO's group for the Metropolitan Strategy at the moment, so we have an opportunity to indicate what we think is required in terms of open space and certainly sporting facilities. There have been other planning exercises, such as involvement with the Western Sydney Parklands Trust working group that we have been involved with. I think we sing the same song every time we sit in front of the Department of Planning, that is: Do not forget the need for sporting and recreation facilities.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** And quality obviously?

**Mr CLOUT:** Absolutely.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** I am interested in the management side. We were looking at parks that local teams play on or local associations play on or where the elite sports or the NRL play on. Within the trust that you are involved with what is your link in to broadening out the uses of the recreational spaces?

**Mr CLOUT:** There are a number of trusts which sit under the Minister's portfolio, such as Sydney Cricket Ground Trust, Wollongong Stadium, Newcastle Stadium, Parramatta Stadium and the Sports Centre Trust. Generally speaking, the trusts operate independently and they report to the Minister, but, again generally speaking, most of them pursue opportunities for joint use. It does not always work that way. I think for example at Newcastle, the Knights play there and the Newcastle Jets I think have an arrangement to play there as well. I think at Wollongong, St George Illawarra used to play there and when Wollongong had an NSL team I think they played at Wollongong Stadium. Parramatta Stadium, Parramatta played there in conjunction with the Parramatta soccer team that was in the NSL in those days. It is in the trusts' own interests to look for other people, other than the major users if you like, to come and use their facilities.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** You said they are under the auspices of the Minister, but is there any thought about having a broader scope to those trusts in the relationships? What we are hearing from local councils is, with the finite nature of recreational space or the finite nature of these high-end facilities, looking at a broader scope of them, for co-location of different events that happen?

**Mr CLOUT:** Again, I would have to say it is up to the trusts to do that. We have not been involved in discussions along those lines but it is something that is worth pursuing.

**Mr GREENE MP:** They would want to maximise the use of their facilities.

**Mr CLOUT:** As I said, they want to get as much revenue as they can. It is not an easy thing to say at Newcastle Stadium, for example, that the Knights play there on a Friday night and then the Adamstown junior rugby league plays there the next morning.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** No, we are not talking about that. Obviously people have made the submission that they are actively lobbying for extra. They want 100,000 in AFL and so much more in certain sports. Those sports tend to have a high-end team and the high-end team is locked out of - the State Government is putting millions into a facility, yet it is used for one code and not the other, and there is an expectation to have a lead team. Where do they play?

**Mr GREENE MP:** That is often sorted out at a local level.

**Mr CLOUT:** It is and it relates to the arrangements that manage those particular grounds, whether it is a trust or a council, whether the trusts have leases with teams who want exclusive use.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** With the trusts, it is mainly land based we have been talking about. Are there any water based or aquatic based?

**Mr CLOUT:** None that I am aware of. None that we administer.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** We have heard a lot about exchange of information between councils and State Government and perhaps that could be improved. Do you see a role for the Federal Government at all in co-ordinating an approach towards planning for sporting facilities?

**Mr CLOUT:** That is a curly one. Is yes the answer to that?

**Mr GREENE MP:** I will follow on from that. For instance, there was a thing called the Federation Grants which were given out in 2000. There are 149 or 150 Federal electorates. At \$1 million per Federal electorate, that still only comes to \$150 million a year with a specific focus for sport. Considering there is a \$15 billion Federal Government surplus, if the Federal Government continues to talk about, as they do, obesity programs and all those types of issues, would you see that a fund similar to the federation, in other words a sports fund that would be divvied out amongst Federal electorates, to the councils or organisations, sporting groups who could fund facilities, would that not be of some benefit?

**Mr CLOUT:** On behalf of the State's sporting organisations, we would welcome that, they would welcome that, but you are getting into the realms of politics there. I am a humble public servant and I stay away from the politics of the situation.

**Mr EGAN:** One of the things that the Federal Government does have in place now is that under the Department of Transport and Regional Services they have the regional partnerships program that actually has funds available for the upgrade of sporting facilities across Australia. In New South Wales quite a number of organisations around the State are making application under that program for funding and at the same time they will also be making applications under our regional sports facilities program.

**Mr CLOUT:** I think it is fair to say that there is a problem with that, in that the programs do not coincide. If you apply under the Federal program, they say you will have to get matching funds from the State Government, and that is an issue that we really need to take up at the Federal Government level, which we are about to.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** Within that hypothetical situation of two grants, one body, what happens when it is on facilities that are council or State owned?

**Mr CLOUT:** I do not think it makes any difference.

**Mr EGAN:** Not that I am aware of.

**Mr CLOUT:** I do not think it matters. State owned land would be leased to someone, a council or a sporting organisation, so they would be making the application anyway. Councils make applications.

**Mr GREENE MP:** The majority of Crown land is actually administered by trusts or councils, the great majority by councils.

