

**DEPARTMENT OF SPORT AND RECREATION — FUNDING CRITERIA — UNDERCROFT  
BRIDGE CLUB**

*Grievance*

**MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine)** [9.50 am]: My grievance today is directed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and addresses funding criteria used by the department. The minister will be aware that her department has criteria that enable it to provide funding to community groups from the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. I understand the need to have clear funding criteria to make sure available funds are used in the best way. However, I have recently become aware of an example in which those criteria are lacking both commonsense and fairness for our increasingly ageing population. Earlier this year I was contacted by the Undercroft Bridge Club, which has sole use of a building it leases from the City of Joondalup. The building is located at Percy Doyle Reserve in Duncraig, in my electorate. This venue was constructed in 1993 with funding provided by the club, the federal government and Lotterywest. The bridge club has been deeply appreciative of this venue, and it has proved to be a successful social group. The club now has 450 members and provides 13 or 14 three-hour playing sessions each week. It also runs two 16-week teaching sessions a year, each attended by 25 to 30 people. Since July last year, the club has had to hire additional space for these sessions because they can no longer be accommodated at the clubrooms.

Over the past 12 years the club has sought a number of times to extend the building, but without success. The City of Joondalup had advised the club of its intention to redevelop the site, which would involve consolidating the buildings in the reserve. However, the city has deferred that redevelopment for about 20 years, so the sharing of premises is not currently an option for the club. Given that long delay, the Undercroft Bridge Club has applied to the city for support and funding to extend its current premises, and I am delighted to advise that the city has recognised the club's need and made an allocation of \$445 547 in its 2016–17 budget to enable construction of an extension and toilets. The current situation is that the Undercroft Bridge Club has itself committed \$140 000 towards this project to expand its premises. Although I would like to give credit to the City of Joondalup for its assistance to the club, I am very aware that, in two years' time, the funds committed may not be sufficient, given likely price increases. It may be that at that time the club will need to seek some state government financial assistance to make this project a reality. However, there is a problem and that is the reason for my grievance today.

I understand that the Department of Sport and Recreation advised the club that the game of bridge is not classified as recreation and therefore it cannot provide the club with funding. At this stage I would like to point out to those members who might be unaware of the game of bridge that it is considered to be the most complex card game in history. It dates from the nineteenth century, and is a sophisticated development of the seventeenth-century card game of whist. The complicated bidding process in bridge is mathematically based and the play requires the constant evaluation of cards played and points remaining. It is, therefore, a highly intellectual and challenging game, and it is beyond my comprehension that this pursuit cannot be considered to be recreational. On behalf of the Undercroft Bridge Club, I made formal inquiries of the minister about the club's eligibility for funding. Her recent reply indicates that the community sporting and recreation facilities fund's primary purpose is to increase participation in sport and recreation with an emphasis on physical activity outcomes, and encourages facility rationalisation and sharing. In this instance, the expansion of the Undercroft Bridge Club would not be considered for funding. Although I appreciate the minister's personal note that she has asked her office to investigate other financial opportunities, the bridge club nonetheless finds this statement very hard to accept, as do I. I have a number of issues to raise about these criteria. They do not consider the fact that some people's recreational needs are more mental and social than physical, and the fact that dedicated facilities are sometimes appropriate.

I say right now that I think the criteria for these grants need to be reviewed and updated, so should the Undercroft Bridge Club need to apply for assistance in 2016–17, it will be eligible to do so. Firstly, I point out that the fund's title indicates that this is supposed to be a sporting and recreation facilities fund, not just a sporting fund. Therefore, rejecting this club's application on the basis that it does not have an emphasis on physical activity is both illogical and unfair. As the club pointed out to me, and I point out to the house, the majority of the club's members are elderly and therefore may have physical limitations. In fact, getting out of the house and going to play bridge does involve physical activity, which for some of these seniors might be a great deal more than they would otherwise have—sitting at home alone watching TV, for example. The criteria being used also totally undervalue the importance of this club and its activities in terms of social contact and mental engagement. It is well documented that senior citizens who remain socially active and intellectually engaged are more likely to remain healthy and that intellectual engagement delays age-onset dementia. I therefore challenge the department's assumption that bridge does not have positive physical outcomes for its participants. It seems to me that the recreational needs of elderly citizens are not being properly considered in this planning process in terms of equity of investment. Older community members have fewer social options to interact with society due

to their age, health, mobility, finances and interests. Social clubs such as the Undercroft Bridge Club offer one of the few social and intellectual outlets available to them.

The government talks constantly about issues facing our ageing population and the need to provide services and facilities for them. Here is a case in which services are needed and the arbitrary criteria being imposed by a government body are preventing a constructive way to do exactly that. I look forward to some positive action being taken at the earliest possible time to ensure that groups like the Undercroft Bridge Club are eligible for funding. I thank the house for its attention.

