



The Hon. Dr Geoff Lee MP

Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education

Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans

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Ms Maggie Dawkins
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Dear Ms Dawkins

Maggie

Thank you for your ongoing interest in the Sydney International Equestrian Centre and particularly the surface of the Indoor Arena. I understand that you have made several representations to myself and the Office of Sport and I want to take this opportunity to provide advice on all the matters you have raised.

Procurement Process

I refer to your ongoing concerns regarding the procurement process for the Indoor Arena surface upgrade at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre. Following receipt of your initial concerns, the Office of Sport commissioned an independent probity review of the process. The review was undertaken by O'Connor Marsden and Associates (OCM) who is an accredited probity service provider on the NSW Government's procurement scheme.

Having regard to the serious concerns raised, including a perceived conflict of interest during the tender process, the Office of Sport sent the OCM report along with your concerns to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) for their review. The Office of Sport fully co-operated with ICAC during their review of this matter.

ICAC subsequently advised the Office of Sport in December 2020, that it will not be investigating the matters raised. I understand that the Office of Sport advised you of this decision late last year. Any further advice received by the ICAC on the Office of Sport's tender processes and procedures are a matter for the Office and are currently being considered and/or implemented.

In your recent correspondence, an allegation of fraud is made. Should you have evidence of fraud in relation to the procurement process, then it is recommended that you make representation to the NSW Police. I consider that the report of OCM and the review of ICAC have been thorough and that this matter is now closed.

Independent Verification of the Indoor Arena Surface

Following the installation of the Indoor Arena's new surface, the Office of Sport requested that Equestrian Australia nominate suitable professionals to undertake an independent review. While waiting for a response from Equestrian Australia, the Office of Sport sought advice from OTTO Sport International. The Chief Executive Officer of OTTO Sport International has confirmed that the traction nodules *"present absolutely no danger to the health of horses or to the safety of riders."*

The Office of Sport has now received advice from Equestrian Australia about suitably qualified professionals with the technical capability to review the Arena's surface. The Office of Sport is arranging for this assessment to take place as soon as practicable subject to availability and the lifting of COVID19 domestic travel restrictions.

The Office of Sport did request that remediation work be carried out to remove the traction nodules and this work has been completed. The Office of Sport will continue to liaise with the BSM Sport to ensure that the Indoor Arena is safe and suitable for equestrian use.

Suitability of the Indoor Arena Surface

The Office of Sport follows OTTO Sport's instructions on how to maintain and prepare the surface and consults with the event organiser's Field of Play coordinator before and during events and during practice and warm-up sessions. For dressage events there is also a rider's representative who reports back to the event organiser or Dressage committee.

The surface has received positive responses from users since it was installed. The Office of Sport has not received any documented details of injuries to horses caused by riding on the arena surface.

Level of Usage of the Indoor Arena

The Indoor Arena hosts a variety of events including dressage. In summary:

- In 2018 there were 23 events held in the indoor arena including 7 dressage;
- In 2019 there were 29 events held in the indoor including 7 dressage; and
- In 2020 there were 5 events held in the indoor including 1 dressage.

Sydney International Equestrian Centre event bookings have experienced significant disruption due to COVID-19.

Stabling Costs

In relation to the stabling fees for the Sydney International Equestrian Centre, the Office of Sport reviews these regularly and advises me they are comparable to venues of similar quality.

I trust you this information responds to all your concerns. I again thank you for your ongoing interest in the Sydney International Equestrian Centre.

Yours sincerely

11 FEB 2021

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