

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - LEGAL AFFAIRS

Friday 6 March 2020

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

SPORT, MULTICULTURALISM, SENIORS AND VETERANS

CORRECTED

The Committee met at 09:30.

MEMBERS

Mr David Shoebridge (Acting Chair)

The Hon. Sam Farraway

The Hon. Rose Jackson

The Hon. Trevor Khan

The Hon. Taylor Martin

The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane (Acting Deputy Chair)

PRESENT

The Hon. Dr Geoff Lee, *Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

The ACTING CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2019-20 further hearings. Before we commence I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I pay my respects, those of the Committee members and those present to Elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present. I welcome today Acting Minister Lee and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans.

Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

All witnesses in budget estimates hearings—you will be pleased to know, Minister—have a right to procedural fairness, according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. There may be some questions that witnesses could answer only if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances, witnesses are advised that they may take a question on notice and provide the answer within 21 days. Any messages from advisers or members of staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee secretariat. Acting Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you. Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web as soon as possible.

Finally, I ask everyone, including Committee members, to turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Acting Minister Lee, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. I remind the following witnesses that they also do not need to be sworn as they have been sworn at an earlier budget estimates hearing before this Committee: Ms Karen Jones, Mr Simon Draper, Mr Joseph La Posta, Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter, Ms Caroline Mackaness, Ms Kerrie Mather and Ms Catherine D'Elia.

KAREN JONES, Chief Executive Officer, Office of Sport, on former affirmation

SIMON DRAPER, Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure NSW, on former affirmation

JOSEPH LA POSTA, Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural NSW, on former oath

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, on former oath

CAROLINE MACKANESS, Director, Office for Veterans Affairs, on former oath

KERRIE MATHER, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust, on former oath

JOE ACHMAR, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Venues NSW, sworn and examined

CATHERINE D'ELIA, Deputy Secretary of Courts, Tribunals and Service Delivery, Department of Communities and Justice, on former oath

The ACTING CHAIR: Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.30 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. with the Minister, likely 11.30 a.m. if the Government members have no questions. The Committee has resolved that it will be from 1.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. with the department witnesses. I note that that is different to a scheduled proposal, which was to commence at 2.00 p.m. The Committee has just previously resolved to commence earlier at 1.30 p.m. unless that creates a significant difficulty for any witness, in which case we can push it back and start at 2.00 p.m. We thought there might be a unity to ending earlier. That was our thinking. I declare the hearing for the proposed expenditure in the portfolio areas of Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans open for examination. As there is no provision for any witness to make an opening statement before the Committee commences questioning, we will begin questions with the Opposition.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, Penrith Panthers provided the preliminary design to the Office of Sport in May 2018, indicating that the Western Sydney Community and Sports Centre would no longer include sport and recreation facilities. In response to that, on 24 May an internal Office of Sport email from Anne Gripper was sent, which stated that the Minister wanted to achieve two things. One was "to ensure the \$12m remains available to the Panthers..." Why was the first action of the sport Minister, on learning that a grant given for sport facilities that would, in fact, no longer be built, to tell the department that he still wanted to ensure that they got the \$12 million?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you for your question. Can I say that I understand the project that you are talking about is actually a 2015 election commitment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The election commitment was—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: I will take my point of order right at the start. My point of order is that the Minister is allowed to finish his answer before the Hon. Rose Jackson jumps down his throat.

The ACTING CHAIR: I understand your point of order. Why don't we try to start as best as we all can? We are all guilty of this at different times—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No, we are not.

The ACTING CHAIR:—apart from the people who do not ask questions. Let's try and let the Minister finish. Minister, the best way of assisting not being interrupted is to be concise and direct in your answers.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will do my best to answer any questions, obviously.

The ACTING CHAIR: Why don't we press restart?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, you were discussing the 2015 election commitment for a sport centre. Keep going.

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I was saying, in 2015, I understand, it was an election commitment. That obviously predates my role as the acting Minister responsible for sport. I have been advised that the processes were followed. Therefore, I will ask Karen Jones, who looks after the sports agency, to make comment about your question.

