

PORT BOUVARD RECREATION AND SPORTING CLUB

Grievance

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [9.54 am]: My grievance this morning is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. At the outset, I thank him for taking my grievance on behalf of the Port Bouvard Recreation and Sporting Club. This club was established in 1979 and is one of the popular recreation and sporting clubs in my district with more than 660 members. It provides an important location in our community south of the Cut where hundreds of people meet and participate in a whole manner of sports including predominantly bowls, and also tennis, croquet, yachting and a whole bunch of recreation activities including arts and crafts. Carpet bowls, bootscooting and a night market also occur in this part of the world in Dawesville where the club was established in the 1970s. It is a real community hub and many people who are not members go there for a range of events. It is especially popular for the gunfire breakfast after the Anzac Day service, and because of that the Dawesville RSL also operates from the Port Bouvard Rec and Sport Club.

The issue I would like to raise with the minister today relates to the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries grant that was provided through the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. As the minister knows, having written to him in April this year, the Port Bouvard club went through the resurfacing of the A green of its bowling club, which was based on the total resurfacing cost of \$199 000. The resurfacing was approved and the club went through a process to get one-third of the cost funded through a grant from CSRFF and one-third of the cost from the City of Mandurah, with the last third being its own contribution. After that grant was initially approved, the club subsequently, through its own efficiencies, found a cheaper and more optimal solution. The cost of works then came down to \$148 000. All the way through the process, the club had been very open and honest with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the City of Mandurah about that reduction in cost. A number of communications were made, certainly with the lead agency in the City of Mandurah, in which the club was assured by the City of Mandurah that the reduction in resurfacing costs would not impact the CSRFF grant or the City of Mandurah's contribution based on the original cost of \$199 000. Given that the club had been up-front and provided with a range of assurances that this cost reduction would not impact the grant provided, it was quite a concern to the club, as the minister would appreciate, when in March this year it received an invoice from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries to the value of \$8 816.50 to reclaim some of the CSRFF grant that the department considered to be unexpended. As the minister would appreciate, my concern is that this is a local club that is entirely part of the community and run by the community. To have been so transparent and up-front about the reduction in costs and assured that there would be no reduction in grants, and then to receive this invoice to pay back money was quite a shock that the club had not anticipated, given that this process had taken the better part of the year to get to this point.

As I said at the start of my grievance, the Port Bouvard Recreation and Sporting Club provides a very valuable and important service in an area of Dawesville that is typically underinvested in. A large number of people in the community come to the club to enjoy not only sporting and recreational activities, but also other things such as the gunfire breakfast and interactions with the RSL.

I appreciate that the minister is taking my grievance this morning and acknowledge his previous correspondence advising that he has looked into the matter but, unfortunately, he has come back and said that the club would have to pay back the sum of \$8 000. My grievance here this morning is, as a patron of the club, to implore on behalf of the club the minister to revisit this in good faith and allow the club to retain the \$8 000 so that it can reinvest it into the club. It would not be money simply sitting in a bank; it would be reinvested into the club and, ultimately, spent in the spirit of what the community sporting and recreation facilities fund in its incarnation would hope to achieve in the provision of these important community grants.

It would be good if it were at all possible for the Department of Sport and Recreation and the minister to look at this in good faith and realise that the club had acted with openness and integrity the whole way though, having been assured that it would not have a negative impact on its process and, even having been up-front, and that it would be provided with the exact same amount, as though the resurfacing costs were based on the \$199 000 figure rather than \$148 000. It would enable not just the 660-plus members who use the club to continue to have a vibrant facility and one that I think would be better invested in if they were to keep that money rather than it being returned, but also it would enable the greater community of Dawesville to enjoy what is clearly a very popular location and facility and a very popular recreation and sporting club.

Again, I appreciate the minister's looking into this further and I appreciate the correspondence we have had to date. I again appeal to him on behalf of not just the club, but the broader Dawesville community, to, hopefully, get some good news here this morning that might see that club keep a very minuscule amount compared with the larger sporting budget the minister oversees and certainly the CSRFF grants round. It will be an important and quite substantial amount for the club to keep going forward.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [10.00 am]: Thank you, member for Dawesville. I always welcome hearing problems raised in here. I say up-front that, unfortunately, I will not be able to accede to his request. I must make it very clear that a grant agreement was in place, which certainly set out what funding was available and how it should be spent. I take my hat off to the club itself, which has worked very hard to keep down costs, generally. The problem is an overrun, although in this case the club has been very vigilant and I take my hat off to it.

As a grant has been signed off, the excess funding has to come back. I have taken steps to make sure it does not happen to other clubs. Unfortunately, there is a cut-off line. I am asking the department to make sure payments are made in steps so that overruns do not occur and that milestone payments are made along the way. In saying that, this is not the only club. I have copped the same sort of thing from my club in Capel in my electorate. That puts the focus on the fact that the way we have been doing things has not been quite right. People could claim for an overspend and that money was then funnelled off when it should probably have gone to another club.

The other thing I must make very clear is that clubs have to understand that, especially with artificial surfaces, most of them probably have a 10 or 12-year life span. They therefore must put money away; they cannot use the turf or carpet—whatever it is called—for 10 years and come to the government asking for a handout. It could add 5c to the cost of a glass of beer or something like that, with a sign in the club indicating that 5c of the cost of their glass of beer will go into a sinking fund that will pay for the next lot of turf. It is becoming ridiculous that right across the state, whether it be tennis, croquet, or whatever we look at, people are coming to the government for a handout. To the disappointment of some, I have reduced the amount available from the \$12 million fund, which is over-subscribed by a huge amount. Some of the larger centres, such as the growth areas in Mandurah, may want a big facility, but that could soak up 20 or 30 per cent of that fund in one hit, so we have to be very careful. Nevertheless, I really understand where the member is coming from.

The other point I make strongly is that in Whitfords, a young group of people wanted turf on their hockey field. They raised \$600 000 and never asked for any money. In real terms, that club is subsidising someone else because it did not take any money out of the fund. By very hard work, it either has been penalised to some degree or is subsidising another club. I will not mention the name but another one down the road had its carpet for 12 years but did not have one cent in the bank to replace it. That is not good financial management and it is something the clubs must come to grips with. I will certainly put in place that funding. We will need to establish a sinking fund beside it so that as we move on, there is financial assistance from the club. That does not mean to say that I am ruling out assistance for some of the smaller clubs that will not have the ability to raise large amounts. The member for Dawesville's club has 660-odd members, while some clubs will have only 50 members. How would they find roughly \$300 000 for a bowling green? They would not, so they need assistance.

I am working very hard to make it a fair system, but due to the grant agreement, I cannot change what the Port Bouvard Recreation and Sporting Club has done. Other clubs have far greater financial responsibility to pay funds back to the department, which they have not paid, and I am sure they will get the same response as this club is receiving. However, I take my hat off to it. It is not as though we are trying to single someone out—it is certainly not that. It is about being fair and honouring agreements. To the club itself, I wish it the best but, unfortunately, in this case, I cannot help.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: Thank you, minister.