

CORONAVIRUS — VENUESWEST

Statement by Minister for Sport and Recreation

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [12.14 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the essential role VenuesWest has played in the state government's response to COVID-19, predominantly behind the scenes, including providing the incredible donation of more than 20 000 pre-cooked meals donated to OzHarvest, which the member for Belmont and I saw being loaded into trucks this morning. Chefs from Optus Stadium, RAC Arena and VenuesWest came together in recent weeks to turn surplus food at the stadium into 20 000 individual frozen meals that will be distributed across the state by charities such as Feed the Little Children in Broome all the way down to the Salvation Army in Albany.

The SPEAKER: Hear, hear!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: This mammoth effort follows another donation of more than \$70 000 worth of food and beverages by Optus Stadium to OzHarvest in April. The community spirit and innovation shown by VenuesWest and the operators of RAC Arena and Optus Stadium during COVID-19 deserves commendation.

While I have the floor, I also wish to thank VenuesWest, led by the formidable David Etherton, and his fantastic team, for the work they have been doing in parallel to assist the government's response to and recovery from this pandemic. In April, I visited VenuesWest staff at HBF Park who have been assisting the Department of Communities by running a non-emergency welfare support hotline and taking hundreds of calls to support the wellbeing of travellers in hotel quarantine. I met swimming instructors, lifeguards and personal trainers who have all stepped up to help out.

In the face of a public health crisis, VenuesWest leadership did not shy away from pitching in in ways totally outside its comfort zone and certainly different from the business of running state government venues. I take this opportunity again to thank those staff. On top of this, VenuesWest has worked to develop the Lotterywest event cancellation relief fund for arts, sports and community groups; supported our Western Australian Institute of Sport elite athletes with pool access over the last few weeks; brought forward funding for maintenance and upgrade works while venues have been closed to support local jobs and construction work; and worked hard on a recovery plan for the state government venues it operates. I also believe that swimming is back on at HBF Stadium from today.

Congratulations to chairman, Graham Goerke; CEO, David Etherton; and all the team at VenuesWest. Their contribution to the state government response to COVID-19 is truly valued and has not gone unnoticed. Thank you also to the operators of RAC Arena and Optus Stadium for the community spirit they have shown in assisting with cooking up the 20 000 meals donated this morning.