

WA LITTLE ATHLETICS, ARENA JOONDALUP

Grievance

MR A.P. O'GORMAN (Joondalup) [9.48 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and relates to WA Little Athletics and the lack of facilities at Arena Joondalup. I thank the minister for accepting this grievance, as he has already handled two this morning. Little Athletics has been a tenant at Arena Joondalup for some eight years and it has possibly the longest-running tenancy at the arena, apart from the West Perth Football Club. I take this opportunity to congratulate West Perth on reaching the grand final, which will be played on Sunday, and I wish the team well.

Mr M.P. Murray: I'll agree to that. Up the Falcons!

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Up the Falcons, yes.

During the time that the Joondalup Little Athletics has been at the arena, it has generally been very happy with the facilities. There are, however, a number of outstanding issues that have never been resolved satisfactorily as far as the association is concerned. I have been informed by that group that it has taken up these issues on a number of occasions with the management of the arena. The issues include ablution facilities. Although there are excellent ablution facilities at the arena, they are hundreds of metres away from the track. When the association has its young athletes training and competing on competition days, there is a 480-metre round trip to the toilets and ablution block. This was the information given to me by WA Little Athletics. It was followed up in the Wanneroo local newspaper with a letter from a Clarkson parent of one of the young athletes who participates in the club. It is headed "Little athletes racing to the loo" and reads -

The 480 metre round trip from the track to the arena's front entrance to access toilets is a joke. The kids compete in five events during morning competitions and it is often with some distress that the distance to the available toilets has to be negotiated in between events, usually more than once over the four hours.

The athletics group stores its equipment at the arena, approximately 100 metres away from where they participate. I attended one of its competition days last year, and noticed that people dragged their equipment on a trailer from a sea container in the bush. They use a little unregistered ute - it is never driven on the road - which has been fixed up over the years to keep it going. They are very proud of their ute, but because it is 25 to 30 years old it is difficult to keep it going.

The issue of drinking-water facilities was taken up with the management of Arena Joondalup. The manager arranged for a tap to be located on the field where the 350 young people hold their events and practise every Saturday. The number of young people is set to increase because an additional three clubs will be joining the association this year. A tap and a hose are not sufficient facilities to cater for 350 young people, especially when they are training. We all know the importance of drinking water to ensure that we maintain fluids in our body, especially when participating in strenuous exercise. The former President of WA Little Athletics also wrote a letter to the local press on 3 September as follows -

I am involved and I am embarrassed every time the Joondalup Little Athletics Centre invites teams from other Perth suburbs to the arena during summer. Parents and athletes are surprised and shocked that there is no shade, no seating stand, no toilets, no drinkable water taps and no storage for our equipment.

This issue has raised considerable interest and is causing some concern among members of the community. As Mr Beach said in his letter, there is no shade or shelter close to the track. Parents erect a number of portable shades before every meeting or training day. It involves a considerable amount of time and effort and further detracts from the association's efforts to provide appropriate training for young athletes.

The association cannot raise funds, even at athletics meetings, due to conditions imposed by the arena management. Not even an association sausage sizzle can be held on an event day. The sale of food and other refreshments is one of the main sources of income in the northern suburbs for community groups such as WA Little Athletics. The association essentially has no place it can call home - no club rooms are provided. That means it has no place to display its trophies etc. If a community sporting group is to build up a history and culture surrounding its sport, its own club rooms are vital. It is a place for members to call their own in which they can display their club's achievements over the years and engender a sense of pride.

I am happy to present on behalf of the association issues that are similar to those raised by a number of other organisations that have ceased their tenancy at the arena. To date I am led to believe that soccer, hockey, rugby union and Wanneroo Basketball have left the arena and do not wish to return in the future. As we know, West Perth Football Club intended to leave the arena. However, I am pleased to say that with intervention from the Government we have managed to keep them at the arena. I congratulate the Government on that. With so many

organisations leaving what should be the premiere sporting venue in the northern suburbs, it faces the prospect of becoming a monument to what could have been.

MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee - Minister for Sport and Recreation) [9.54 am]: I thank the member for Joondalup for raising that grievance. Essentially, it is focused on WA Little Athletics facilities. However, towards the end of his grievance he referred to some of the other associations that are using or have used Arena Joondalup, including the West Perth Football Club. I recall that the West Perth Football Club announced to the world that it was leaving Arena Joondalup. The first I heard that it was not intending to move was on Sandover Medal night after I had shaken hands with the President of the West Perth Football Club, when somebody told me it had decided to stay. It is conceivable that we might have other plans for the arena, which will accommodate some of these other organisations. If West Perth Football Club has decided it will stay at Arena Joondalup, it would be appropriate for two things to happen. It could probably let me know officially, and I could then consider the matter in relation to the requirements of other potential users. The last official notification I had was that the West Perth Football Club was happy to move to the Wanneroo grounds.

