



4 October 2011

Willetton Sports Club - Statement

Dr Mike Nahan, the Member for Riverton said the Willetton Sports Club, which provides services to Amateur Football, Soccer, Cricket, Lawn Bowls, Basketball, Tennis, Netball and Little Athletics, is experiencing difficulties and may be forced to close.

"The Club's facilities were built, and are owned, by the City of Canning. The Club, which leases the facilities from the City, has struggled financially for years and the facilities have become run down and in need of re-investment," said Dr Nahan.

"The City of Canning has known about these difficulties for years. In 1998, the City did write off the remainder of the initial construction loan but in recent years, Council has shown a reluctance to take leadership in resolving the very real problems at the Club."

"The Club's Board was revamped a few years ago to include people with business and facilities management skills. Mr Andrew Sharpe of the Council's Executive Corporate Services joined the Board to provide financial expertise and to report back to the City. I became Patron of the Club at that time."

"The new Board put in place many changes and succeeded in improving the operating position of the Club. However, the Club was found to be laden with substantial debt from previous years and importantly; it faces a growing bill to replace old and worn-out equipment."

"The Board has sought assistance from Council but at this stage, that has been denied. Instead, Council has requested that the Club expend further monies to do a financial audit and present a business plan. Council voted against providing the Club with the funds to undertake the audit and business plan at its meeting on 27 September 2011."

"The Mayor says the Club's facilities could be closed without impeding the operation of the various sporting clubs. I don't believe the two can be separated. Club members use the building as a 'clubhouse' for meetings, for get-together's after the games, for fundraising activities to provide equipment for their members and as a storage area for their equipment."

Dr Nahan said last year, over 30,000 people used the facilities. More than 1,200 individuals, local schools and other community groups have forward bookings for the Club's function rooms over the next 18 months.

"These include school graduations, weddings, 21st birthdays and other family events. People have paid deposits to secure these bookings but they could be left without a venue and face the loss of their deposits if the WSC closes," said Dr Nahan.

"I fully agree with the Mayor that the City should not put money into a failing model. However, the Club could be made to work. I personally urge the Mayor and his fellow Councillors to step up to the mark on this matter. The community needs this facility."

“Council should, on an interim basis, take over the operation of the Club and put in a manager. It should then develop a strategic plan with the input of the community to restructure and redevelop the facilities. I am more than willing to continue to work with the City and the community to keep the Willetton Sport Club going as a vital local asset.”

“I would like to thank the volunteers and community leaders who have served on the Board of the Willetton Sports Club for all their efforts on behalf of the community to help keep the Club alive.”

Media Contact: Dr Mike Nahan 9457 1282 or 0412 911 969