**Mr CLOUT:** Yes.

**Ms PALUZZANO MP:** So that would not be an impediment?

**Mr EGAN:** Probably not because when you look at the Federal Government put X million dollars into Kogarah Oval recently and they have put money into other major sporting grounds in New South Wales.

**Mr GREENE MP:** And they have just committed \$9 million to Endeavour for Cronulla.

**Mr EGAN:** So that has not been an impediment in the past.

**Mr CLOUT:** But these are strategic decisions taken by other governments.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** Do either of you want to make any comments about the water problems which sporting organisations are having?

**Mr CLOUT:** We are praying for rain. That is really not our area. Obviously it is a problem for sporting organisations and I think it has been addressed by other agencies that were here before.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH MP:** If we recommended that the capital assistance programs for regional sports facilities be increased to about \$28 million, would you have any problems with that?

**Mr CLOUT:** No.

**Mr GREENE MP:** Just following on from that, the Parks and Leisure Australia submission, also certainly the comments made by NSW AFL this morning, indicated that New South Wales's contributions through funding per capita in New South Wales for sport and recreation is a lot lower than other States. Is that your perspective as well?

**Mr CLOUT:** That is true, but again, I guess, as far as the State Government is concerned it is a question of priorities. We are allocated a certain amount. We deal with that. There is no chief executive officer or Minister worth their salt who is not in there asking for more money all the time, and we are doing that along with everyone else.

**Mr GREENE MP:** One-off grants to Brookvale Oval or Newcastle Stadium or wherever, the grandstand at Wollongong, would not be included in those figures, would they?

**Mr CLOUT:** No, generally not.

**Mr EGAN:** No, and the investment in Sydney Olympic Park for the Olympics was not included in those figures.

**Mr GREENE MP:** In terms of an ongoing thing, the Government commits one-off moneys which are usually in the millions, they are additional to, and therefore not included in the figures that would have been quoted by Parks and Leisure Australia and also the NSW AFL?

**Mr CLOUT:** Probably not. We can provide that.

**Mr EGAN:** What Parks and Leisure have done is looked at the capital assistance grant program across States and Territories, then looked at the population in each State and Territory and then worked it out on a per capita basis. So that one-off funding that you are referring to would not be caught up in it.

**Mr GREENE MP:** To be fair also, whatever millions they put into upgrading Melbourne for the Commonwealth Games would not have been included. So they were just looking specifically at capital

assistance grants in the regional--

**Mr CLOUT:** Basic annual grants that people apply for.

**Ms ANDREWS MP:** With the capital assistance grants, if funding is not taken up in one area, is it then applied to another area? In other words, do you utilise the full amount that is allocated in the budget?

**Mr CLOUT:** We allocate the full amount. Whether it is used is up to the organisations who actually get it, and we monitor whether it is actually spent. Part of the guidelines say that the funding has to be spent within two years, and if we do get a request for funding, then we ask the organisations whether they are going to spend it, and they may say, "Yes, but we are held up by council approvals", or something like that, and we make a decision that, "Yes, you can keep that. We will come back to you in 12 months time", and if it is obvious that it is never going to be spent, we take it back and we put it back into the pool.

**Mr EGAN:** The question also had the other part to it that if in one electorate say there is only \$15,000 funded, is the money allocated elsewhere. The answer to that is yes.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(The Committee adjourned at 3.45 p.m.)**



## Appendix One – List of Submissions

Submission No	Author	Organisation
1	Mr Ray Tozer	Royal New South Wales Bowling Association Inc.
2	Mr Brian Wilkinson	Richmond Valley Council
3	Mr David Allen	NSW Golf Association
4	Mr Michael Coulter	Nambucca Valley Council
5	Mr Michael Rolfe	The Vaucluse Progress Association
6	Ms Sandra Kubecka	Liverpool City Council
7	Mr Paul Gallagher	Narrandera Shire Council
8	Mr Stephen Yam	Lismore City Council
9	Mr Gregory Doyle	Athletics NSW Ltd.
10	Mr Wayne Hull	Greater Taree City Council
11	Mr Stephen Bourke	Parks and Leisure Australia
12	Mr Richard Davis	Upper Lachlan Shire Council
13	Mr Gary Arthur	Cootamundra Shire Council
14	Mr Stirling Hamman	Lindfield District Cricket Club Inc
15	Mr Peter Hickman	City of Ryde
16	Mr Brad Cam	Mid-Western Regional Council
17	Mr David Ransom	Baulkham Hills Shire Council
18	Mr Bryan O'Connor	Bega Valley Shire Council
19	Mr Dale Holmes	AFL (NSW/ACT)
20	Mr Pat Romano	Burwood Council
21	Mr Rodney Watson	NSW Netball Association Ltd
22	Mr James Jenkins	Albury City
23	Mr Robert Szoszkiewicz	Wollondilly Shire Council
24	Mr Graeme Haley	Deniliquin Council
25	Mr Andrew Sharp	Hurstville City Council
26	Mr Geoff Hatton	Individual
27		Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd
	Ms Sharon Fingland	
28	Ms Kathy Collinson	Wentworth Shire Council
29	Ms Kerry McMurray	Yass Valley Council
30	Mr Aaron Callaghan	Leichhardt Municipal Council
31	Ms Diane Dales	Gosford City Sports Council Incorporated
32	Mr John Wells	Shoalhaven City Council
33	Ms Karen Tucker	Gosford City Council
34	Mr Ian Field	Cricket New South Wales
35	Mr Patrick Wong	Dee Why Lions Rugby Football Club Inc.
36	Mr Peter Kemp	Hornsby Shire Council
37	Mr Michael Quarmby	Soccer NSW Limited
38	Mr Troy Holbrook	Parramatta City Council
39	Mr Richard Colley	Bankstown City Council
40	Dr Wilfrid Ewens	Individual
41		Shore Regional Organisation of Councils (SHOROC)
	Ms Margie Brown	

