

ACT GOVERNMENT  
Sport and Recreation

PLANNING FOR INDOOR FACILITIES AND  
OTHER SPORT AND RECREATION  
INFRASTRUCTURE



SEPTEMBER 2018



*National Expertise. Local Understanding*

**SPORT + LEISURE**

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# 1. Executive Summary

## BACKGROUND

The 2015 ACT Indoor Sports Facility Study found that there is a shortage of multi-court indoor sport facilities in the ACT and that demand for indoor courts will be exacerbated by population growth and the closure of the Woden Basketball Centre and Woden CIT. The study found that the most sustainable facilities have multiple courts that provide for a range of uses and incorporate ancillary services such as cafés, health & fitness and allied health. It noted that single purpose (e.g. sport-owned) facilities require a strong business case to ensure that the organisation is able to viably operate them over time.

## STUDY AIM

To further progress the findings of the 2015 study, ACT Sport and Recreation sought a preferred facility strategy to meet the needs of three high participation indoor sports - basketball, futsal and gymnastics - with a focus on three locations, namely Gungahlin, Belconnen and Woden. ACT Sport and Recreation also sought commentary on different approaches to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure.

## STUDY APPROACH

The study process included an overview of current indoor facility provision in the three study areas; consultation with the three indoor sports involved; meetings with representatives of Woden, Gungahlin and Belconnen Community Councils; analysis of population data and recent planning reports; and an analysis of approaches to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure in other jurisdictions.

## SNAPSHOT OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Gungahlin has a high population (73,133 projected to grow to 117,506 by 2036); and a median age well below the ACT as a whole (lower median ages typically have a higher demand for sport and recreation infrastructure). Belconnen also has a high population (97,905 projected to grow by 18,098 by 2036) and a median age in line with the ACT as a whole. Woden has a comparatively moderate population (34,475), low projected growth (+1,528 by 2036), and a significantly higher median age than the ACT as a whole.

Recent plans/agreements (see section 4.2) have recommended provision of an indoor sporting facility in Woden or feasibility studies for multi-purpose indoor facilities in Woden and Gungahlin.

Indoor sporting facilities in Canberra have historically been provided in one of four ways (1) directly by the sports sector (2) by large licenced community clubs (3) through facilities at schools/ universities (4) by the private sector. In some cases, ACT Government has provided capital funding support. Generally, sporting organisations have provided larger centralised indoor sporting facilities (particularly for competitions purposes) rather than numerous smaller facilities located across Canberra. As a result, many indoor sports have made strategic decisions over time where they now have facilities located in key catchments that service multiple districts. This is particularly important when considering the commercial viability and sustainability of indoor sporting facilities as high utilisation rates are an important part of their ongoing viability.

## SNAPSHOT OF CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Basketball ACT has 8,809 active playing members. They are seeking a 3-court expansion of their 4-court facility at Belconnen Basketball Stadium to incorporate a High Performance Centre to host national competitions, conduct social competitions, and accommodate team training. Capital Football has 21,673 registered players, of whom 4,792 (22%) are futsal players. They are seeking a dedicated football facility incorporating at least two indoor futsal courts. Gymnastics ACT has 5,200 participants, and are seeking a State Centre for high level training and the conduct of local, regional and higher level competitions. Canberra City Gymnastics Club is also seeking to relocate from its freehold facility which it has outgrown.

From discussions with representatives from the Community Councils, Woden is seen as lacking activation and gathering space with a need for a multi-use facility incorporating indoor sport; Gungahlin indicated a lack of provision for sport and recreation land/ facilities generally and expressed the need for an easily accessible, multi-purpose indoor sport and recreation facility; Belconnen felt that basketball was adequately catered for in the area but the existing gymnastics facility was seen as unable to cater for demand.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR SPORTS/ AREAS WITHIN STUDY SCOPE

The ACT Government has not directly developed and managed indoor facilities. The provision, and wide distribution across Canberra, of government-owned multi-purpose indoor sport & recreation facilities would have significant budget implications and may impact on the viability of existing sport-owned facilities. Accordingly, any future government provision should be focussed only on those areas where there is high projected population growth, and the opportunity to offset capital costs via developer contributions (see below). In areas where no reasonable access to indoor facilities exists, partnerships with sports or schools should be considered.

There is a need for indoor facility provision in Gungahlin, and to a lesser extent Woden, which is only likely to be partially addressed by existing or proposed sport-provided facilities. Given budget limitations, developing shared use indoor facilities in schools would offer a more effective solution in these areas.

In the longer term, this study recommends that the ACT Government adopt a more strategic approach to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure in new development areas which enables infrastructure to be funded (or co-funded) by developer contributions, as occurs in other states (refer section 7). This would ensure that sport and recreation land/ facility needs are factored early into the planning process, reduce pressure on limited capital budgets and deliver sport and recreation infrastructure in a more timely manner.

