

SPORTS FACILITIES — MUCHEA AND DARDANUP

Grievance

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [9.20 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and concerns the provision of sports change rooms and facilities. Two quite separate centres are the subject of this grievance. One is in my electorate of Moore at Muchea and the other is in the minister's electorate of Collie–Preston. I know from discussions with him that he is very well aware of it. The issue has come to my attention thanks to the efforts of Nationals WA upper house member Hon Colin Holt and Mr Wayne Sanford, the Nationals candidate for the seat of Collie–Preston, which will be vacated by the minister on his retirement.

The Dardanup sporting and community clubs that use the Wells Recreation Reserve report that the current change room is a single demountable donga that has no running water. Players cannot shower after games or training, which is particularly damaging for the local junior soccer club. The kitchen facilities are also substandard such that fresh food cannot be prepared or sold onsite, meaning that clubs are unable to run self-sustainably through food and drink sales. The soccer club, the Eaton Dardanup Football Club, had 300 members when it moved there from Eaton five years ago to accommodate the Eaton Boomers football club. Eaton Dardanup Football Club is now down to fewer than 100 members because it lost its women's team and three of the men's teams, principally because of the poor change room facility and the inability to run its own fresh food canteen. The low standard of facilities reduces the socialising aspect of the clubs' sports and their ability to raise money. Clubs at the Wells Recreation Reserve include Eaton Dardanup Football Club, Dardanup Cricket Club, South West Veteran Car Club, Dardanup junior basketball club, Dardanup Tennis Club, Dardanup Bull and Barrel Festival and the South West Rose Society. There are approximately 500 users across all clubs, including 250 children.

The Shire of Dardanup recognises the need to improve the facility in its “Dardanup Townsite Community Facilities Plan 2018” and is currently completing improvement planning in consultation with user groups. There are plans to have a larger, shared building that includes catering facilities and a separate change room with shower and toilet facilities that will also double as public toilets. Verandah and spectator seating would be incorporated in the building and new tennis and basketball courts would replace the current ageing ones. There is a funding application to the state government, and the total cost of the project is \$2.45 million. A previous funding application for \$2.3 million was made as part of the shire's economic stimulus package of 2020 and was submitted to cabinet members at the regional cabinet in Collie. Wayne Sanford, Mia Davies and Colin Holt visited the club on 26 August and met with the secretary of Dardanup's sporting and community clubs, Jill Cross, and on the same day they also met with the Shire of Dardanup to discuss these issues.

I turn now to Chittering in the electorate of Moore. Muchea has a real and urgent need to upgrade its facilities. The area has a growing population, which was accelerated due to the recent completion of the Tonkin Highway extension linking Muchea to Perth Airport. In my view, the Muchea sports facility upgrades should have been supported much more strongly by the Shire of Chittering in the past, but it has been distracted by planning for a major sporting facility 12 kilometres to the east at Lower Chittering. That \$9.71 million project was based on a large federal grant of \$4.71 million to provide a shared facility with a local independent school. The Shire of Chittering was to fund the balance, with \$2 million to be paid back by the school. This massive project was poorly researched and always lacked community support, as evidenced by the change of council at the 2019 elections, which saw it take a new direction. The new council sought to divert part of the federal funding to provide upgraded facilities at Muchea and deliver a much more modest facility in Lower Chittering. The new application had my support and it included a \$2.2 million upgrade for Muchea. On 14 August 2020, the shire was informed by the federal government that the application to vary the grant was unsuccessful. The shire has now discontinued that project and has informed the federal government of that. The urgent need to upgrade the facilities at Muchea still exists. As recently as Monday, I met with Chittering shire president, Councillor Kylie Hughes, and members of the Muchea Hall users group at the oval.

The number of users at Muchea Hall is close to 500 a week. The Chittering Junior Football Club has now grown to include three girls' sides. The Western Australian Cricket Association has stated that the Chittering Junior Cricket Club in 2019 had 10 times more girls playing cricket compared with the state average, but that having no facilities of a proper standard for the female members will affect those teams. Muchea Oval is the central place for all junior football and cricket in the Shire of Chittering and beyond, with members coming from Bindoon, Chittering, Gingin, Lower Chittering, Muchea, Bullsbrook and other areas. It is classified as lying in the wheatbelt region, but the positioning of Muchea Oval is critical for sporting competition due to its proximity to Perth, as all the teams that are based at Muchea Oval compete with metropolitan teams. Club membership numbers are growing rapidly. The latest figures are: netball, 95; senior cricket, 50; junior cricket, 85; and junior football, 266, including 53 girls. All the clubs are growing.

Currently, there is a funding request before the state government. The Muchea Hall users' group has accumulated contributions of approximately \$500 000, including GST, towards a change room and clubroom development, costing \$1.65 million, GST exclusive. There is an application for a community sporting and recreation facilities fund grant of \$550 000, with the shire making up the balance. The Muchea group has written, according to my notes —

“With the most used oval in the district, we hope that after our 3rd attempt of funding, that CSRFF will allow the sporting clubs to have facilities at the legal standards for playing sport, for too long we have had 24 junior football players per team lining up to use one toilet, or having no closed in showers, or the clubs sporting memorabilia history sitting on the floor due to lack of clubroom space, or the girls teams needing to wedge cushions into holes so no one can look into the changerooms as they get ready.”

