

**Division 35: Western Australian Sports Centre Trust, \$93 816 000 —**

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr M.P. Murray, Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Mrs J. Carren, Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Mr G. Nordsvan, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr S. Humfrey, Principal Project Manager, Design Development Director.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** With the indulgence of those assembled, I will ask the first question.

Minister, I refer you to the first and second dot points on page 476, concerning Optus Stadium. In relation to security and the orderly running of the venue, have there been any evacuation drills? What preparatory work has been done about possible incidents at the stadium, bearing in mind that the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee is looking at this issue at the moment?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Richmond supporters had one at three-quarter time on Sunday. It worked very well!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Plenty of work has been done on security out there. I am very concerned that if there is a major problem and we reveal everything that has been done in those areas, we could exacerbate the problem. As we know, an inquiry is being undertaken, and the member for Burns Beach is a member of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee that is working through that. We have to be very careful with what we show. We live in an evil world and some people out there are very, very evil and will go to extreme lengths to do damage to others. I do not want us to say this is what is here and this is what is there. I think most members of the standing committee have been through—I wait for a nod from the member—and looked at the facilities. I went and looked at some of the security measures at nib Stadium. I do not want to go into detail but it was impressive to see what is there. I ask anyone in here—I am not sure whether it is possible, but I look for a nod—to look at some of the security systems, but without telling people exactly what is there, because if we did, we would give away the plot and make it easy for others. I am not trying to be evasive; I am offering people an opportunity. I got the nod. I want people to have a look. I suggest that they do. I was gobsmacked to see what has been done at that stadium. Millions of dollars have been spent on measures at Perth Arena that the public does not see. Time and again, reviews are undertaken at the Perth stadium; they are ongoing. Due to the different methods of harming, such as car ramming and things like that, we have to adjust how we go about our security. The measures at Optus Stadium, in light of the very, very big crowds that go there, have been handled very well.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** It is very well planned.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** There have been a few minor issues of a low-grade nature. How would Optus Stadium have a full evacuation procedure? We cannot stop a game at half-time and tell 50 000 people to run out, but we can watch how they go in, how they go out, how they move around and the crowd movements generally. I have reported on the number of games I have been to, and I have been to the stadium many times and watched the crowd behaviour change. Where people are going out has changed dramatically. In some of those areas, buses have become the favourite way to get away rather than trains. The trains are still doing a good job. At one stage, cars were going to be able to go under the stadium, but people very quickly realised that was a danger and that something could happen if we allowed it. Van bombs and those sorts of things influenced where parking could be allowed. I ask that if members want a preview and a look at the places, to please organise a tour, but we do not want that information in the press so that, if some idiot is out there, they will not get a head start.

I am not sure whether the Chair needs me to add to that.

[9.30 pm]

**The CHAIR:** I just need some clarification, so I will ask further questions. The minister's adviser can probably answer them both. I have attended the stadium on a number of occasions and I have had three different seats. On a number of occasions, if I can use the vernacular, I have been given a bum steer by people who are specifically there to advise me how to get to a particular area of the stadium. Are they the people who will be advising me of where I need to go if there is an incident or some emergency situation? If that is the case, I have to say that I am not absolutely filled with confidence.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** As someone who walked quite some kilometres around the stadium and back to the same person, I would have to agree with the member. I think we have to give people some time and some opportunity to be drilled in that area, but I know what the member is saying. The turnover of staff does not help. I will hand over to my adviser, if she would like to add a few words.

**Mrs J. Carren:** I take on board the point that we had very new staff at the commencement of operations. Many things have been in place, such as event management planning, and training is critical and there is no room for complacency. However, we have utmost confidence in our emergency response plans, the chief fire wardens, operations, the CCTV, and the way communications are handled should anything occur at the stadium. We have processes in place for the appropriate access and egress to be managed out to muster points et cetera. I am very confident that those drills are occurring and that the appropriate communications are in place.

**The CHAIR:** Are the people who currently show people to their seats the same people who would be doing that?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I will defer the question because I am not sure myself.

**Mrs J. Carren:** The ushers are not in charge of emergency evacuation at all. That is all run out of the control room. The chief fire wardens and wardens would take control of the venue at that time.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Having gone on a tour of the facility and into the control room with the member for Burns Beach has given me confidence in their ability in a command situation to deal with it centrally. The technology in use is very impressive. I think it was well executed by the former Liberal–National government.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** We will cop that one.

**The CHAIR:** Is there a question, member?

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** There is, indeed. I refer to the fourth dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 476, which relates to Perth Motorplex. A number of people have approached me with concerns about where the motorplex is. Could the minister give us a precis of what is happening? I could jump in with any specific questions. The minister may already answer them in his summary statement.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** We hope that the ongoing operations of the Perth Motorplex will be resolved fairly soon. The proposed transition to the private sector through sale or lease had not been concluded at the time of the budget. Variations have been asked for and some people have backed off because they did not want to take it on after seeing that. We have taken that on board and we are looking at how we can improve the saleability of the motorplex. As a government, it is not something that we want to carry on with. VenuesWest will continue to talk with further proponents who may wish to purchase the area. The problems are not financial only for the venue itself. Competitors are also finding things a bit tight, so the number of competitors has dropped off. It is very expensive for dragsters to blow a motor and to put it back together, as are the finances of getting there. The variation in what the professionals who hire their vehicles to the complex charge is very difficult to deal with when budgeting. Sometimes it might be \$20 000 a car and next time it might be \$30 000 a car for the doorslammers—the jet-powered cars. We find understanding that process a bit difficult in getting on and keeping the gates open. One thing we want to see is that people have a place to go. Other issues about concessions, seating and the like still have to be worked through. Another issue is how much the government should spend to bring the facility up to 110 per cent. If we do not put money in the facility, it will become second rate and will lose further revenue or will shut its doors because we will just be subsidising it straight out of the door. I will refer this to the acting CEO.

**Mrs J. Carren:** Extensive efforts to secure a sale through a tender process have failed to yield a result, so we have entered into a period of conversations with other interested parties through private treaty conversations while we await the decision of government for the ongoing 2018–19 operations of the venue. We believe that an operating venue is much easier to move over to the private sector. We will wait for further advice and take it from there for next year.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** If we hit that 30 June 2018 deadline without having found a private sector operator, will the venue still be operating for motorsport or does the minister imagine that it will close its doors? Will motorsport still have a venue?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** While short-term and long-term issues are being dealt with, the intention of lease or sale to a private person remains. The member may not believe this but, although I would not call the Premier a racer, he is very keen to see it continue because it is an outlet for people so that they do not go out on the roads and do in a set of tyres that I could never afford.

What are the community races that it has?

**Mrs J. Carren:** The speedway?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** But also for the streetcars.

**Mrs J. Carren:** Whoop Ass Wednesday.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Yes. We want to keep those events because they allow people to get rid of frustrations with their cars. I am not sure what it is. I only wish I was able to put black marks on the road like some of them do. If they do it in a facility such as that, no harm is caused and it takes it away from being on the streets. To me, that is

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B — Tuesday, 22 May 2018]

p178a-182a

Chair; Mr John McGrath; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Zak Kirkup; Mr John Carey; Mr Peter Rundle

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part of our social fabric. We need to keep those people going there. We need to make sure that what they do is happening there. People are sick and tired of hooning. Why do they not go down there, pay a few bob, have some insurance and do that? I might just hand over to Mrs Carren again to explain all that.

[9.40 pm]

**Mrs J. Carren:** The motorplex season does not start until September—it runs from September through to May—so the 30 June deadline does not essentially impact on any of the operations at this time.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I appreciate that answer. Just in relation to children utilising the facility, has that been halted of late? I am keen to understand where that is at in terms of a policy decision and the internal review that I believe has been taking place.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I can answer that. We must make sure that all avenues of safety are explored before we put children back in there. There is some evidence to say that there were several previous accidents that had not been properly investigated. That, to me, is heartbreaking. Again, it was probably before our government took over, but I am not totally sure. If those accidents had been properly investigated, maybe we would not have had that tragedy. I would love to see the kids back there, but in my position I am not going to take that risk until it has gone right through the process. What I can say is that the Australian National Drag Racing Association, which is the sports body over the top, has been liaising with us and, in recent times, also with the police. There have been some frustrations between the departments. I have spoken with the Minister for Police about how we can make sure that things are more open and accountable for all parties. She has asked the department to do that. That has certainly been going ahead. I do not think anyone here would say, “Let’s have those kids back on there before an inquiry is concluded.” Let us get the inquiry done. I would love to see them there at the next season. I have met the family involved. I certainly know the grandfather of the children. He is very frustrated, as are other people and the government, but I am not going to compromise safety in any way, shape or form. Once we get the reports, we can fix the problem and the kids will be back on the track.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I thank the minister; I appreciate the answer.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I refer to page 478 of budget paper No 2, service 1, “Deliver Training and Competition Facilities for High Performance Sport”, and particularly to where it deals with Optus Stadium. Can the minister tell us how much the government got for the naming rights of Optus Stadium?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** No, I cannot; it is a commercial deal.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I am so disappointed, minister!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The government would lose its competitive advantage if we were to name that. I am sure the member is aware of that. The member cannot say that some things that might have hurt the government’s future income were not held back when his party was in government. We are making sure that commercial confidentiality is maintained because of that issue. I can tell the member that it was a good deal for the state of Western Australia. That money has gone back into the coffers. Yes, the previous government was not going to call it anything and there would have been very little return. We are quite happy. The name has settled in very well. The people who are paying the money to go there are more than happy with that name now.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I want to just drill down a little more on that same item. I refer to the figures under 2018–19. The cost of service for the stadium has gone up significantly from this year—I gather that is because the stadium will have had 12 months of operation—and also the income will increase. Would the minister be able to provide us with some idea of whether this is all stadium revenue in this section; and, if not, how much of it is stadium revenue? What is the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust budgeting for 2018–19, given that there will be 22 football matches, and possibly some finals, and concerts, cricket and all that stuff? There must be some sort of budget that looks at possible income out of the stadium.