Recognising historical facility provision arrangements and budget limitations within the ACT, the proposed strategic direction and priorities for those sports and areas within the scope of the study are as follows:

1. Pursue opportunities for partnership with an ACT Government school/college to deliver a multi-purpose indoor sport & recreation facility in Gungahlin.) Undertake a feasibility study to determine the facility mix components, location, capital cost, funding arrangements, management arrangements, and operating viability. The design components should consider sports courts (min 2) and other potential complementary facilities (i.e. gymnastics training area, programming space, health & fitness, administration/ meeting areas, storage, food & beverage, and parking).
2. Consider options to develop an indoor sport & recreation facility in Woden at an existing ACT Government school/college. Undertake a feasibility study to determine the facility mix components, location, capital cost, funding arrangements, management arrangements, operating viability. This facility would be smaller than the Gungahlin facility and design considerations should take into account any other existing private or government owned facilities within the catchment.
3. Support the preparation, by Capital Football, of a detailed Business Case for the inclusion of indoor futsal courts as part of a dedicated football facility in Gungahlin.
4. Support the preparation, by Basketball ACT, of a detailed Business Case for their planned 3-court expansion of Belconnen Basketball Stadium. If unsatisfactory, consider partnership opportunities with a school to deliver a multi-purpose indoor sport and recreation facility in West Belconnen, subject to a feasibility study which takes into account any existing private or government owned facilities within the catchment and examines facility mix components, location, capital cost, management arrangements, and operating viability.
5. Support the preparation, by Gymnastics ACT, of a feasibility study to examine the location, facility mix, capital cost, funding options, tenure and management arrangements, and operating projections for a dedicated State Gymnastics Centre, incorporating the relocation of Canberra City Gymnastics to underpin viability. The feasibility study should investigate the University of Canberra as the preferred site for the facility.
6. To reduce pressure on limited capital budgets and deliver sport and recreation infrastructure in a more timely manner, ACT Government should review its approach to the planning and funding of land and facilities to help cover the cost of delivering infrastructure needed to support new communities in population growth areas. This should include consideration of developer contributions as is common in other states (refer section 7).
7. To ensure the future planning and provision of shared use sport and recreation facilities at ACT Government schools is appropriately considered early in the site identification, planning and design phase, a representative from ACT Sport and Recreation should sit on relevant planning committees within the Education Directorate.
8. In the planning phase of any future shared use provision of indoor sports courts at schools, consideration should be given to elements which may maximise community use and viability (eg health & fitness, food and beverage, programming areas, gymnastics training area).



## 2. Introduction

In 2015, ACT Government Sport & Recreation engaged Strategic Leisure Group<sup>1</sup> to prepare an Indoor Sports Facility Study. The study found, among other things that:

- Multi-court indoor facilities are important for the efficient running of competitions<sup>2</sup>
- Access to multi-court facilities in Canberra during peak times (4-10pm on week nights and during daytime on weekends) is highly competitive
- Most sports reported difficulty gaining sufficient court hours for competition and training which is inhibiting their ability to grow participation
- Some facilities are constrained by cost of hire and/ or not meeting contemporary design standards
- School facilities are underutilised, mainly due to lack of awareness, booking and access difficulties, or cost of hire, but could meet demands for training space and free up court hours at larger venues
- There is a shortage of multi-court indoor sport facilities. Demand for indoor courts will be exacerbated by population growth and a pending loss of four (4) courts at Woden Basketball Stadium and Woden CIT (both since closed).

The report noted that the most effective and sustainable model of provision is usually a professionally managed, multi-court facility provided as part of a large multi-use venue (eg aquatic, indoor and fitness) that is able to accommodate a range of uses, and incorporates a range of ancillary services such as cafes and allied health. The development of single purpose (eg sport-owned) facilities requires a strong business case to ensure that the organisation is able to viably operate them over time.

The study set out the rationale for recommendations and strategies which included:

1. Increasing community use of indoor sporting facilities at schools
2. Ensure multi-court facilities are provided to service growth areas (focus on Molonglo and Gungahlin)
3. Investigate sustainable options for increasing capacity and use of existing centres
4. Ensure that all proposals for new or expanded facilities are tested for viability and sustainability
5. Encourage sustainable provision of squash facilities at the current level
6. Encourage ice sports to develop a future facility strategy
7. Investigate options for improving gymnastics facilities within Canberra

### 2.1 Update on Implementation of Recommendations and Strategies

Since the release of the study, a number of recommendations and strategies have been implemented. While this work is ongoing, significant work has been undertaken to increase community usage of indoor sporting facilities at ACT Government schools (including schools in the regions identified in this report - Gungahlin, Woden and Belconnen).

| SCHOOL                    | WORKS UNDERTAKEN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alfred Deakin High School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security system upgrade to allow for isolation of gymnasium from rest of the school</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       |
| Wanniassa High School     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security system upgrade to allow for isolation of gymnasium from rest of the school</li> <li>• Updated signage</li> <li>• Upgraded lighting</li> <li>• Improvements to fire doors linked to the gymnasium</li> </ul> |
| Lyneham High School       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security system upgrade to allow for isolation of gymnasium from rest of the school</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       |

<sup>1</sup> Otium Planning Group now comprises the directors and former staff of Strategic Leisure Group.