Ms JONES: The western Sydney community centre was an election commitment from the 2015 election process. That election commitment was given to the Office of Sport to administer. During that process over the course of a number of years, the scope of the project did change. It did actually change with the approval of the Federal Government at the time. There was some discussion amongst the Office of Sport around whether or not, given the scope of the project no longer included sport, we should actually canvass other government agencies to

have that election commitment moved to a more appropriate agency at the time. However, it was actually decided that, given the Office of Sport knew the history of the project and also that the Office of Sport has well-established processes and procedures in issuing and administering election commitments with sporting clubs, that we would continue to administer that project.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Who participated in those discussions within the Office of Sport for canvassing alternate places for the funding to sit?

Ms JONES: It was an internal conversation within the Office of Sport. If you want actual details of names, I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That would be useful. Is that a fair description of what actually occurred inside the Office of Sport because was it not the case that the office did, in fact, actively seek alternative funding arrangements?

Ms JONES: That is correct. The Office of Sport, as part of those discussions, did have other discussions with other government agencies, including the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Greater Sydney Commission and also the Department of Industry. But like I said, the Office of Sport has well-established processes and procedures for administering election commitments, particularly for infrastructure projects with sporting clubs, and it was decided that the election commitment would continue to be administered by the Office of Sport.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We will come back to that. Ms Jones, according to an internal email dated 15 June 2018 from Anne Gripper, she states, "I spoke with Karen who received a call yesterday from the Minister who wants this finalised this financial year." Did you keep notes of that phone call with the Minister?

Ms JONES: I would like to get a copy of that email if you have that handy.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can probably make those arrangements. I do not know if I have an actual copy.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You provided it to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, or at least Lynda has, so you must have a copy.

The ACTING CHAIR: Trevor, you did urge calmness earlier.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Sorry, that is right. I will restrain myself.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will see if I can arrange for a copy of that. But essentially, are you suggesting that that email does not exist? You are questioning—

Ms JONES: No, I do not have the email in front of me. Before I answer the question, I would like to be able to read the email.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Did the Minister call you about wanting the project finalised by the end of the 2018 financial year? Do you recall a phone call from the Minister to that effect?

Ms JONES: No, I do not recall.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You were in charge of sport infrastructure from 2017. That is correct, is it not?

Ms JONES: That is correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What was the date on which you were made aware that the Penrith Panthers facility would not include sporting facilities?

Ms JONES: I will have to take that on notice. I do not have that information handy.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was it on 13 February 2017 when they advised the Office of Sport that the gym, pool and function centre would no longer be financially viable?

Ms JONES: I think you will actually find that that is before I actually started at the Office of Sport.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: By the time you started, already the project did not include sporting facilities. So it never included sporting facilities in any of the time that you had any carriage of the project.

Ms JONES: In terms of the emails and everything that you are referring to, I do not have those in front of me, so if you are able to table those I am more than happy to have a look at them.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was Panthers informed that the State Government funding would follow the Federal Government funding decision? Was that the information that was given to the Penrith Panthers from the Office of Sport?

Ms JONES: The New South Wales Government, through the election commitment, committed \$12 million. There was also a co-contribution matched through the Federal Government for \$12 million as well.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was the State Government funding commitment contingent on the Federal Government funding commitment?

Ms JONES: I think for that project there is a certain value of that project and, obviously, with Penrith Panthers making their application or making their proposal available to the Office of Sport, they would have had to determine how they were going to fund that, and whether that was also a Federal Government component, then that is up to the Penrith Panthers.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was there any uncertainty during any of the time when you had carriage of the project that the Federal Government funding was still forthcoming, considering the scope of the project had been changed so substantially? Were there conversations around the status of the Federal Government funding?

Ms JONES: Ordinarily, when you do have an infrastructure project, in particular, and there is a number of sources of funding, before the State Government actually commits its funding we also want certainty that the project will be delivered and we also want certainty around those other sources.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Were you given that certainty that the Federal Government funding was, in fact, forthcoming, despite the fact that the scope of the project had changed? Did you have that certainty?

Ms JONES: That is something that I would have to take on notice and go back through the file and have a look for you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So, for example, there was not correspondence in June, in September—throughout 2018, in fact—that the Federal department of infrastructure had indicated that the project would require reassessment due to the scope of the project changing?

