

Division 46: Western Australian Sports Centre Trust, \$111 150 000 —

Mr A.P. O’Gorman, Chairman.

Mr T.K. Waldron, Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Mr D.P. Etherton, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr P. Stewart, Director, Corporate Services.

Mr M. Cutler, Chief of Staff, Office of the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Do members have questions?

Mr P.B. WATSON: I refer to the trust. I am aware of the strong opposition at the time to putting in bureaucracy on top of the basketball association to run the new stadium at Perry Lakes. Will the minister provide the following information: How many staff work at the venue? What is their cost? What loss is there to government? Will the minister reconsider allowing the basketball association to run the stadium as it has done so successfully for the previous 50 years? I ask that question for me and for the member for Kalgoorlie who could not be here this morning.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I will make some general comments and then pass the question to Mr Etherton, and some supplementary information may be required.

When the new basketball centre was completed, basketball moved from a dilapidated and very poor facility; albeit one that had done a great job at the old Perry Lakes site for many years since 1962. Costs are involved in moving to a new facility. VenuesWest and Basketball WA struck an agreement on that at a rate of \$8.06 an hour for the first 11 516 court hours each year. That is a 70 per cent discount. The off-peak rate is normally \$33 an hour and the peak rate is \$44 an hour. The department is subsidising that cost. Basketball WA indicated that it cost too much and I met with VenuesWest and then Basketball WA in my office. I listened to all sides of the story. I heard differing opinions about the effect on each group and the way in which they run their businesses. I suggested that we let the deal run for a year and then have an independent auditor determine the costs to each group and report back to me about whether the costs were too high or were at a sustainable level. That audit is now, I think, about complete. I will have to check. Obviously, I will get the audit figures and the government will look at them and make a decision. It is always a balancing act in sport and recreation. When we build lovely new facilities, people, used to doing what they did in the old facility, love the new facility but sometimes do not understand that it is not possible to keep things exactly as they were in the old facility. We have tried to strike what I think is a pretty fair deal. I think Basketball WA has done pretty well out of the deal. However, because of the complaints, I have called for an audit and when I get the figures, I will take them to government. If the report is that the costs are sustainable and all is well, we will probably continue the current arrangement. If the report states otherwise, I will report that and we will have to determine whether further assistance is required.

I will leave it at that, but I refer the question to Mr Etherton in case he wants to make further comment.

[11.50 am]

Mr D.P. Etherton: I am happy to provide the staffing structure and spend as supplementary information. The thing to remember is that VenuesWest is not set up with a venue structure by which every single person works and stays in that venue all day, every day. Therefore, we have an asset management and development director and one-fifteenth of his duties is to spend time maintaining the asset. I will provide as supplementary information the direct staff employed in managing that venue on a full-time basis.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Has the venue run at a loss? Could the CEO let us know that through the minister?

Mr D.P. Etherton: We absolutely run at a loss when the capital cost, depreciation, maintenance and operating costs are taken into account, as most sporting facilities do.

The CHAIRMAN: There was an offer of supplementary information; minister, are you happy to supply that supplementary information and can you please explain exactly what he will supply?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The supplementary information will supply the number of VenuesWest full-time equivalent staff at the basketball facility.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Can we also get a copy of the audit when it comes in?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, I can send an audit.

Mr P.B. WATSON: No, I want to see it when it comes in.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I will look at the audit before I commit to anything, because that will go to the government.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, I need to make a note of the supplementary information number so that Hansard and the clerks have it. Members can ask another question in a minute.

[*Supplementary Information No A7.*]

Mr P.B. WATSON: During Country Week, as the minister knows, a lot of young regional basketballers come to Perth. The basketball event is held, I think, in January or February and it is very hot. This year a lot of complaints were received by me and other regional members that in the facility where these young people played, rubbish bins were not emptied and were overflowing, and the air conditioning was not turned on. Was this due to a cost-cutting measure to make the event a viable one for the government to run? I am sure that if Basketball WA had run the event, the air conditioning would have been switched on and it would have ensured that the rubbish bins were cleaned.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I thank the member for the question. I also had representations on that issue made to me as a local member and as a minister. As the member knows, the air conditioning is in the show court area. As I understand it, the decision whether to turn on the air conditioning rests with Basketball WA; it chose not to, which is disappointing. Basketball WA may say that it chose not to because of the costs involved; we are happy to talk to it about that, but it made the decision. There were also complaints about the airflow into the open section. The basketball centre is based on a modern design similar to the new facility in Albany. I acknowledge that on a really hot day when everyone is playing, we have an issue. I have spoken to the CEO of VenuesWest and will let him inform the house of the details of what we will do, but I know that we will have some extra fans installed to address the problem.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Only one of the water fountains was working also. I know that these issues occur with new facilities, but when kids are coming 400 or 500 kilometres to play basketball in an elite venue, it would be thought that some of these things would be looked at.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I think that the air conditioning should have been on, quite frankly, but that is the decision of Basketball WA. It may say that the electricity charges would have been too expensive, but I would have thought that, although VenuesWest has a responsibility, so do our sports bodies. Would the CEO like to add any further comment to what I have said?