List of Submissions

<b>Submission No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
42	Mr Steve Dunn	Department of Natural Resources
43	Mr Neil Fraser	New South Wales Rugby
44	Mr Ken Grainger	Ashfield Municipal Council
45	Mr Gary Sawyer	City of Canada Bay Council
46	Ms Davina Craft	Campbelltown City Council
47	Mr Jim Montague	Canterbury City Council
48	Mr J Rayner	Sutherland Shire Council
49	Mr Max Eastcott	Gwydir Shire Council
50	Ms Clover Moore	City of Sydney Council
51	Mr Dennis Trezise	Holroyd City Council
52	Mr Ian McAlister	Dubbo City Council
53	Mr John Burgess	Auburn Council
54	Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter	Department of Commerce
55	Ms Margaret Harte	Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council
56	Ms Kim Buckingham	Kempsey Shire Council
57	The Hon Tony Kelly	Department of Lands
58	Mr Adrian Birkbeck	Blue Mountains City Council
59	Mr Wouter Wurth	Individual
60	Mr Norm Harwood	Gloucester Shire Council
61	Dr James Hull	Independent Turfgrass Consulting
62	Mr David Howard	St Ives Soccer Club
63	Ms Kerry O'Keefe	Little Athletics Association of NSW Inc.
64	Mr Gary Eastman	Kogarah Municipal Council
65	Mr Robert Andrew (Bob) Somerville	Hornsby Ku-ring-gai and Hills District Cricket Association
66	Mr Mark Taylor	Parks & Leisure Australia NSW Regional Council
67	Mr Ray Brownlee	Randwick City Council
68	Mr Stephen Blackadder	Warringah Council
69	Mr John Ferguson	Lake Macquarie City Council
70	Ms Deborah Purss	Eurobodalla Shire Council
71	Mr Ian Rhodes	Wyong Shire Council
72	Mr Ryan Fletcher	Local Government and Shires Association of NSW
73	Ms Melissa Gibbs	Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
74	Mr Greg Smith	Rockdale City Council
75	The Hon Sandra Nori	NSW Government
76	Mr David Gill	New South Wales Rugby League

## Appendix Two – List of Witnesses

Friday 29 September 2006

Mr Steven Head, NSW Regional Councillor, Parks and Leisure Australia - NSW Region,

Mr Stephen Bourke, Past National President, Parks and Leisure Australia - NSW Region,  
Director Community and Recreation Services

Mr Simon Laughton, Game Development Manager, AFL NSW/ACT

Ms Clare Toia-Bailey, Strategic Projects Manager, AFL NSW/ACT

Mr James Forrest, Vice President, Soccer NSW Limited

Mr Aaron Callaghan Senior, Recreation Planner, Leichhardt Municipal Council,

Andrew Kelly, Community Recreation Officer, Leichhardt Municipal Council

Mr Paul Woods, General Manager, Kogarah Council

Mr Amit Chanan, Director, Assets and Services, Kogarah

Ms Sharon Fingland, Assistant Director, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils  
Limited (WSROC)

Ms Beryl Jamieson, General Manager, Asset Management, NSW Department of Education  
and Training

Mr William Anderson, Assistant Director Strategic Initiatives, NSW Department of Education  
and Training

Ms Norma Shankie-Williams, Acting Executive Director, Metropolitan Planning, NSW  
Department of Planning

Mr Mark Alexander Taylor, Open Space Program Co-ordinator, NSW Department of Planning

Mr Daryl Clout, General Manager, NSW Department of Sport and Recreation

Mr John Egan, Director, Programs and Partnerships, NSW Department of Sport and  
Recreation