Ms JONES: That level of detail, as I said, I do not have that information or those documents in front of me, so I would have to take that on notice. I am happy to provide you with a chronology of it then.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, given that you were, as I understand, in charge of sports infrastructure at this time, are you aware of a letter written by the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, to Senator Marise Payne regarding the funding of the facility?

Ms JONES: No, I was not, but, again, I am happy to take it on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can probably provide you with a copy of that one too. I am unsure why you cannot recall with clarity as to why the Office of Sport did not have full oversight and clarity on the Federal Government funding commitment, when the funding commitment from the Office of Sport was so obviously contingent on that?

Ms JONES: As I said before, in terms of infrastructure projects that have a number of sources of funding, we do actually confirm those sources of funding before we actually sign up to our funding agreement. That is typical practice at the Office of Sport. So, in terms of specific details around the Federal component of that commitment, as I said, I am happy to take that on notice and provide you with that information.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: On the funding commitment that the New South Wales Government made, on 24 January 2019 the then Minister for Sport, Stuart Ayres, signed a funding agreement for the Penrith Panthers facility. Are you aware of that funding agreement?

Ms JONES: I am aware.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: On the same day he signed a briefing note stating that the project will no longer incorporate sporting or active recreational facilities. That was in the briefing note that was signed by the Minister from the Office of Sport. Are you aware of that?

Ms JONES: I am aware.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: At that point did you have absolute clarity as to whether the Federal Government funding agreement, on which your funding agreement was contingent, was secure?

Ms JONES: Again, in terms of the details around the commitments and who signed it and what dates they were signed by the Federal Government, I am taking that on notice. I do not have that information in front of me.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Despite the fact that you have said that the Minister signing the funding agreement for the Office of Sport funding was in fact contingent on the Federal Government funding agreement, you are unable to provide any certainty that, in fact, the Office of Sport knew that the Federal funding was available at that time?

Ms JONES: For the purposes of this Committee I want to be accurate and correct for yourself. In order to provide that level of information it is important that I go back and source those documents for you and provide that information to you at a later date, so I will take it on notice. Thank you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Minister signed the funding agreement on 24 January. You have confirmed that that occurred. Then, on 19 February, there is an internal email from Anne Gripper that states, "Matt has confirmed that the Minister does not want to have his signature on anything to do with the Panthers project."

The ACTING CHAIR: Good decision, Matt.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: "He would like a brief in which he delegates his authority to Matt for all aspects of the project." Minister, can you explain why the Minister asked for his signature be taken off a legally binding document that, in fact, had already been given to Penrith Panthers, given that it was a document he signed, in fact, only weeks before?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes, well, clearly that predates my role as acting Minister, and I think Karen Jones is best to answer that process—questions. I think she has clearly indicated that she wants to seek—take it on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am asking for a view from you, as a Minister, as to how and why that might have occurred—where a Minister has signed a funding agreement and then a few weeks later has sent an email indicating that he does not want his signature on anything to do with aspects of that project? How and why might something like that occur, Minister?

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Point of order: The question began with Ms Jackson asking for a view. This is not the time or place to ask for opinions of Ministers on their colleagues' decisions.

The ACTING CHAIR: I think the question ripened. At the end it became a request for an explanation from the Minister. I think the Minister is in a position to address the question.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: To speculate.

The ACTING CHAIR: To address the question, to provide an explanation, which is what he has been asked to do.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: It was a very simple question.

The ACTING CHAIR: The question is in order.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that Minister Ayres has stated in the media, and if you—I mean that is his comments—can I say he stated that:

The change of scope was first approved by the federal government and following this decision the NSW government agreed to continue with a co-contribution.

Minister Ayres delegated the negotiation, development and execution of the funding agreement to the CEO of the Office of Sport as a probity safeguard.

And:

The funding was an election commitment, not subject to a competitive application.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So if it was a probity safeguard that was appropriate on 19 February, why was such a probity safeguard not necessary on 24 January?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, again—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What has changed in those few weeks so that the probity safeguard was relevant a few weeks later?

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said, I was not Minister at that time. I have been Minister for the last six months. Can I say that we are trying to understand the situation. I think Ms Jones has been very good. This is about speculation and Ms Jones has clearly indicated that she will take that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You were the one that mentioned—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: The Minister is answering the question. The Hon. Rose Jackson should allow the Minister to complete his answer before she jumps down his throat.

