

Listening report

ACT Sports CEO Networking Event

Monday 20 July 2026

Attendance:

Former Minister for Sport, Yvette Berry MLA

Rebecca Kelley, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation (host)

ACT sporting organisations:

ACT Equestrian	Cricket ACT	Tennis ACT
AusCycling ACT	Gymnastics ACT	Touch Football ACT
Badminton ACT	Hockey ACT	Triathlon ACT
Basketball ACT	Netball ACT	Ultimate Canberra
Bowls ACT	Squash ACT	Waterski ACT
Canberra Region Rugby League	Swimming ACT	

Communication Link - Helen Leayr, Managing Director (facilitator)

Context

This report provides a summary of the feedback received during a facilitated workshop as part of the July meeting of the ACT Sport Peak Bodies CEO Networking event. The purpose of the workshop was to gather input to inform the following:

- an independent report into existing and future community requirements and sporting facilities
- sportsground management and maintenance.

The ACT Legislative Assembly recently passed two motions that directly impact the ACT sports community. Copies of these motions were provided to participants prior to the session. The key implications or actions arising from these motions are:

Sporting facilities – Independent Audit Report “to assess future demand and guide the ongoing supply, maintenance, and upgrade of sporting infrastructure, taking into account the current and future needs of the community: and

Sportsground management and maintenance - “an accelerated reactivation schedule for the dryland ovals in category 1; including:

- (i) Plans for consultation with sport associations, clubs and the community for the proposed ovals; and
- (ii) Plans for the appropriation of necessary funds.

The focus of this workshop was in two parts to align with these two motions:

- Part one was to provide ACT Government with feedback from the ACT sporting community on what is important to understand about the community’s needs, how do we gather that information for each sport.
- Part two asked the group to consider what is important to understand about the existing sporting facilities and how do we gather that information.

As aquatic facilities are subject to a separate strategy, they and elite stadiums were excluded from these discussions.



How do we best understand the current and future needs of our community?

The following feedback was provided during this discussion.

Understanding community need and participation

- Important to understand the current and future demographics of participation across sports including the needs of a growing and expanding community
- Important to understand sport participation and pathways, from grassroots development through to high performance
- It was noted that different user groups should be captured, including recreational or social participants as well as registered members
- Social participation was raised as important, including recognition of the role sport plays in community connection and mental health
- Understanding whether facilities can support the full pathway, from grassroots through to high performance given different regulations for social versus elite participation

What data to collect

- Draw on participation data that sports organisations already have. It was suggested that a portal or live platform would be a good way for different organisations to contribute their data.
- Capture general community data and the ABS data.
- Consider the planning for new developments and suburbs
- Look beyond Canberra to the regional community serviced by ACT based sporting organisations
- Consider the sporting requirements of school communities
- Consider the needs across different seasons
- The group noted the importance of understanding each sport's business model and the impact that has on participation and future needs

Quick wins

- Achieve better information sharing between sports in terms of best practice, access to facilities etc
- Improving seasonal sharing of sports facilities

Other considerations and feedback

- It was suggested that engaging an independent auditor to do the work would be useful
- Cost challenges were raised, including the true cost to develop and maintain sporting grounds and facilities
- Sports were described as willing to collaborate, particularly where there are shared facility needs and opportunities for cross-code planning
- Participants asked if forward Government and sporting budgets can support sinking funds for refurbishment, upgrades and major works over the longer term



How do we best audit our existing sporting facilities

The following feedback was provided during this discussion.

What information needs to be collected

- Data should show how facilities are used, where they are located, whether they are all weather, the hours available, who uses them, what amenities are provided and whether there is disability access
- Questions need to include size, capacity and how many participants a facility can host
- Information should cover indoor and outdoor facilities, cost of operation, cost of hire, and whether the facility is used for training or competition
- The audit should look at whether facilities are fit for purpose, meet sport regulations and meet minimum standards such as diversity and safe guarding considerations
- It should include a true picture of facility use, including retiring facilities and facilities planned for redevelopment, facilities open to the community and those that aren't
- Consider demographic shifts and the impact on types of facilities such as growth sports or shifting demographics
- Single-sport organisation and non-sport organisation facility guidelines could be used to test whether facilities meet minimum standards and compliance expectations

What facilities should be included

- The audit to include ACT Government facilities, privately owned facilities and facilities run by associations
- There was interest in understanding whether non-government facilities are available for community use
- School facilities should be included, with information on location, usage and fees
- The audit should identify who owns each facility
- Facilities should be understood across the pathway, from recreation sports, grassroots through to high performance

Quick wins

- Consider opportunities for vacant office buildings to be used for sports such as karate, table tennis etc
- Explore cross-code collaboration between sports to better share existing facilities

How the information could be gathered

- A staged approach was suggested, developed in collaboration with sports and facility managers
- Use existing data where it is available
- Lean on sports to provide information, while recognising that volunteers in sporting organisations will often be the ones completing the survey therefore make the process as practical as possible
- Develop a form that can be completed online and supports gathering data directly from sports
- Keep the questions consistent across all sports so the information can be compared

Other considerations and feedback

- Perceptions that active sports club members are subsidising facilities to be used for recreational users.
- The relationship between sports facilities and the viability of some sports was raised, noting that a lack of available facilities can limit the capacity and participation rates and therefore the funds of sporting organisations.