<sup>2</sup> Otium Planning Group research has found that, while suitable for training purposes, single court facilities are generally not functional for conducting competitions in court sports such as basketball, as only limited player numbers can be accommodated in an evening and the economies of scale gained in multi-court facilities are absent.



| SCHOOL                        | WORKS UNDERTAKEN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lake Tuggeranong College      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Security system upgrade to allow for isolation of gymnasium from rest of the school</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Headley Beare Training Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Upgraded lighting</li><li>• HVAC repairs</li><li>• Security system upgrade to allow for isolation of gymnasium from rest of the school</li><li>• Repairs, resealing and marking of parquet floors</li><li>• Plumbing repairs to toilets, showers and hot water supply</li><li>• Removal and replacement of asbestos floor tiles in entry and storerooms</li><li>• Removal of trip hazards at entry points</li></ul> |
| Amaroo School                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extension of gymnasium to incorporate two basketball courts and associated amenities</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Campbell High School          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Upgrade of change rooms</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

A number of sports have directly benefited from these improvements including two of those involved in this report (basketball and futsal).



### 3. Study Purpose and Approach

To further progress the 2015 Indoor Facility Study, ACT Government - Sport and Recreation engaged Otium Planning Group to recommend a preferred facility strategy to meet the needs of three high participation indoor sports - basketball, futsal and gymnastics - with a focus on three locations, namely Gungahlin, Belconnen and Woden.

Subsequent to the commencement of the study, Sport and Recreation sought commentary on models of public provision of indoor sport and recreation facilities, and different approaches to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure generally.

This report responds to these objectives.

The study process included:

- Examination of current indoor facility provision and usage in the three study areas
- Consultation with the three indoor sports involved in the study
- Meetings with representatives of Woden, Gungahlin and Belconnen Community Councils
- Meetings with Sport and Recreation officers
- Analysis of population data and recent planning reports and studies
- Examination of approaches to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure in other jurisdictions.



## 4. Snapshot of Key Background Research

### 4.1 Population Analysis

Current ACT Government population projections and analysis of median age as at the 2016 Census for the three study areas are summarised at Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Population Projections and Median Age of Areas within the Scope of the Study**

| DISTRICT  | 2017   | 2026    | 2036    | GROWTH 2017-2036 | MEDIAN AGE | ACT MEDIAN AGE |
|-----------|--------|---------|---------|------------------|------------|----------------|
| Belconnen | 97,905 | 105,498 | 116,003 | +18,098          | 34.9       | 35             |
| Gungahlin | 73,133 | 100,609 | 117,506 | + 44,373         | 31.9       |                |
| Woden     | 34,475 | 35,132  | 36,003  | +1,528           | 40.7       |                |

Of the three study areas, it is evident that the Gungahlin region has a comparatively high population, the highest projected growth to 2036, and a median age well below the ACT as a whole (lower median ages typically have a higher demand for sport and recreation infrastructure). Belconnen has a high population, significant growth and a median age in line with the ACT as a whole. Woden has a comparatively moderate population, low projected growth, and a significantly higher median age than the ACT as a whole.

### 4.2 Recent Document Review

The Draft Variation to the Territory Plan for Woden Town Centre includes a recommendation that “...the ACT Government amend the draft variation to reserve a large, flexible site in Woden suitable for future community, tertiary education or recreation uses such as an indoor sports hall or CIT facility.”<sup>3</sup>

Section 12 (Public Infrastructure) of the Parliamentary Agreement for the 9<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens agrees to... “Undertake feasibility studies into the construction of two multi-purpose indoor sports centres in Woden and Gungahlin.”

<sup>3</sup> Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal. “Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 344 Woden Town Centre: Zone Changes and Amendments to the Phillip Precinct Map and Code. Recommendation 22.” December, 2017.



## 5. Stakeholder Engagement Findings

### 5.1 Indoor Sports

Feedback from the three indoor sports within the study scope is summarised below.

#### 5.1.1 Basketball

Basketball ACT has 8,809 active playing members (2017 figures) representing a growth of 21% in the last three (3) years. The existing courts at Belconnen Basketball Stadium are at capacity during week days and weekends, and the Association utilises indoor courts at twelve (12) other school/ University or privately owned venues, primarily for training activities. Access to these external courts is constrained by their shared use with other sports or unavailability, often at short notice.

