

15 December 2021

Ms Kate Kent
Deputy Secretary
Communities, Sport and Recreation

By email: sportrec@communities.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Kent

Tasmanian Sport and Active Recreation Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Tasmanian Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (the Strategy). This submission has been prepared by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) in collaboration with our members; all 29 councils.

LGAT is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993* and is the representative body and advocate for local government in Tasmania. Where a council has made a direct submission to this process, any omission of specific comments made by that council in this submission should not be viewed as lack of support by the LGAT for that specific issue.

We support the themes and intent of the Strategy and its overall approach. There are two areas of concern for local government:

1. The lack of fair and accurate recognition of the unique and essential role that local government plays in the provision of sport and recreation facilities across Tasmania.
2. The limited scope of the Strategy to 'active' recreation and the intention to identify active recreation as a stand-alone sector.

The discussion paper does acknowledge that local government contributes to the sport and active recreation sector and plays a key role, along with others, in developing the sector and developing and managing many sport and recreation facilities and spaces. It notes that local government has a key role in managing and providing access to important infrastructure, sport and recreation facilities and spaces. The Department also wants to increase their engagement with local government, among others (p. 25).

This recognition is welcome but is an inadequate representation of the unique and essential role played by councils in sport and recreation. Tasmanian community sport infrastructure is mostly owned, operated or maintained by local government and the sector is often the only provider of facilities and services in some rural and regional areas. Funding comes from a variety of sources including council rates, state and commonwealth funding, and business sponsorships. The sustained and reliable work of councils makes a significant contribution to the economic, social and health benefits identified in the Strategy discussion paper. These benefits are both direct and indirect in that the infrastructure provides facilities for direct public use and opportunities for businesses to offer services to diverse clients. Councils are the direct point of contact for sporting, recreation and social clubs, particularly in rural and regional communities. In many small communities, the private sport and recreation sector is not present.

The role of local government as the local community representative must also be acknowledged. We request that this role is described in a separate section that identifies its unique relationship with local communities as a level of government. Local government's engagement in implementing the Strategy must be recognised as a process different from consultation with sporting clubs, businesses and other community groups.

Our view is that local government and the broader community is not well served by the separation of active recreation from other forms of recreation that also rely on sport and recreation facilities and administration. Limiting the Strategy's scope to active recreation as a stand-alone sector appears to offer no benefit to communities. It is unclear how this limited view will improve health and wellbeing outcomes. We are concerned that the limitation to active recreation detracts from the Strategy's contribution to improving health and wellbeing outcomes across Tasmania.

The Strategy's themes in the section on the value of why sport and active recreation matters are health and wellbeing, community connection, inclusion and safety, our identity and culture, and education outcomes. Intentionally limiting recreation to activity that requires physical exertion, with the primary focus on human activity, restricts the Strategy's ability to contribute to those priorities. This definition excludes other recreational activities that commonly take place in sport and recreation infrastructure. Consequently, this excludes recreation activities that contribute to the Strategy's rationale for why sport and active recreation matters. The discussion paper does not identify what other government policy areas would cover this significant gap.

The intention to focus on sport and recreation as stand-alone appears to not be supported by some of elements of the Strategy itself, including the sport and recreation in Tasmania overview (p. 11) and the economic value case (p. 7). The data included in the Strategy does not separate active from other forms of recreation. The KPMG Report "The

Value of Community Sport Infrastructure. Investigating the value of community sport facilities to Australia” (2018, Australian Sports Commission) does not make this distinction. That report identifies health, social and economic benefits associated with community sports facilities in Australia. It identifies health benefits of \$4.9 billion, economic benefits of \$6.3 billion and social benefits worth \$5.1 billion.

The stand-alone nature of the Strategy is also not consistent with the current policies identified in the related policies section (p. 19). The major theme across these policies is the State Government’s commitment to a coherent approach to health in all policies. Local government is the level of government where Federal and State Government polices come together for implementation. Making sense of diverse policies is challenging enough, without the deliberate attempt to separate sport and active recreation out as a stand-alone sector. Our view is that this will not benefit councils, nor will it increase the potential of improving health and wellbeing outcomes beyond the more inclusive sport and recreation framework. It may lead to decreased opportunities for those unable to participate in active recreation for a wide variety of reasons.

If you have any queries or would like further information, please contact Lynden Leppard, Policy Officer at lynden.leppard@lgat.tas.gov.au or telephone 6146 3744.

Yours sincerely



Dion Lester
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER