



MEDIA RELEASE

January 2020

AUSTRALIAN PROGRESSIVES DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION OF SENATOR BRIDGET McKENZIE OVER SPORTS RORTS AFFAIR

The Australian Progressives demand the immediate resignation or sacking of Senator Bridget McKenzie, for her deliberately unethical use of \$100 million in sports funding to fund sports grants in marginal and targeted electorates.

A report from the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has slammed the use of the Community Sports Infrastructure Fund, suggesting McKenzie had influenced the approval and disbursement of funds, for which she had no legal authority. This is yet another example of the inherent and unacceptable lack of ethics in our government

Public service agencies and non-corporate bodies are mandated to abide by the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs). The Australian Sports Commission (ASC), rebranded in 2018 to Sport Australia, is notionally independent and therefore, is not bound by the CGRG's. On this occasion, instead of Sport Australia deciding who should receive these annual grants based on a strident selection process, they were instructed by then Minister for Health that Ms McKenzie as Minister for Sport would be circumventing the required process and would decide who would receive grants, in a clear and obvious breach of the CGRGs.

The ANAO report states: "In early June 2018, Sport Australia recorded adherence to the *Australian Sports Commission Act 1989* required that it, not the minister, approve the award of Community Sports Infrastructure Program funding. The guidelines published on 2 August 2018 identified that the minister would approve CSIP funding..."

After working out how to circumnavigate the required process, Ms McKenzie's office demanded Sport Australia accept nine late and incomplete applications, contrary to rules related to applications for grants across the public service. Of those nine, eight were awarded funding by her own approval.

In the first round of the funding from the \$100M, 41% of funded projects were not on Sport Australia's list of 426 projects endorsed by its board. In the second round, this jumped to 70%, whilst in the third round, it was 73%. This means three quarters of the funding in the third round was awarded on the basis it helped the coalition in marginal seats, all decided by Ms McKenzie.

In other words, Ms McKenzie engaged in blatant pork barrelling.

Ms McKenzie chose an organisation operating under different rules, to knowingly and willingly rort Australian taxpayers. Ms McKenzie and her office ran roughshod over merit-based assessment from the Sport Australia board, to channel funds to targeted marginal electorates in order to shore up votes in potentially winnable electorates for the coalition in the upcoming federal election



This emphasises the Australian Progressives' policy position calling for the immediate creation of a Federal ICAC. The arrogant and mendacious attitudes of Ms McKenzie, and other ministers who inappropriately and unethically divert taxpayers funds to their own benefit, are a disgrace to the Australian democratic process and do not reflect the values and ethics that Australians demand of our elected representatives.

<https://www.progressives.org.au/integrity>

ENDS

About Australian Progressives:

We believe in the advancement of an empathetic society - one in which all citizens of Australia can reach their full potential and find fulfilment in their lives within a thriving democracy. We will be a government with the guts to advance society through laws, services and infrastructure, for the benefit of all people. We believe government and communities should work together to develop creative and passionate individuals who can improve the world around them, embracing education, technology, science, culture and global leadership.

Australian Progressives President Robert Knight is available for comment.

For further information or interview requests, please contact: Pete Dillon – National Communications Director

communications@progressives.org.au or 0409 142 365

www.progressives.org.au

Facebook: /AusProgressive

Twitter: @AusProgressive