The priority of Basketball ACT is a 3-court expansion of their 4-court facility at Belconnen Basketball Stadium to incorporate a High Performance Centre to host national competitions, conduct social competitions, and accommodate higher levels of club training (currently undertaken at external venues). From information supplied by Basketball ACT, while the highest proportion of their members reside in the northern suburbs, the Belconnen facility services a whole of city catchment and beyond (as does the Southern Cross Stadium in Tuggeranong) with high participation rates across all regions, including Queanbeyan (refer Appendix A). If developed, the expanded facility would free up existing school facilities used by Basketball ACT for other, smaller indoor sports in the short to medium term (3-6 years).

Basketball ACT has indicated a preparedness to contribute to the capital cost of the facility and would need to submit a detailed Business Case to demonstrate its viability. Basketball ACT indicated that the proposed timeframe to consider any future expansion would likely be 4+ years away once it has improved its current financial position. Basketball ACT acknowledges that any future upgrade at Belconnen will need to be delivered in partnership and likely require a direct cash contribution from the ACT Government and additional finance to be secured.

#### 5.1.2 Futsal

From information supplied by Capital Football, there are 4,792 futsal players in their Association which represents 22% of their total 21,673 registered football players. Futsal participation has increased by 9% in the last 3 years but, according to the Association, growth has been hindered by limited access to indoor facilities.

Capital Football accesses indoor courts at fifteen (15) school, university or privately owned venues throughout the ACT. They indicated there are a number of constraints regarding access to these facilities - for example, university facilities are under pressure to make their facilities available for university sports clubs and students; the AIS courts are shared with other indoor sports which have priority access and consistency of availability is impacted by AIS needs for their National Centre of Excellence programs and Australian representative camps; and demand for indoor facilities from other sports such as martial arts codes and gymnastics/ cheerleading has also increased. The closure of mPowerdome and less satisfying player experience at school halls has also impacted on participation.

The priority of Capital Football is the development of a dedicated football facility in Gungahlin, with Capital Football prepared to contribute to its capital cost. Capital Football is seeking to include at least two (2) indoor futsal courts as part of the development which would have a synergy with small sided fields proposed to be situated adjacent to the facility. The intent would be to maximise the use of the indoor courts for Capital Football's competition and training purposes. This could free up other indoor courts currently being used for futsal for other sports, however Capital Football believes there is a high level of latent demand for futsal which has not been met due to insufficient court access, so this may not eventuate. Clubs in the north of Canberra have reportedly had to cap player numbers.

Indoor courts could be designed to cater for future expansion should demand warrant. This could include the development of a satellite gymnastics venue, provided that it contributed to the overall financial viability of the facility. Capital Football is currently working through a Business Case for a dedicated football facility and the number of indoor (futsal) courts has not been finalised at this stage, although it anticipates that two (2) courts would be a viable proposition.



### 5.1.3 Gymnastics

The sport of gymnastics has experienced over 60% growth in the last five (5) years with approximately 5,200 participants in the ACT. The sport has a high proportion of female participants (approx 75%) and young children aged 6-12 years (approx 50%).

Each year 26-28 competitive events are held across different club venues which are not well equipped to cater for them and clubs are unable to conduct other concurrent activities when these events are in progress.

Gymnastics ACT is seeking a state centre for high level training and the conduct of local, regional and higher level competitions. A dedicated venue for competitions is understood to be supported by affiliated clubs. The preferred option of both Gymnastics ACT and Gymnastics Australia has been a facility based on, or adjacent to, the AIS. This now appears to be unlikely given the recent decision by Gymnastics Australia to relocate their high performance program interstate.

Gymnastics ACT has indicated a preparedness to contribute financially toward the development of the facility (in partnership with the ACT Government) which would be serviced by turnover from the operation of the centre. This would require a detailed Business Case to be submitted by Gymnastics ACT to demonstrate its viability.

An alternative could be the development of a new state centre at the University of Canberra (subject to the negotiation of mutually beneficial arrangements with the University). This facility could also accommodate the relocation of Canberra City Gymnastics who have outgrown their freehold facility in Belconnen, the sale of which could potentially fund the development of their new venue. A new state centre would not be financially viable as a stand-alone event/high level training facility and the preferred model would see a gymnastics club co-located at the facility.

## 5.2 Community Councils

A meeting with a *Woden Community Council* representative emphasised the loss of public and private indoor sport and recreation facilities in Woden and a lack of activation and gathering space to service current needs and future high-density development. It was suggested that this is contributing to youth issues and a perception of lack of safety. The need for a multi-use facility incorporating indoor sport was expressed. [It should be noted that a new commercial \$20m Lifestyle and Wellness Centre has recently opened in Phillip<sup>4</sup>.]

Similarly, the *Gungahlin Community Council* identified a lack of sporting and recreational opportunities for young people and the need for an easily accessible, multi-purpose indoor sport and recreation facility. It was pointed out that Gungahlin has an existing high population with high growth, and is constantly playing catch-up because provision for sport and recreation land/ facilities has not been planned for in the same way as schools.