**The CHAIR:** Member, you have referred to the cost of service, not the income.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Yes, cost of service—\$135 million.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Again, I will refer the question on the financials. I can say that as far as budgets are concerned, VenuesWest has done a magnificent job in providing information and in being helpful about different problems out there; it has done everything possible to help the state out on the stadium.

**Mrs J. Carren:** The budgets for 2018–19 and 2017–18 reflect a consolidation of accounts—that is the change in accounting treatment that we received late in 2016–17. By comparison, the 2016–17 budget did not have that same consolidated approach to both costs and revenue. When we move forward to 2017–18, we have half a year of operations in the accounts for Optus Stadium and then in 2018–19 the full operations are budgeted for. I will refer to our chief financial officer to give the member the details associated with the costs of the operator in 2018–19, which I think was the second part of the member’s question.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Part of the \$135 million in 2018–19 would be the drawdown for the continuing ongoing maintenance to the contractor. Would that payment be included in that?

**Mrs J. Carren:** Correct.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Someone told me at the footy on Sunday —

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** It would not have been a lie!

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** — that the revenue from catering has amazed the stadium operators. The figures have been very high. The public has really come on board—they obviously like the catering there. The figures have been very good. Can the minister tell me, maybe through the department, whether these early games have exceeded expectations?

**The CHAIR:** The way the member phrased that question, it could be answered with a yes or a no.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Yes, but he would not do that to me.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I will give him something. For a change, some of his gossip is right! The member was standing in the right place at the right time to listen to that. I do not have the figures, but I can say that it has exceeded expectations. From the last time I was talking to VenuesLive, there has been higher than expected turnover. I am not sure whether I am allowed to say how much —

**Mrs J. Carren:** No.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** It is substantial.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** The minister could tell us; he is amongst friends!

[9.50 pm]

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** It is a substantial spend by people who come into the stadium. I am absolutely shocked. I am glad that I am not paying for my kids to go there, because it would cost me a fortune! The spend is far higher than most people expected. The spend at The Camfield, which is outside Optus Stadium, is remarkable; indeed, it is remarkable how much people are spending at sporting facilities. It is great to see that support from the Western Australian public. One thing I must say—I have to be careful how I say this because I made a comment today and got told off—is that I am sick and tired of the knockers of Western Australian sport and our facilities. I had to be very careful about how I couched that. Every time a blade of grass falls over, someone wants to make a complaint. That famous West Coast Eagles team from the weekend complained two weeks ago that the ground was too hard, yet in the derby, I saw one of them running down the wing and when he went to bounce the ball, it never came back. I thought, “Where’s that come from?” Every person has their day of glory at the stadium. The Eagles had theirs last week. I do not think that it will continue, but that does not matter. Every time there has been a complaint, we have had a look at it. VenuesWest has been magnificent in looking at issues and working with VenuesLive to make sure that we have a stadium.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The only complaint I have heard about the stadium is from the Chair, the member for Girrawheen, who could not find an attendant to show her to her seat.

**The CHAIR:** No, I found an attendant, but they gave me a bum steer—on several occasions!

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I refer to “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 476. I am asking this question on behalf of my young colleague the member for Dawesville. There is a challenge to get music acts to extend their tour beyond the east coast. How does VenuesWest and the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust make sure that we get big acts to travel from the east coast to Perth? What is the strategy?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I will answer that because I have asked the same question. VenuesWest has been very active and aggressive in that space to try to get some of the top acts. I will refer to my notes.