Mr D.P. Etherton: Basketball WA has a heat, or hot-day, policy, which has been determined in association with its resident clubs and its council, that determines when the air conditioning gets turned on or off. In essence, that policy states that when the outside temperature is forecast to be or reaches above 35 degrees after 10 o'clock—I cannot remember the exact time—the decision will be made to turn on the air conditioning. After the complaints following Country Week, we noticed that it made the decision to turn on air conditioning a lot quicker than it had in the past, and we have not had any subsequent complaints. There is a charge for turning on the air conditioning in that court hall. As the minister mentioned, he has recently approved some additional works at the basketball centre to improve the airflow of the passive system and also to install some wall-mounted industrial-strength ceiling fans to cool the people not playing in the match. Basketball WA has a heat policy for players under which water breaks, half-time breaks and other breaks are extended to manage that heat issue.

Mr R.H. COOK: I appreciate that we need to keep moving along, and I want to talk briefly about the development and commissioning of the netball stadium as detailed on page 530 of the *Budget Statements*. I wonder, again as a newcomer to the sport and recreation portfolio, why it was decided to develop that venue at Matthews Netball Centre rather than with all the other elite sporting venues at Mt Claremont. Was it because netball is a women's sport and therefore unworthy of co-location at Mt Claremont? What are the operational implications of developing the netball centre away from the Mt Claremont venues?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: There was probably quite a bit of debate about where the state netball facility should be and, as there has been in the past, about getting funding for the state netball centre. That went on for years without the funding going ahead. This government made the decision to fund it; it is now happening.

Mr R.H. COOK: I am not asking about the funding; I am asking about that location.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I just wanted to remind the member about that decision.

It was felt that, as there were already netball facilities at Matthews Netball Centre, it made sense to locate the venue where netball was played. There are also significant savings to be made in basing the facility at Matthews.

Mr R.H. COOK: Netball is played everywhere.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: There were significant savings to be made at Matthews. It is not too far from AK Reserve. We have actually gone ahead and funded it; that is one of the factors. We will take the development to an existing integrated netball precinct and that is a fair decision.

Mr R.H. COOK: What are the operational implications of that for the West Coast Fever netball team?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: An agreement has been struck to allow the Perth Netball Association, on a Saturday, access to two courts during its season. There are four indoor courts. The Perth Netball Association has access to two of those; the other two will be there for the state competition.

Mr R.H. COOK: Does the Armadale netball body get access to these courts?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It is a similar situation to having the Perry Lakes Hawks play out of the Perry Lakes Basketball Stadium; that happens in various sports. Yes, it is great for the Perth Netball Association; I do not deny that. But at the end of the day this is about netball, remembering that our state netballers and development squads come from all districts. I mean, it could be asked whether the Kojonup netball club gets access to the centre; it is the same question. It will be a fantastic venue; there will be four indoor courts. Should there be a major event during the netball season; VenuesWest would work on it with the Perth Netball Association. We have to remember that this goes back to sporting bodies showing a bit of commonsense and cooperation. Netball is a fantastic sport that has been crying out for this facility for years; that facility was really needed to take netball to the next level for the West Coast Fever and for our junior squads coming through. We are starting to show some real improvement in the area and this centre will enable netball in this state to take things another step further.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: That gets my wind, minister—giddy up!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It is also about working together in sport; we need to work together in sport. There may well be times on a particular Saturday when Netball WA has no need for the four indoor courts, and if the Perth Netball Association could use them, why would it not?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: As a regular user of the Matthews Netball Centre on Saturday mornings, is there extensive planning for traffic and parking at the new state netball centre? Matthews is a particularly dangerous place to park on a Saturday.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Access and parking are part of the plan of this development; they are taken into account. We would be silly, while we have the opportunity, to not work with local government to do that. It is the responsibility of local government, but the state is assisting.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It will need our help.

[12.00 noon]

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I want to ask about West Perth Falcons; \$400 000 has been allocated. I have not actually found it in the budget. Can the minister tell us where that \$400 000 is? Is it in the allocation for VenuesWest?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I actually asked the same question myself.

The CHAIRMAN: I know you did.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: At page 529, under item 141, “Capital Appropriation”, there is a figure for 2011–12 of \$92 887 000. The \$400 000 for West Perth is included in there. The other figure is part of the Perth Arena construction project, but the \$400 000 is included in there. That is allocated and it is in that figure.