From discussion with a representative of *Belconnen Community Council*, basketball is considered to be well catered for in the area and no major demand for futsal has been evidenced. However, the existing gymnastics facility in Belconnen was seen as unable to cater for demand. It was felt that any new gymnastics facility should incorporate an excellence program with a strong connection to the grass roots of the sport. As a general principle, the view was expressed that sport should partner with government in meeting future needs.

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Leisure Management, e-news, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018. Described as the largest Anytime Fitness centre in Australia, the facility is an expansion of the Canberra Southern Cross Club on part of the old Southern Cross Pitch and Putt Club which was closed in 2013. It features a 17-metre indoor learn-to-swim pool, a 90 place Kids Club childcare centre, and related wellness facilities.



## 6. Comment on Demands

### 6.1 Sport Demand Analysis

The following high level observations and options relating to demands by indoor sports within the study scope are provided.

#### 6.1.1 Basketball

Subject to the outcome of a Business Case which addresses basketball's capital contribution and operational viability, the proposed extension of Belconnen Basketball Stadium (as sought by Basketball ACT) will provide a centralised multi-court venue for regular basketball competition and training, as well as one-off high-level events. The venue draws on a broad city-wide catchment (refer Appendix A) and additional courts should contribute to short term competition and training needs of basketball participants in both Woden and Gungahlin. It should also free up existing school courts for access by other indoor court sports (through relocation of club training back to Belconnen Basketball Stadium).

#### 6.1.2 Futsal

Capital Football is in the process of preparing a detailed Business Case for a dedicated football facility in Gungahlin which includes the initial provision of two (2) dedicated indoor courts for futsal. This would contribute to addressing short term futsal demands in Gungahlin. Once developed, this could free up some existing use of school courts for futsal, however Capital Football has indicated that there may be latent demand due to the lack of facility provision which may mean that continued use of existing school courts is required. If the facility is developed in Gungahlin the potential future provision of a satellite gymnastics facility as part of future expansion of the indoor courts would also service Gungahlin residents.

#### 6.1.3 Gymnastics

Noting the recent decision by Gymnastics Australia to relocate their high performance program interstate from the AIS, Gymnastics ACT should develop a Business Case for the dedicated State Centre they are seeking. Co-location with a resident club is considered critical to the long term financial viability of such a facility and to that extent there is a synergy between Gymnastics ACT's desire for a State Centre and Canberra City Gymnastics' need for a new home to replace the facility they have outgrown in Belconnen. The Business Case should investigate the opportunity to locate this facility at the University of Canberra.

### 6.2 Location Analysis

Brief comment is provided below on the three locations within the scope of the study - Belconnen, Gungahlin and Woden.

It is evident from the 2015 ACT Indoor Facility Study (which noted deficiencies in access to school facilities at the time) that there is an undersupply of multi-use or purpose-built indoor sporting facilities. This position was supported by the Community Councils during consultation with them.

While the potential futsal facility outlined at 6.1.2 above could address some immediate indoor sport needs in Gungahlin, the need for a multi-purpose indoor sport and recreation facility (as expressed by the Gungahlin Community Council) to service a large, growing and younger population will remain and increase.

In the case of Woden, the closure of public and private indoor facilities, future high-density development (although overall projected population growth to 2036 is low), and an older demographic suggests a likely demand for a different type of indoor facility (eg more recreation focussed). Certainly, a multi-purpose indoor facility was emphasised by the Woden Community Council representative.

Belconnen's projected population growth to 2036 is likely to maintain and increase demand for access to indoor facilities. The potential expansion of the Belconnen Basketball Stadium would service current and projected basketball demands in Belconnen and cater for a broader catchment area as currently exists. Alternatively, a 2-court multi-use facility in partnership with a school in the growth area of West Belconnen could be considered.



## 7. Planning to meet Future Sport and Recreation Needs (*The Case for a Different Longer Term Approach*)

### 7.1 Land Planning

Typically, master planning by government agencies for new housing developments includes provision of open space land for sport and recreation purposes, however it is a common problem in sport and recreation planning that land is not always fit-for-purpose or sufficient in size. In the ACT, the current forward planning for sport and recreation infrastructure does not always provide sufficient guidance on the amount and quality of land required. Often a generic allocation of land for sport and recreation is made without a clear understanding of the area needed, the purpose for which it is to be used, and its suitability. This often results in land that is unsuitable for other uses being allocated for sport and recreation purposes, and can create increased capital costs or reduced sport and recreation outcomes.

Recognising the lack of suitable land, the importance of sport and recreation infrastructure, and the need to provide facilities in proximity to the communities they are servicing, one of the options could be to investigate changing the allowable uses in the Urban Open Space zone to include some indoor community sport and recreation facilities (eg up to 15% of block size); and/ or to develop land suitability guidelines for sport and recreation purposes in new urban areas that can inform urban master planning and the allocation of land that is fit for the intended purpose.