The ACTING CHAIR: I accept the point of order. However, I think the Minister did finish as Ms Jackson commenced.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I think that is a generous interpretation.

The ACTING CHAIR: It would be best if there was a clearer delineation.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Do you want to repeat your question, sorry, Ms Jackson?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In your previous answer you mentioned that the reason the Minister indicated that he wished to delegate his authority to Mr Miller in relation to the signature of the funding agreement was as a probity safeguard. That was your answer. I am asking you why that probity safeguard was not necessary on 24 January and was necessary on 19 February?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Sorry, perhaps I was not clear in what I was saying. I was saying that a spokesperson for Minister Ayres, which was reported in the media recently, said that—and I just quoted what they—that is speculation, but what I quoted was Minister Ayres's spokesperson saying about the process. I am more than happy for Ms Jones to answer about the process but I think she has clearly indicated that she will take those specific questions on notice when she has the documentation in front of her. Unless you want to add anything, Ms Jones?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, do you have anything to add on that?

Ms JONES: No. Look, I was not the chief executive at the time, so obviously if there is any additional information I am happy to provide that through taking it on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You may not have been the chief executive at that time, Ms Jones, although in correspondence you are repeatedly referred to as providing the Minister and, indeed, Mr Miller, with examples or similar cases of where funding agreements that have been signed are then rescinded and signed again under delegated authority. Did you in fact provide those examples or similar cases to the Minister or to Mr Miller?

Ms JONES: In my capacity as the Executive Director of Sports Infrastructure Group I was often called upon in terms of providing advice around funding agreements for infrastructure projects. It would be great if you could show me that information that you are relying upon.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am happy to table the emails. I do not have copies for the whole Committee.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Why do you not just show the witnesses?

The ACTING CHAIR: You have another three minutes if you want to make copies over the course of the break or you can show them to the witness now.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is one email to which I am referring, but there are other references of a similar nature.

Ms JONES: Yes, this email that you have tabled refers to myself as providing examples of funding agreements for infrastructure projects. That was part of my job as the Executive Director of Sports Infrastructure Group.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think that the specific reference is to funding agreements in which delegated authority had been given by the Minister to the chief executive. The context of that was the Minister's specific request for a new brief in which he did delegate his authority after he had in fact signed a funding agreement himself. Is that the type of thing that you would ordinarily provide advice on to the Minister and the chief executive?

Ms JONES: I would have to go back through my notes to see in what context I was actually asked to provide those funding agreements, but I was not party to those conversations in terms of the transfer of the delegation of that funding agreement from the Minister at the time to the chief executive at the time.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You were never told or never informed or never given any information in relation to the fact that Minister Ayres had signed a funding agreement and then a few weeks later a new brief had to be written in which delegated authority was given to Mr Miller to sign a funding agreement? Your evidence is that you were completely unaware of that chain of events?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No, that is not right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: She can answer for herself.

The ACTING CHAIR: Can we not talk over each other? If you have a point of order, it is best to start with the words "Point of order" and then I will know you are taking a point of order.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It is reasonable that a witness, having just heard an answer, does not put a proposition that is contrary to what she has said. That is just outrageous.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: There is no point of order.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There is no point of order.

The ACTING CHAIR: I hear what I think is a point of order and I think the witness is in a position to answer the question as she sees fit.

Ms JONES: As I said before, the context of this email is that I was to provide examples of funding agreements for infrastructure projects. The context of those discussions is something that I have to go back through my notes on. Again, I will take that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, is it usual for a project funded through an office—for example, the Office of Sport—that does not include any sporting facilities to be allowed to continue? Is that usual for this Government?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that as acting Minister for the last six months, there is a process that we follow. That process for every—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many times has the Office of Sport funded—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I will take the point of order again: The Minister was answering the question. The Hon. Rose Jackson does—

The ACTING CHAIR: I hear and accept the point of order. Minister, have you finished?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: He is just repeating his notes.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, had you finished your answer?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No. I think it is important to recognise that this project that we are talking about was an election commitment. There is a process that we go through for election commitments and I think Ms Jones is answering those questions and, where necessary, she will take those questions on notice to sort out the finer issues and dates after she consults her notes.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, how many portfolios do you have?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Six.