**The CHAIR:** It is Ed Sheeran; okay, repeat after me.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Is the minister getting Ed Sheeran back? The minister will get Ed Sheeran back because he will come back to see the minister.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** We are trying to attract them to come, in some cases, to Western Australia first so that there is not a rundown and tapering off of the excitement. I tell members with all sincerity—again, I cannot blow the whistle on which acts we are chasing and what we are looking at—that we are looking for, in the first instance —

**The CHAIR:** Just sing a few bars, minister!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I blame the member for South Perth; he wound up the Chair and now I am copping it! After the time he has spent in Parliament, the member for South Perth should have known better about waking her up!

Can I honestly say that we work very hard to make sure that we get one world-class act. What is the name of the bloke who I called the wrong name?

**Mrs J. Carren:** Ed Sheeran.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Ed Sheeran. He is a world-class act and I have never heard of him, but that does matter.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** When the minister says a world-class act, does he mean from his generation?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Did I cop it, especially from my kids!

It will be a coup for Western Australia if we can get one or two world-class acts to perform in Western Australia, because usually they perform on the east coast and then go back overseas. VenuesWest is working extremely hard and given the way it is working, I am hopeful that it may get another world-class act this year. Again, because of commercial confidentiality, we do not want to blow promoters out of the water. We want to make sure that they get through. I am getting a few notes here. I am not going to say that because that will give opposition members all the ammunition in the world! We need those acts to help pay for the stadium, to fill Western Australian hotel rooms and get the tourism industry back on track. In recent times there has been quite an influx, not a huge influx, of people coming from the Malaysian area.

**The CHAIR:** The Malaysian area would be Malaysia.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I know that we have five minutes left and I encourage the minister to use all five minutes.

The first dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” refers to attracting big state and premium sporting events to Western Australia. The minister mentioned the Commonwealth Games, about which there has been some speculation. Can the minister indicate what the government is doing to draw in and attract major sporting events to Western Australia?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I have already done a fair spread on that, but I will give you another one, mate!

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** Go for it—five minutes!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** What I can say about the Commonwealth Games is that I asked the department to do an audit on all our facilities. It is all right to have Optus Stadium, but other areas around the place must be up to scratch. At this stage we are looking at all our facilities. I do not see us being a contender for the Commonwealth Games in the short term because they have been held in Australia a couple of times recently. We will be a bit down the list and my guesstimation is that Canada will be next. We might get the one after that or the one after that. But we have to have the facilities in the first place. That is fine; we will do that.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The first dot point on the same page refers to the successful first year of operations of the stadium. Can the minister enlighten me about the difficulties the government has had with unsold tickets to football matches? I gather that allocations that the government has set aside for tourists have been left unsold.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** One of the first things I will say is that I was very disappointed in a certain football club saying that it was the government’s fault that the tickets were not sold. There was a very obvious part of the stadium where the tickets were not sold. It was not our fault; rather, it was the club’s marketing issue. When the tickets were handed back, the club did not put them on sale early enough. I have not seen the club since. I am still waiting to see it and I will see it all right. But I can tell members that I might get another question in Parliament! Seriously, the club stuffed up in a big way with 500-odd seats that it could have onsold. It should not blame the government for those sorts of issues.

**Mrs J. Carren:** Yes, the minister is quite correct. The Bankwest memberships sold out extremely well—within two hours. We are very happy with that. It is a commercial decision for each of the clubs as to how they handle their own memberships. We are thrilled with the fact that we had a crowd record of more than 57 600 people at the recent West Coast Eagles versus Richmond game, and we will shortly be celebrating the millionth patron to the stadium.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I want to say that people out there are buying tickets without knowing whether they are genuine. Three hundred and fifty invalid tickets were sold to unsuspecting buyers at Perth Arena. Do not tell me that that will not happen at Optus Stadium. They lined up with bogus tickets, unlike me who lined up and was turned away —

**The CHAIR:** Is the minister sure that they were not genuine but they were sent in the wrong direction!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I lined up at Perth Arena. When I got to the front of the big, long queue, I was told that my tickets were not valid. I stood there for a while and looked at my wife and she said, “They must be; they must be okay.” But then we found out that we were there on the wrong day!

**The appropriation was recommended.**

*Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm*

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B — Tuesday, 22 May 2018]

p178a-182a

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