The CHAIRMAN: There are ongoing discussions about the clubrooms for West Perth.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I am happy to talk about that. I congratulate the member, who has lobbied hard on this. I went out to look at the Joondalup facility of West Perth with VenuesWest to have a look at some of the concerns that were raised by West Perth Football Club but also to have a look at the whole facility. The member also raised it in the Parliament. The Premier went out and had a look. The initial need at West Perth Football Club was for players’ facilities, particularly the gymnasium for their strength training and indoor pre-season work. The gym is shoved under the stand and is way out of kilter for what the modern WAFL professional competition should have. Not only that, meeting rooms were really important for the players. In the end what was agreed to was an allocation of \$400 000 from the state government for a proper gymnasium, as put forward by the club, and a lecture theatre room for the players. There is also a need for a general upgrade. There is funding to look at upgrading the scoreboard, the goals, some seating and signage.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is a shame it was not the Premier’s electorate. He gave Claremont how many million?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Claremont is different. That is the sale of private land—it works differently. That is something the local government can consider with the club and with the government at some stage.

People knock the AFL. The AFL actually contributed \$200 000 towards West Perth Football Club and it contributed towards Rushton Park. A lot gets said about the AFL—I am not here to defend the AFL; I think it should be doing this. In my position I find—we would always like national bodies to be putting more into facilities—the AFL is one of the few national bodies that actually does. Cricket does to a certain degree. I congratulate the AFL for supporting the club as well.

There is around \$6 million for the clubrooms. I think there is a need for West Perth to have its own clubrooms out there. That obviously needs the support of the local Joondalup council to support that. No doubt at some stage that will come forward. We have met the immediate needs. I was out at West Perth Football Club with president, Brett Raponi, and chief executive officer, Gerry O’Dea. They are really thrilled, and I know the players are really thrilled that they are going to have better facilities. It is also worth noting that this year the cabinet endorsed in principle the improvements at Claremont Oval. Nearly \$1 million has been allocated to Rushton Park by this government.

Mr R.H. COOK: Where is that, minister?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Rushton Park; that is where Peel Thunder plays. That facility is due to open soon. It is a great facility. The government has endorsed in principle that it is very keen to partner local government, the football commission and WAFL to look at improvements to grounds, particularly where there is available land, and to look at similar situations to Claremont Football Club. I know Swan Districts and East Fremantle are looking at this, but the council needs to be on side. I think it makes sense. Having played for Claremont, I watched for years as facilities at Claremont Football Club degenerated. Volunteers—old guys there with bits of paint—tried to keep going a facility that was designed for the 1970s when I was playing. Whole areas of that were never used. Now we are getting smart; we are utilising that land, to develop with the council, to make money, to improve the facility and to make it very much a community facility. That is the way the WAFL is going. We are very much in support of making those facilities for the club but also for the community. It is with the strong support of the WA Football Commission and the clubs themselves. I think that answers the member’s question.

[Ms L.L. Baker took the chair.]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: My question relates to page 533 under “Asset Investment Program” and the line item “Capital Upgrades and Maintenance”; \$3.845 million has been allocated in the 2011–12 budget. I am just wondering what that figure relates to.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I thank the member for her question. I will just go through these new works and outline what the \$3.845 million of capital upgrades is for. Today in the Sport and Recreation division I have talked a lot about our social delivery through sport, justice delivery and what sport does in the community. But to do that, infrastructure also needs to be maintained. There is always a balance, because we can have the finest building, but if there is no-one in it, the building is no good. Likewise, if we have the people, we have to make sure we provide them with good facilities. We are doing some upgrades. We have allocated funding to make sure we can try to keep our facilities up to the state they should be in. It is an ongoing challenge for VenuesWest. It is an ongoing challenge for the community, local government and state government. This capital expenditure includes nearly \$1.7 million for upgrades to Challenge Stadium. I think it is fantastic that we are going to be spending that money at Challenge Stadium. There is \$1.3 million for improvements to Arena Joondalup, such as a parents room and upgrades to lighting and security. There is \$35 000 to improve security and repairs to the cycle track at the Midvale SpeedDome. That is really important. Currently this state is turning out some of the best cyclists in the world. Midvale SpeedDome is where they all train and practice, so it is really important. There is also \$260 000 to improve safety in the pit and paddock at Perth Motorplex. Perth Motorplex is another outstanding facility. This is just making sure that we keep pace with that facility. There is also \$210 000 to address signage and point-of-sale issues at WA Basketball Centre.

This will all contribute to a better level of amenity for not only the users, but also for spectators at those facilities. It is making sure that we have the correct safety and security at our premier facilities in Western Australia. That is what the \$3.85 million, which is a substantial investment, is for.

The appropriation was recommended.

[12.10 pm]