



**Mr Sam Birrell MP**  
Federal Member for Nicholls

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Blowing the whistle on community sport facilities

Federal Member for Nicholls, Sam Birrell MP, has blown the whistle and called on the Labor Government to provide funding to upgrade community sport facilities across Nicholls.

Mr Birrell spoke in Parliament on Wednesday about the dire state of a number of local sports facilities and the need for the Labor Government to replace regional funding schemes established by the Coalition, after they were scrapped in Labor's October budget.

Mr Birrell shined the spotlight on women's change facilities including those at Murchison Toolamba Football Club.

"The AFL audited 3000 facilities across Victoria and Murchison Toolamba Football Netball Club President, Craig Thomson, confirmed publicly that the club ranked in the bottom 10 per cent," Mr Birrell told Parliament.

"The tiny female change room has space for 3 players at a time and 1 shower."

"This year the club has 80 netballers in 8 teams and 10 girls playing football at junior level."

"Despite the lack of facilities, the female participation rate has gone up – a credit to the players and the club," he said.

Mr Birrell is continuing to visit netball and football clubs across the electorate and is aiming it to train with every club during his first term.

Mr Birrell said although netball participation has remained strong for decades and AFLW participation is rapidly growing, club facilities are not keeping up.

"Longwood has 6 netball sides but no dedicated female facilities," Mr Birrell told Parliament.

"President Ricki Shiner told me on game day at Redlegs Stadium there are 130 players – 2 toilets and no showers".

"Women change behind a curtain in a shed."

"We can't promote female participation and not provide facilities," he said.

He called on the Government to provide funding as clubs and local governments could not pick up the slack alone.

“It is the Australian Government that needs to step up and invest in inclusive facilities that foster greater participation,” Mr Birrell told Parliament.

“The Coalition had the Building Better Regions Fund and Community Development Grants to fund these projects.”

“This Government created its own regional grant streams in October but nearly six months later hasn’t released guidelines or a single dollar.

“Get on with it – show some respect to regional communities,” he said.

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Speaking with Ricki Shiner about the State of Longwood Netball Club Facilities.



Sam Birrell Training with Mooroopna Netball Club.