The current approach to indoor facility provision in the ACT places a strong reliance on schools, tertiary institutions, and not-for-profit or commercial organisations. In new growth areas the timing of facility provision often lags behind need. There are limited budget resources to meet multiple demands so there is no certainty of capital works funding to meet sport and recreation needs driven by population growth. The end result means government is often playing catch-up in these areas.

### 7.2 Developer Contributions

There is a case for reviewing the planning and funding of land and facilities to meet future community needs for sport and recreation. Essentially infrastructure can be funded by ACT Government budget allocations, grants, partnerships with other sectors (eg sport, commercial, not-for-profit), development contributions, or a combination of all four.

The main issue to address is the absence of a nexus between urban growth and the timely provision of land and facilities. Approaches in other jurisdictions are generally based around the principle of the nexus between demand generated by a new development and a contribution to a forward financing system for sport and recreation infrastructure. The use of headworks charges, infrastructure contributions, or developer contributions is common in other states. This is often calculated as a “per lot” contribution rate and is used to fund the development of essential infrastructure such as roads, water, sewerage and sport and recreation facilities. Charges are calculated based on the expected demand arising from the development and it is common to see differential rates for different types of development.

In Queensland, a Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP) enables an Infrastructure Charge to be levied on all development, based on a per capita demand calculation that is averaged for different types of development (e.g. residential housing may be \$x per lot based on an expected average occupancy of 3.5 persons, while unit/ multi-dwelling development may levy a lower amount per unit based on expected 1.5 average occupancy). Local governments are restricted in what they can include as Trunk Infrastructure (i.e. charged for via the LGIP). In the case of sport and recreation, only the land component and embellishment for use can be charged through the LGIP system. A legislated ‘cap’ on total charges applies (for road, water, sewerage, public recreation and community facilities).

In NSW, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 enables development contributions to be levied for a range of infrastructure to help cover the cost of delivering infrastructure needed to support new communities. This can take various forms (eg S94 contributions, S94A levies, Voluntary Planning Agreements) but enables funding to be applied to the acquisition or embellishment of open space and provision of community sport and recreation facilities to meet the demand of future residents. Similarly, WA, Vic and SA all operate some form of contributions schemes that link demand created from development to the forward funding of community infrastructure.



Although ACT operates differently and has considerable control over new development areas, a more strategic approach to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure could incorporate:

- Development of sport and recreation infrastructure plans for the main development areas (including parks, sporting fields and built facilities)
- The infrastructure plan to consider timing of the items identified and nominate preferred locations and footprint of areas required.
- Calculation of forward cost estimates of sport and recreation infrastructure needed and a per capita cost.
- The calculation of a contribution per lot/ unit that is included as a cost of development (as happens in other jurisdictions)
- Establishment of an infrastructure development fund/ account for each development catchment which can be financed primarily by the contributions. The source of payment for the contribution could be a dedicated budget line item which has a direct dividend paid from sales or land disposal revenue.

Establishing a fund to forward finance would provide much more certainty for both the community and the developers that the community is going to receive sport and recreation infrastructure in a more timely manner. It also gives greater certainty to the department that it can plan and provide facilities in a strategic manner without constant revisions and changes due to the competitiveness of budget processes and limited capital budgets. This is no different to the approaches used for other infrastructure in new urban developments.



## 8. Options Analysis and Strategic Direction

### 8.1 Models of Indoor Facility Provision

There are generally three models of provision of indoor sport and recreation facilities that are considered by Councils across Australia. The advantages and disadvantages of each of these models is summarised at Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Models of Indoor Facility Provision**

| MODEL                                                           | ADVANTAGES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | DISADVANTAGES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sport owned and managed facilities (with Government support)    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfies the needs of individual sports</li> <li>• Generally, one-off capital contribution and provides opportunities for government and sport partnerships</li> <li>• Lower cost to government (if sustainable over long term)</li> <li>• No ongoing operating cost to government as operation is sport responsibility</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally single-purpose facilities and don't cater for other compatible sports</li> <li>• Don't necessarily cater for broader community recreation needs of surrounding residents</li> <li>• Risk of sport not being able to fund long term operating/ maintenance costs and needing 'rescue' by government or other partner</li> <li>• Sport may not have appropriate venue management skills (eg risk management, financial)</li> </ul> |
| Government owned and managed multi-purpose community facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides opportunity to satisfy a broader range of community sport and recreation needs</li> <li>• Maximises value for money from government investment in facilities</li> <li>• Avoids ad hoc facility provision if planned for early in the development phase of suburbs/districts</li> <li>• Avoids potential need to 'rescue' failed sport owned facilities</li> <li>• Enables timing to be aligned with needs arising from population growth</li> <li>• Ensures appropriate venue management skills are in place</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically managed by, or on behalf of, government (similar to swimming pools)</li> <li>• Higher overall cost to government arising from subsidised operating costs and funding cost of asset renewal</li> <li>• Potential dissatisfaction from individual sports who do not get their ideal facility or may not get desired court access hours (ie different sports trying to access the same space at the same time)</li> </ul>           |
| Facilities provided by Education sector                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximises use of community assets as peak time community use occurs outside school hours</li> <li>• Capital cost shared with other government agencies</li> <li>• Lower operating cost to government if situated at a University</li> <li>• Enables shared operating costs with other government agencies (if situated at a school)</li> <li>• Can be an effective solution where land availability is tight</li> </ul>                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historically not provided at a scale that addresses sport needs</li> <li>• Location within the school is critical to ensure ease of community access</li> <li>• Comprehensive Joint Use Policy must be in place between relevant government agencies to ensure security of tenure for sporting groups and maximising of community use.</li> </ul>                                                                                          |