The ACTING CHAIR: The annual report says you have seven.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Seven, actually. Parramatta should be included as seven.

The ACTING CHAIR: With so many it is easy to forget, is it not, Minister?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I was being facetious in my comment about Parramatta, which is not a portfolio, more a passion of mine.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, you have been the acting sports Minister for over six months, is it?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I would have to check, but around that.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you accept the complaints from peak bodies, including rugby league, basketball, Australian Football League [AFL] and netball organisations, that it is unacceptable to have an acting Minister in a crucial portfolio like sport for six months or more?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that from time to time we deal with a lot of very complicated or very complex issues. Sometimes we get feedback and we deal with that feedback as required. I think you will find that we have executed those duties in all of those portfolios quickly and efficiently and, like everything, that people have different views. I can assure the Committee and everybody out there listening that we take every concern. But the opportunity to advance sport—and that is what we are in to, advancing sport for our young people at grassroots level—we are very proud of. I take my responsibilities very seriously in terms of those executions on all six portfolios.

The ACTING CHAIR: Seven.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Facetiously, I was saying that I am the member for Parramatta as a seventh one. As acting Minister, let me assure you I take those responsibilities very seriously. I have some great staff that provide expert advice. I have great bureaucrats who are sitting around the table here today. They are very professional and they provide great advice that allows me to be able to execute those duties. I am very proud that we have had some terrific work to do in the last six months. It has been an absolute honour and privilege to be the steward of those six portfolios.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, you say that it is complex and I accept that it is complex, having six portfolios. But the peak bodies have signed a letter to the Premier and said words to the effect—I am quoting from an article in *The Daily Telegraph*—"There was concern expressed that sport in NSW was in a holding pattern and losing relevance and traction at the government level." That is what the organisations said in a letter to the Premier of 10 December. Since then, we have been stuck with an acting Minister for another 3½ months. What do you say to those organisations on their concerns about the holding pattern and losing relevance?

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said before, I take my responsibilities as the Acting Minister for Sports, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans very seriously. We work with lots of different sporting organisations and lots of individuals. We have a great team of bureaucrats in the ministry. In sport it is led by Karen Jones. I am very happy with the outcome. We work through issues as they occur. Being in government, issues occur from time to time and the major thing is that we solve those issues as best we can. We are very proud of what we have done. We have had some great wins in the role and I am very happy about that. Certainly, for any of those stakeholders in the media article, we have addressed those issues and I have assured them that as acting Minister I am here to serve the sporting community. That is a real priority for me.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, your Government has a factional problem and it is playing out to the detriment of sport in New South Wales, because you have not been able to address the issues with former Minister Sidoti. You are leaving sports agencies in an unacceptable holding pattern, are you not? And it is not for the best interest of sport in New South Wales.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I certainly reject your assertion that sporting organisations are in a holding pattern. I am very proud of the achievements that have been seen in the last six months including negotiation of 27 grand finals to be held at National Rugby League [NRL] and the delivery of some wonderful programs. Also included are things like drought and bushfire relief programs. I have some other instances in terms of things like the Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre. This is what we are going to deliver. I came into the portfolio under very difficult circumstances at Lake Macquarie and I should congratulate Greg Piper, because I know Greg, the member for Lake Macquarie, listens in. He is a wonderful champion for his community and we work collaboratively together.

The closure of the Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre was a very difficult situation and we were able to deliver a great win not only for the people of Lake Macquarie but because this will be the first brand-new sport and recreation centre that we have delivered in decades.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, you talk about one incident, one issue that you have got sorted, yet you know the organisations—

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: I do not think he has finished his answer.

The ACTING CHAIR: —were deeply distressed by the very slow allocation of funding to 80 of the State's sporting organisations. That was because your Government does not have a permanent sports Minister, is it not? That is what caused the delay to the funding of 80 of the State's key sporting organisations.

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, I reject that again. I reject the premise of your question, Mr Shoebridge. That issue has been addressed. It was addressed as soon as I became aware of that situation. I think that anybody in the sporting organisation who knows me, knows that I am full and frank and I get on with the job. I am very proud to take those responsibilities seriously. I think the premise is wrong to say that not only have we fixed Myuna Bay

and looked at the best possible outcome to deliver something for the people of Lake Macquarie and people from the region.