I seek the minister's support to rectify the urgent need for change rooms and facility upgrades at Wells Recreation Reserve, Dardanup, and the Muchea Oval sportsground. Both are well-used facilities with substandard change rooms and clubrooms, and both are very much in need of improvement, especially with the growth of female participation in sports such as football, soccer and cricket.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [9.27 am]: I thank the member for the grievance and for giving me some forewarning of it so that I could chase it up. I find it quite amazing to think that I have had two grievances from the Nationals WA in my four years as a minister and that both have been about my electorate. What I can say to you is this: don't try to put your foot into something you know nothing about. I agree that those facilities are very poor, but I also have a wish list from the Shire of Dardanup that adds up to \$52 million, but it has not prioritised it. I know the shire pushed very hard for the cricket facilities at Pratt Road. It is up to the community to go back to the shire and ask it to prioritise what it wants and to then put in a grant application, which has not been done. The member has a wish list, like any of us. We all have a wish list, and it is good to see that it has been pulled out, but there is a process that people have to go through. I do not have a bag of money that I can drop. The National Party might have done that under royalties for regions, but we have a process that people have to go through. I have been down there. I have that document in my office and I have read it time and again as we come towards election time to try to see what can be done during the election process. That is no different from what the member is doing now. I respect that the issue has been brought up, but to pick out one project out of \$52 million worth is a very difficult issue. I again say that it has to go through a process, and the process is that the shire will allocate money for whichever project it decides on.

In saying that, this gives me an opportunity to say what I have already done down there. One facility is the Eaton Bowling Club, which is a \$4 million facility that has been turned into a hub. I thank the member for Moore for the opportunity to espouse what I have already done in my electorate. The member did not say anything about that. There are also the boat ramps.

Mr R.S. Love: I'm sure you've done many things.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Does the member want me to read the whole list? Thank you very much for that!

We have also provided funds for road and parking area upgrades at Gnomesville and for the Ferguson Valley, which is in the Dardanup area. All those things have been asked for by the shire. The member cannot come in and say, “I want”, but I agree that he can highlight the problems. I have been there and I have stood in those change rooms. It is also where they hold the Bull and Barrel Festival. There is a complete new plan for that area, but it will cost a lot more than \$2 million because the shire wants to revitalise the whole facility. I am aware of that. Coming into the chamber to play cheap politics and to pull one out does a disservice —

Mr D.T. Redman: It's not cheap politics.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: It is because it is one of many things on the list and the shire has not identified where it sits as a priority. Yes, we are all allowed to lobby. I thank the member for the opportunity to say that I am doing that work. I have done previous work and, as I said, Eaton Bowling Club is one example. We will get on with that when it comes through the system, but until then, we cannot just pull one out.

The Muchea sporting ground issue is a bit more concerning. That is a community problem. Different shire councillors have a different opinion. I believe that the community was not consulted strongly enough about where the facilities should go. I have to be very careful about this because an application grant is going through the independent process. What the member said about the Muchea sporting ground is more of what a grievance should be. The community is saying, “This is what should have happened.” The previous local government did not go down the right lines and it then lost funding from the federal government, which disappoints me immensely. But as I have said, a process is being worked through and a result is not far away. I do not know what the answer will be because an independent body is working through the issues to make sure that the money is spread around and everyone gets their share. Over the last couple of years, the government has provided \$2.5 million for sporting facilities in the member's electorate. I think the amount might be greater than that. It is not as though the area has been starved to death of funding. I stress that it must go through the system, and that means the local member—it is great that the member

for Moore has made this grievance—getting into the same bucket as the shire and working with the community to bring that forward. Time and again we are lobbied by interest groups, but that is the name of the game. Sometimes interest group members become members of a council to try to influence it with all the games that are played about what goes where.

I hear the member loud and clear that the decision did not quite fit in with community expectations. It is disappointing to hear about the number of kids who want to play sport there but cannot because they do not have the facilities. It is certainly disappointing. The member must remember that it is one-third, one-third and one-third, with one-third of the funding coming from the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. It is my understanding that the community has a little pot of money that would be very helpful to the shire and government, and it would assist in bringing that money forward.

Mr R.S. Love: It is a third, a third, a third arrangement.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Yes. Again, it is provided as a stimulant. The grant system is very welcome in country areas because without government help, those areas would not get a lot of those facilities. Here we are with a chance. The member has brought it up, but the process is well down the road. The member cannot lobby anyone and I cannot speak about it; otherwise, someone will talk about me in the same way that they talked about the National Party sports awards, which happened federally. I am not going down that road. The member can check anywhere along the line and he will see that the process is fair and equitable. I think 68 per cent of the funding that has occurred during my time as minister has gone to non-Labor held seats. The member should not think that I am pointing the finger and playing political games. It is about the community. The member has raised his point. He needs to get the shire and the community onside and make sure they push that forward.