## 8.2 Indoor Sports Courts Performance Data

Performance data on the operation of public indoor recreation centres throughout Australia, collected by the University of South Australia's Centre for Tourism and Leisure Management,<sup>5</sup> indicates that larger centres (>3,000m<sup>2</sup>) have higher cost recovery (median = 86%) and annual visitation (median = 249,645). From Otium Planning Group consulting experience, for indoor facilities that are sport-focussed, 4 or more courts are far more financially viable.

## 8.3 Options for Indoor Provision in ACT

Contemporary multi-purpose indoor facilities are provided by many Councils and incorporate a mix of components such as sports courts, health and fitness facilities, gymnastics facilities, programming areas, meeting areas, good quality food and beverage, creche etc. They may be managed by local authorities (either directly or via Council owned companies) or tendered out for external management. Typically, these multi-purpose facilities seek to maximise usage for both sport and recreation purposes and conduct a range of programs that service catchment communities.

The ACT Government has not historically provided these types of community facilities, although a similar example that has not been replicated, is the Active Leisure Centre that was constructed as part of Erindale College.

The provision, and wide distribution across Canberra, of government-owned multi-purpose indoor sport & recreation facilities would have significant budget implications and, in any event, may impact on the viability of existing sport-owned facilities. This was not recommended in the 2015 Indoor Sports Facility Study. Accordingly, they should be considered only in areas where there is high projected population growth, or where no reasonable access to indoor facilities exists. In areas of high projected population growth, the opportunity exists to make provision for these facilities early in the planning process and fund (or co-fund) their capital cost through developer contributions or partnerships with schools (refer section 7).

In addressing the scope of this project (ie focus on the sports of basketball, futsal and gymnastics; and consideration of needs in the districts of Gungahlin, Woden and Belconnen) the following models for providing indoor facilities were applied to the research and consultation outcomes:

1. Sport-focussed model of provision (ie facilities predominantly funded by sports)
2. Government-focussed model of provision (ie facilities predominantly funded by government), and
3. Education-focussed model of provision (ie facilities developed by government for shared school/ community use)

Based on analysis of research and consultation undertaken with the sports of basketball; futsal and gymnastics, a *sport-focussed model* of provision would support the development of:

- A 3-court expansion of Belconnen Basketball Stadium, thereby creating a 7-court headquarters facility for basketball competition and training (subject to completion of a detailed Business Case by Basketball ACT)
- 2 indoor courts for futsal as part of a dedicated football facility in Gungahlin (subject to finalisation of a detailed Business Case by Capital Football)
- State centre for high level gymnastics training and competitions in central Belconnen (possibly the University of Canberra) incorporating a relocated Canberra City Gymnastics (subject to completion of a detailed Business Case by ACT Gymnastics)

A *sport-focussed model* of provision is consistent with ACT Government's historical approach to indoor facility provision but requires a **strong business case** to ensure the ongoing operational viability of facilities and avoid the risk of failure or future requests for unbudgeted government support. The sport-provided model however, only partially addresses needs in Gungahlin and Woden.

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<sup>5</sup> Centre for Tourism and Leisure Management, University of South Australia. "CERM Performance Indicators for Recreation Centres, 2016". CERM performance indicators for indoor sporting centres, and aquatic & leisure centres are recognised nationally within the leisure industry. CERM PI® performance data includes cost recovery, catchment usage rates, secondary spending etc). Data for indoor centres is segmented by the size (m<sup>2</sup>) of the facility.

It should be noted that participation in, and provision of information for, the CERM database is on a purely voluntary subscription basis. To that end their database represents a "convenience sample" and serves as a comparative guide only, based on similar categories of facilities, but is not necessarily representative of all indoor sport and recreation centres. Most of the 69 centres incorporated in the 2016 report are local government owned. Data from the 2016 CERM report is based on the medians of the three most recent survey periods - 2014, 2015 and 2016.