We have done other things. I am more than happy to go through the 27 NRL grand finals that have been secured for New South Wales. I would be more than happy to let the Committee know about the wonderful work we are doing in bushfire-affected areas and the drought-affected areas, such as holding summer camps over that time or the other grant achievements which we were able to administer under the sports program, things such as the opening of the Ken Rosewall Arena.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, this is not the opportunity for a random shopping list. The Government has an opportunity to ask you questions if you want to get these matters on the record at the conclusion of the Opposition and crossbench questioning.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I apologise Mr Shoebridge if you thought that was random. But my understanding was that you were concerned about the delivery of sport and I am very proud and take responsibility for the delivery of sporting infrastructure, sporting funding and encouraging young people. I was just being enthusiastic about what I want to do.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, you have your six quite distinct portfolio responsibilities. How much time a week are you seriously able to give to your work as the acting sport Minister?

Dr GEOFF LEE: The time that is required. It varies from week to week. I do not actually sit there and add up.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is it four hours or five hours? There is only a certain amount of time in the week. Is it four, five, six hours? How much time are you able to give as the acting sport Minister to this key portfolio?

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: He has just given you the answer.

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said, it varies from week to week and what happens in the week. Sometimes you spend a lot of time, sometimes a little bit. Rest assured, I do not sit there and add up the minutes. I am not a solicitor. I do not sit there and do it in six-minute intervals. I do what is required to sort out the problems and then we move on. We have very dedicated staff. We have a great Office of Sport run by Karen Jones, who assists us ably in those issues. It is a great privilege to serve for the Office of Sport and the people of New South Wales.

The ACTING CHAIR: When can sporting organisations and the millions of people in New South Wales who want sport to be properly administered expect to have a permanent Minister rather than a part-time acting Minister?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Again, I do not know if you are trying to be argumentative or not, but not calling me—

The ACTING CHAIR: I am just trying to get an answer for the key question that organisations are asking. When are we going to have a permanent full-time Minister?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I think that is a little bit insulting to say that as acting sport Minister I do not take my responsibilities seriously and make decisions and run the office. The premise of your question is wrong. That is offensive for you to say that. You know me. I am not delegating my duties in a proper and fit manner. I reject the premise of your question. I think it is insulting.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, rather than you trying to double guess the premise, can you give us an answer? When will New South Wales have a full-time permanent sport Minister?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am full-time, I am the Minister at the moment. I am the acting Minister. I have all the responsibilities of the sport Minister. It says in my title under the—

The ACTING CHAIR: I have read the title.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I make all the decisions. I have all the power. I am responsible and I am proud of those responsibilities.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, is it true that the current budget for the stadium rebuild is \$99 million over budget or have you got some updates on that?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No. It has been quite public about the stadium build for the Sydney Football Stadium [SFS].

The ACTING CHAIR: Is it still \$99 million over budget?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Those negotiations were handled by Infrastructure NSW and I will ask Simon Draper. Maybe he can outline for Mr Shoebridge the details of those negotiations.

Mr DRAPER: Sure. Mr Shoebridge, it is not a case that it is \$99 million over budget. There is a budget of \$828 million and we are operating within that budget.

The ACTING CHAIR: The original stated budget for the project was \$729 million, was it not, Mr Draper?

Mr DRAPER: That is correct.

The ACTING CHAIR: Last time I did the maths on that, if the original budget was \$729 million and it is now \$828 million, that is \$99 million more than the original budget.

Mr DRAPER: That is true, it is more than the original budget, but the Government has approved a new budget of \$828 million having received competitive tenders at the end of 2019. That informed a recommendation that we made to the Government and the Government has approved a budget of \$828 million.

The ACTING CHAIR: We are having a semantic debate here, are we not? It is \$99 million more than the original budget?

Mr DRAPER: That is correct.

The ACTING CHAIR: Some people would say that is \$99 million over budget, but you for some reason, cavil with that?

Mr DRAPER: I do not cavil with it, I am just stating that we have an approved budget of \$828 million.

The ACTING CHAIR: How much has been spent?

