

17 AUG 2006

Ref: M/06/00605

The Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to correspondence dated 12 July 2006 from Mr K Greene MP, Chair of the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Works, to the Hon John Della Bosca Minister for Commerce, seeking submissions to the Committee's current inquiry into Sportsground Management in New South Wales.

In June 1999 and again in November 2004, the Office of Fair Trading's NSW Products Safety Committee conducted inquiries into the safety of portable soccer goal posts. These inquiries occurred following the death in early 1999 of a ten-year-old boy who died when another child pulled a goalpost down onto him in southwestern Sydney, and the death in June 2003 of a three-year-old girl who was struck by a set of goal posts in Moss Vale.

The Deputy State Coroner, who conducted the inquest into the second death in 2003, heard evidence that seven people had been killed and one person rendered a paraplegic in Australia since 1986 as a result of accidents involving portable soccer goalposts. The inquest also heard that 27 deaths and 49 injuries had occurred in the United States between 1979 and 2003 and deaths involving portable soccer goalposts had also been reported in the United Kingdom, Malta and Japan. The inquest found that the three-year-old child died from a head injury sustained when an unsecured soccer goal toppled over and struck her.

The Coroner made several recommendations to the Ministers for Sports and Recreation, Local Government and Fair Trading. The Coroner also made several recommendations to Soccer Australia and Soccer NSW. The thrust of the recommendations is that portable soccer goals that do not comply with Guidelines published as a result of the 1999 Products Safety Committee inquiry are dangerous and should not be used. The recommendations to other Ministers, Soccer Australia and Soccer NSW go to ensuring that the Guidelines are well known, universally used and enforced. The recommendation to the Minister for Fair Trading was to consider the introduction of a safety law for portable soccer goals.

As a result of a recommendation of the NSW Products Safety Committee, the *Fair Trading (General) Amendment (Soccer Goals) Regulation 2005* was gazetted on 25 February 2005 to take effect on 1 March 2005 (see attached). The regulation requires moveable soccer goals that are over 28kg and not designed to be used solely indoors to meet stability requirements.

At the time of referral to the Products Safety Committee, an inter-departmental working group was established comprising representatives from Fair Trading, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Department of Education and Training and Department of Local Government. The role of the working group was to ensure a "whole of government" approach to this matter.

An audit conducted during early 2005 indicated that 162 full size, metal moveable goals remained in use.

During 2005, Fair Trading conducted a number of "Safe Soccer Demonstration Days" attended by local government and soccer club officials. The purpose of these demonstrations was to showcase a brochure entitled "Soccer Goalpost Safety: Play Your Part", produced and published by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation and a CD-Rom called *Play it safe – soccer goalpost safety* (created and published by Fair Trading). These products aimed to highlight that existing metal movable soccer goals are dangerous if not correctly anchored into the ground, either permanently or by the use of a sleeving system.

Manufacturers, clubs, associations and officials have been provided with very strong messages that unsupported, unanchored and inappropriately secured moveable soccer goals are dangerous and that existing posts should be replaced over time with those installed into the ground. This will have implications for those soccer clubs or associations who rely on local government owned or controlled grounds.

Should you have any further queries in relation to this matter, please contact Mr Steve Hutchison, A/Manager, Measurement and Technical Standards, Office of Fair Trading on telephone 8467 4449

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Coutts-Trotter". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Michael Coutts-Trotter  
**Director-General**