Based on analysis of research and targeted consultation with representatives of Gungahlin, Woden and Belconnen Community Councils, a *government-focussed model* of provision would support the development of:

- A multi-purpose indoor sport & recreation centre in Gungahlin (subject to the outcome of a feasibility study)
- A smaller multi-purpose indoor sport & recreation centre in Woden (subject to the outcome of a feasibility study)

A *government focussed model* of provision has significant short to medium term **budget implications** and has not historically been adopted by ACT Government. In the longer term, the ACT Government could adopt a more strategic approach to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure in new development areas, such that developer contributions could fund (or co-fund) new infrastructure. This would reduce pressure on limited capital budgets and deliver sport and recreation infrastructure in a more timely manner (refer section 7).

Under the government-focussed model of provision, facility development would require the completion of feasibility studies to determine design elements, location, capital cost and funding arrangements, management arrangements, and operating viability.

An *education-focussed model* of provision offers an alternative means of addressing short-medium term indoor facility needs in Gungahlin and Woden as it enables the sharing of capital costs across government agencies, and maximises the benefits of investment in school infrastructure (provided the planning, design and management of facilities addresses the broadest range of community needs). Feasibility studies would still need to be completed to determine facility composition, location, capital cost and funding arrangements, management arrangements, and operating viability.

#### **8.4 Strategic Direction - Indoor Sports/ Areas Within Project Scope**

The ACT Government has not directly developed and managed indoor facilities. The provision, and wide distribution across Canberra, of government-owned multi-purpose indoor sport & recreation facilities would have significant budget implications and may impact on the viability of existing sport-owned facilities. Accordingly, any future government provision should be focussed only on those areas where there is high projected population growth, and the opportunity to offset capital costs via developer contributions (see below). In areas where no reasonable access to indoor facilities exists, partnerships with sports or schools should be considered.

There is a need for indoor facility provision in Gungahlin, and to a lesser extent Woden, which is only likely to be partially addressed by existing or proposed sport-provided facilities. Given budget limitations, developing shared use indoor facilities in schools would offer a more effective solution in these areas.

In the longer term, this study recommends that the ACT Government adopt a more strategic approach to the planning and funding of sport and recreation infrastructure in new development areas which enables infrastructure to be funded (or co-funded) by developer contributions, as occurs in other states (refer section 7). This would ensure that sport and recreation land/ facility needs are factored early into the planning process, reduce pressure on limited capital budgets and deliver sport and recreation infrastructure in a more timely manner.

Recognising historical facility provision arrangements and budget limitations within the ACT, the proposed strategic direction and priorities for those sports and areas within the scope of the study are as follows:

1. Pursue opportunities for partnership with an ACT Government school/college to deliver a multi-purpose indoor sport & recreation facility in Gungahlin.) Undertake a feasibility study to determine the facility mix components, location, capital cost, funding arrangements, management arrangements, and operating viability. The design components should consider sports courts (min 2) and other potential complementary facilities (i.e. gymnastics training area, programming space, health & fitness, administration/ meeting areas, storage, food & beverage, and parking).
2. Consider options to develop an indoor sport & recreation facility in Woden at an existing ACT Government school/college. Undertake a feasibility study to determine the facility mix components, location, capital cost, funding arrangements, management arrangements, operating viability. This facility would be smaller than the Gungahlin facility and design considerations should take into account any other existing private or government owned facilities within the catchment.
3. Support the preparation, by Capital Football, of a detailed Business Case for the inclusion of indoor futsal courts as part of a dedicated football facility in Gungahlin.



4. Support the preparation, by Basketball ACT, of a detailed Business Case for their planned 3-court expansion of Belconnen Basketball Stadium. If unsatisfactory, consider partnership opportunities with a school to deliver a multi-purpose indoor sport and recreation facility in West Belconnen, subject to a feasibility study which takes into account any existing private or government owned facilities within the catchment and examines facility mix components, location, capital cost, management arrangements, and operating viability.
5. Support the preparation, by Gymnastics ACT, of a feasibility study to examine the location, facility mix, capital cost, funding options, tenure and management arrangements, and operating projections for a dedicated State Gymnastics Centre, incorporating the relocation of Canberra City Gymnastics to underpin viability. The feasibility study should investigate the University of Canberra as the preferred site for the facility.
6. To reduce pressure on limited capital budgets and deliver sport and recreation infrastructure in a more timely manner, ACT Government should review its approach to the planning and funding of land and facilities to help cover the cost of delivering infrastructure needed to support new communities in population growth areas. This should include consideration of developer contributions as is common in other states (refer section 7).
7. To ensure the future planning and provision of shared use sport and recreation facilities at ACT Government schools is appropriately considered early in the site identification, planning and design phase, a representative from ACT Sport and Recreation should sit on relevant planning committees within the Education Directorate.
8. In the planning phase of any future shared use provision of indoor sports courts at schools, consideration should be given to elements which may maximise community use and viability (eg health & fitness, food and beverage, programming areas, gymnastics training area).

# Appendix A:

## Basketball ACT Membership Distribution