Mr DRAPER: I would have to check my notes to date but stage one was approximately \$36 million or \$37 million.

The ACTING CHAIR: That was the knockdown?

Mr DRAPER: That was the stage one works, which included more than the demolition. The stage one included demolition, but also included earthworks, relocation of utilities, creation of new stormwater infrastructure on site, which is now in place. All of that has been done.

The ACTING CHAIR: Stage one was \$36 million or \$37 million. What has been spent since then?

Mr DRAPER: I would have to check what the spend to date is on stage two, but it would be relatively small, because we are only at the early stages of stage two.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, have you met with Sydney FC or the Sydney Roosters or the New South Wales Waratahs to discuss their concerns about the absence of an LED curtain on the stadium?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is that because you have not had time?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No.

The ACTING CHAIR: Have they sought to meet with you?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Not to my knowledge.

The ACTING CHAIR: Will you meet with them?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am happy to meet with a whole range of stakeholders, absolutely.

The ACTING CHAIR: Did you sign off on the final plans, approved plans which exclude an LED curtain? Did you have any sign-off on that?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Let me be always clear, no club mode curtain will be delivered in the stadium project.

The ACTING CHAIR: I think it is very clear that no LED curtain will be made available, despite the fact that the New South Wales Rugby Union has said that throughout the consultation process New South Wales Rugby Union made the inclusion of a curtain within the stadium a top tier priority. Were you aware that the LED curtain was a top tier priority for New South Wales Rugby Union?

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said to you, we have always been clear that no club mode curtain will be delivered in the stadium project. I will ask Simon Draper maybe to explain the process for you.

Mr DRAPER: The business case that was approved in March 2018 was very clear that there was no LED curtain included. That was primarily because there was no technical solution available to put in such a curtain. We are talking about an open air stadium. That is a very big curtain. You can imagine the wind loads that would be on such a curtain. We have not been able to identify any other open air stadium in the world that has such a curtain. There is no technical solution available to do that.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr Draper, it was part of the original \$1 billion floated initial proposal to have an LED curtain.

Mr DRAPER: I am not aware—

The ACTING CHAIR: That was included in the original documentation, admittedly glossies, provided by the Government.

Mr DRAPER: I am not aware of a \$1 billion proposal. There was a concept design done by the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust in I think 2017. There was a costing done on that which included an allowance for a curtain. That was removed from the budget that we were then given and it was removed because, as I said, there is no technical solution available. There is nowhere else in the world where such a curtain operates in an open air stadium with high wind loads.

The ACTING CHAIR: Did anybody sit down with the three key tenants for this stadium, that is Sydney FC, the Sydney Roosters and the New South Wales Waratahs and say, "Hang on, the curtain is off. You are not getting your curtain"?

Mr DRAPER: There has been constant discussions with all of those bodies. When the business case and the announcement in the beginning of 2018 said there was going to be no curtain, it meant there was going to be no curtain. That was very, very clear and public.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, what do you say to the Sydney FC Chief Executive, Danny Townsend, who is on the record saying that they have always been adamant that they needed it to function in the two modes. He said:

Once they announced the funding envelope and the stadium design, the one thing that wasn't included ... was the curtain. At which point we went, hang on, we only agreed to this if we could operate and function in two modes, and in order to function in two modes, you need to be able to cover one of those modes.

What do you say to the Sydney FC chief executive?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can you table the—

The ACTING CHAIR: I can, in due course. What do you say to the Sydney FC chief executive?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, the New South Wales Government has been clear since the project was funded in March 2018 that there would not be an LED curtain to cover the top tier of the stadium. I understand that the curtain and another piece of technology known as a media halo were discussed with stakeholders in the early stage of the project's planning. These options were considered in the business case but not taken forward by the Government. I am happy to ask Mr Draper to elaborate anything further on this, if he can.

Mr DRAPER: Only to say, Minister, that that was published in the business case summary that was put online. It was very, very clear from the very beginning that it was not possible to do an LED curtain and it was not included in our budget.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, the three key long-term tenants have made it clear from the outset that the reason they supported this project was because they thought it could operate in two modes. The Government has reneged on that, has it not? We are spending \$830 million of taxpayers' money for a B-grade stadium.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Again, I reject your premise and in fact Mr Draper will explain why it is a great stadium and it will be one of the best ones not just in New South Wales but in Australia and perhaps the world when it is completed. Maybe Mr Draper would like to talk about the wonderful stadium and how it will be international and able to have great sporting events and cultural events and festivals.