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Sport and Recreation)** [9.55 am]: I thank the member for raising this issue with me; he has done so previously and made a number of passionate pleas to my office and me on behalf of his constituents. I undertake to continue to work with the member. I want to go through some of the issues that surround the community sporting and recreation facilities fund, which would be very familiar to everyone in this place. It is a fantastic opportunity for the government to support increasing physical activity in the community and that is the challenge I have with the bridge club. The primary purpose of the community sporting and recreation facilities fund is to increase physical activity and funding is always prioritised, and has been for some time, towards sporting and active recreation pursuits. I know that the member is aware of this because we have had this conversation previously.

I take the member back to the policy framework in which we operate not just this in state but across Australia. The National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework was signed off by all states and territories and the federal government in 2011. I will give the member some of the definitions, so that he knows we are being consistent in our application of what is considered to be sport and active recreation. Sport is defined as a human activity involving physical exertion and skill as the primary focus of the activity, with elements of competition in which rules and patterns of behaviour governing the activity exist formally through organisations and is generally recognised as a sport. Active recreation is defined as activities engaged in for the purpose of relaxation or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion and the primary focus on human activity. These activities are not based on formal competition rules. That is how we encompass both sport and recreation aspects in the department. The emphasis is on physical exertion, as distinct from a range of activities that might be socially and intellectually stimulating, and I understand that part of the argument is that recreation should incorporate some of that mental stimulation. I have sympathy with the member. My own family has members who are suffering from dementia and it is recognised that mental stimulation in activities such as this goes some way towards staving this off.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Shouldn't you do that before they get to that stage?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** That is right; we have to engage in it right now, as we go through life.

However, from a sport and recreation point of view, the funding we provide needs to be in and around physical exertion. The state government supports a variety of recreational organisations, such as Outdoors WA, Trails WA and the West Australian Mountain Bike Association. Again, these are probably not activities that these particular constituents are looking at pursuing. We also support the development of recreational facilities through the fund, such as aquatic facilities, multipurpose spaces in community facilities and active open space for recreational pursuits. In total, the department already supports over 100 sport and active recreation organisations and that provides great capacity for all our non-government organisations to increase the range of opportunities for people in the community. We have provided over \$20 million in grants this year to support this.

I will give the member some examples, so that he can see where our priorities are and have been in the past. Tennis West runs a program to support its clubs in providing cardio tennis sessions for older people, and the West Australian Football Commission has implemented AFL 9s competitions across Western Australia for people of all ages to be involved in a non-contact recreational version of their favourite sport. We also support a number of facilities that have significant attendance by seniors, including bowls, tennis, golf, hockey and soccer clubs and masters' sports. We also provide benefits to seniors in sport and recreation through discounts to VenuesWest facilities for eligible Seniors Card holders as well as seniors-specific grant programs through the Department of Local Government and Communities. That is one of the things that I wanted to talk about today. There are probably avenues for funding outside this particular funding stream that could be used to support the member's organisation to achieve what it would like to achieve.

In relation to community facilities, the member touched on the fact that we like organisations to co-locate. I understand that his local bridge club has contributed a significant amount of its own funding to its own building and it has also consulted with the City of Joondalup. I commend the group for being willing to get some of its own skin in the game and take control of that. The community sporting and recreation facilities fund has been and will continue to be about trying to co-locate community facilities. We think that is the best outcome for the community. It means that all groups using those facilities will have less overhead costs going forward. From my perspective, the CSRFF will continue to focus on sport and active recreation. I am not inclined to change the

guidelines but I am inclined to see what we can do to support the organisation in other ways. Any change in the CSRFF guidelines—every member would know that this fund is oversubscribed every year—would increase the number of projects and put further pressure on the government partnering with local organisations to deliver the outcomes that the community expects.

I have said that I am supportive of working with the member to see if we can work across government. Members of the opposition have mentioned Lotterywest.

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I understand that. I have seen many facilities in my electorate and across the state deliver a good outcome as a result of funding from CSRFF and Lotterywest partnering with individual organisations. It is really pleasing that the City of Joondalup, from a local government perspective, is willing to be involved.

The state government supports the Seniors Recreation Council by funding the broader council, which supports various organisations in that space. I am sure the member is aware that that council is a statewide organisation, with nine regional officers, two of whom are in development. It provides opportunities for seniors to connect with the community. The Seniors Recreation Council publishes a directory of sport and recreation activities. We are continuing to work with it. I know that the member was talking about bridge but he might be interested to know that recently we worked closely with the Seniors Recreation Council on a program to support Exergaming, which is about low impact sport for seniors to get them out of their houses. We talk about people leaving their houses and engaging in the community. That is very much a focus of the department. I am happy to continue talking to the member about this. I thank him for his advocacy.