



by STEPHEN POLLOCK

THE outdoor tennis court at Perth Arena is slated to remain unused for 51 weeks of the year, despite research revealing a major shortfall in inner-city recreation space.

The court is only used by players practising, one week a year, for the Hopman Cup.

Perth Labor MP John Hyde is lobbying to have the taxpayer-funded court available for public use the rest of the year, but WA government-appointed arena operators AEG Ogden are baulking at the cost of allowing the peasants in.

"The request has been declined due to the high risk of surface damage and the potential for increased maintenance costs," WA sports minister Terry Waldron wrote in a letter to Mr Hyde.

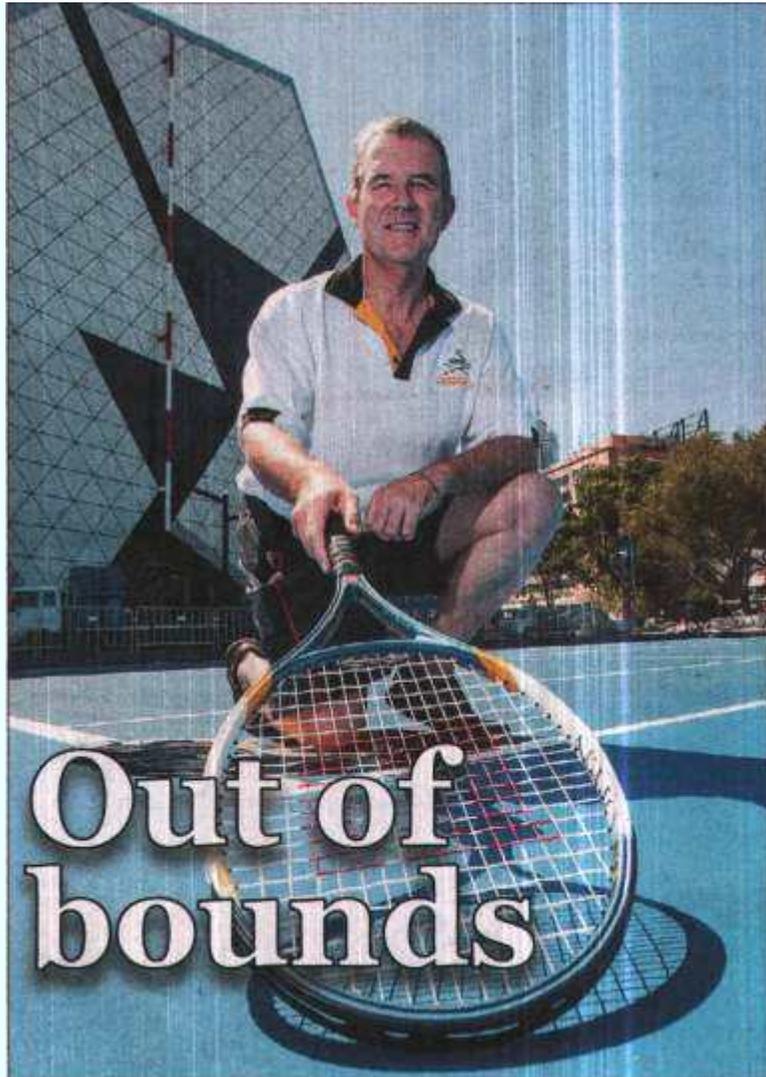
A recent government-funded study by Curtin University concluded Perth needs another 51.6ha of open space to meet the needs of its growing population.

Associate professor Garry Middle predicted the shortfall could blow-out to 510ha by 2031—including 165ha of open space, with the remainder in support facilities such as clubrooms.

Mr Hyde says it's criminal to leave the courts unused 51 weeks a year.

"Given this latest report from Curtin Uni on our growing recreation needs, I call on the Barnett government to open this tennis court for locals and to also incorporate a half-basketball court," he told the Voice.

"The state seat of Perth has now the biggest population



• John Hyde wants locals to be able to use the tennis court at Perth Arena, but the managers say no. *Photo by Jeremy Dixon*

in WA, with many of the new arrivals moving into apartments, yet the Barnett government has failed to meet residents' recreation needs.

"The government's own sport and recreation department made an official submission on the plan to convert the Esplanade

into retail and office towers, saying alternative recreation space would need to be found."

The Voice contacted Mr Waldron but media adviser Paul Jarvis says he won't comment because the taxpayer-funded \$549m arena is managed by AEG Ogden.