We made an election commitment at the last state election that we would spend, I think, \$1.5 million on developing a synthetic athletics track at Arena Joondalup. Am I correct?

Mr A.P. O'Gorman: Yes.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We also made a commitment to provide an athletics facility in the southern suburbs in, I think, the Rockingham area and in the eastern suburbs - although I think that region already has one, which needs some work. We are redeveloping Perry Lakes stadium site, and Arena Joondalup will benefit from that commitment. A feasibility study is half completed on the development of those three athletics tracks; therefore, the Department of Sport and Recreation considers that any decision or announcement now would be pre-emptive. The people involved need more time to ensure that they are putting the right track in the right place to meet all the requirements of the sporting associations.

I am advised that we will support the construction of a new athletics track at Joondalup. However, the precise location is open to question. I countenanced locating it on the football field, given that, officially, the football club has left. What a magnificent athletics facility it would be. In that event, WA Little Athletics would have no grounds for complaints about ablution facilities. In fact, I am still thinking about that.

Arena Joondalup is uniquely a state government facility rather than a local government facility. Most other community sporting facilities are under the umbrella of local government authorities. In this case, Joondalup local government is not involved. However, a little bit of movement might be possible in that area. I have received advice on the specific points raised by WA Little Athletics -

1. There are extensive change rooms and ablution facilities in the main building at Arena Joondalup and use of these facilities are made by all users of the external playing fields including soccer, hockey, rugby, netball and tennis.
2. The storage facilities referred to are actually located 50 metres from the track.

I remember playing cricket in Albany for years where the nearest toilet block was 600 or 700 metres away and no water was available.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: It improved your sprinting ability!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Particularly before facing a fast bowler. To continue -

3. Arena Joondalup provided the water connection and hose at a cost of \$1,100.
4. The Association provides its own shade shelters at this time.

That is correct -

5. The Association does sell tea, coffee and cool drinks as a fundraiser. Health approvals are required for the sale of hot food.

If that is an obstacle, I am sure we can overcome it -

6. The Sports Bar is available for the display of trophies (as is the case for the other sporting users) and meeting rooms are provided free of charge.
Arena Joondalup derives approximately \$850 per annum from the Joondalup Little Athletics Association. The Arena -

That is, the State Government -

is responsible for all costs associated with the athletics field including line marking (\$1 000 p.a.), ground maintenance and power.

In other words, no revenue is being made out of Joondalup Little Athletics. We want to provide facilities for it, and it is fair that we contribute in that way. As well as our commitment to the athletics track, we are also providing funding to WA Little Athletics. We are providing \$200 000 to Athletica over four years - \$50 000 a year - to go directly to WA Little Athletics. As far as I know, that is the first time WA Little Athletics has been funded by the State Government. WA Little Athletics has some issues, but Mr Brian Newton, the very good president of WA Little Athletics, is very happy with that additional support.

I turn now to the use of Arena Joondalup - I do not know why it was not called Joondalup Arena. Five soccer clubs are based at Arena Joondalup, and difficulty is being experienced in accommodating further booking requests. Joondalup City Soccer has relocated from Arena Joondalup to Edith Cowan University in a commercial arrangement with ECU, so good luck to Edith Cowan University. I am also Minister for Education, of course. Rugby Union WA has left Arena Joondalup - with outstanding debt - because it was able to access another facility at no cost. Netball usage is at capacity, with three indoor courts and six outdoor courts being utilised. The Joondalup Hockey Club has relocated to a purpose-built hockey facility provided by the City of Joondalup, so congratulations to the City of Joondalup for that. The synthetic hockey surface, which was recently replaced by the trust at a cost of \$200 000, is used by the Western Australian Hockey Association for its club and state competitions. Training is conducted four nights a week, and competitions are held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. The Arena Swim Club has the highest membership of any swimming club in Western Australia. The health and fitness centre is operating at capacity.

I congratulate the member for Joondalup for being so pro-active in supporting the sports, including little athletics, in his area, and as Minister for Sport and Recreation I will do everything I possibly can to accommodate all of the concerns the member has raised and I congratulate him for bringing them to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Grievances noted.