Mr DRAPER: One of the criteria for being a tier 1 stadium is to be higher than 40,000 seats and to be able to accommodate international fixtures. It has been designed to do that. All the facilities are designed to cope

with those volumes of visitors in that type of event. So, yes, it has been designed for that. I certainly would not describe it as B-grade. It is not necessarily the case that because we cannot build a particular type of curtain the stadium cannot operate in different modes at different times. That is something that the users can explore with the operator at the time of opening.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is that going to cost more than the current budget?

Mr DRAPER: No.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is there anticipated to be additional expenditure so it can actually be fit for purpose, Mr Draper?

Mr DRAPER: No.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, you are aware that Sydney FC have said that their usual home game gets 15,000 attendees and that they are going to feel lost in a stadium of 45,000 and it is a poor outcome for Sydney FC. What do you say to New South Wales taxpayers—that you are dropping \$830 million of public money for a poor outcome for Sydney FC?

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said, this will be a tier 1 stadium. This will allow us to compete with the other States. Not only are tier 1 stadiums required in New South Wales to attract major sporting events but also major cultural events and major entertainment events. Can I say that the New South Wales Government, as I said before, has been clear since the project was funded in March 2018 that there would not be an LED curtain to cover the top tier of the stadium.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, this is an over-budget, over-time white elephant that does not meet the key demands of the three main tenants, is it not? That is what your Government is building at huge cost.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I reject your premise. I think it is a wonderful opportunity to have a great stadium—an A-grade stadium, a top-tier stadium—that will actually allow us to compete because as we know stadiums are not just about sport; they are about having concerts in them and about having festivals in them. It is a wonderful addition to our Stadia Strategy that we have embarked upon. One only has to look at the economic and social value of the stadium that we have already delivered in my responsibilities as the member for Parramatta: Bankwest Stadium. What a great stadium that is. When you go there the fans love it and the performers—

The ACTING CHAIR: We might talk about the Sydney stadium that is \$99 million over budget. That is what I would ask you to address your answer to.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Okay, sorry. I am just very proud of my Bankwest Stadium.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr Draper, what was the original proposed completion date for the stadium and what is its current completion date?

Mr DRAPER: The original estimated completion date was March 2022. The contracted completion date with John Holland, who is the new builder on the project, is 30 July 2022.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you, Mr Shoebridge. Let us go back, Minister Lee, to the election commitments that you have referenced—the 2015 election commitment of \$12 million for Penrith Panthers. That was for sporting facilities, was it not?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I understand the scope is—I do not exactly have the exact scope. I am wondering whether Karen Jones actually had the election commitment. But it was certainly an election commitment made at that period of time.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The commitment made to the people of Penrith, as you would make election commitments to the people of Parramatta, to deliver—

Dr GEOFF LEE: To the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: To the people of New South Wales who might go to Penrith for sporting facilities—that was the nature of the commitment, was it not?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes. As I said, if I had the exact election commitment in front of me—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is indeed why it was funded through the Office of Sport—because it was for sporting facilities.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that it was an election commitment made by the Government in 2015—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: To the people of Penrith for sporting facilities.

Dr GEOFF LEE: It certainly predates my role as acting Minister.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But you are familiar with election commitments; you are running in Parramatta. You are making election commitments all the time to your community to deliver certain things. This was a commitment for sporting facilities. We have got Premier Baird and they are holding footballs. This is a sporting commitment, is it not? This is the announcement in 2015 for the community of Penrith to get sporting facilities. Would you at least accept—

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will take your word on it. I have not seen that photo before but I am more than happy for Ms Jones to—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can tell you they have got footballs. They are playing sport.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, there are footballs.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Why are you asking me the question? Sorry.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Because I am trying to ascertain when your Government was going to tell the people of Penrith that they had reneged on their commitment to deliver sporting facilities to them.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Obviously when those decisions were made predates my tenure as acting Minister and I would ask Karen Jones if she would like to make a comment in terms of that—or do you have to consult your notes and get back to the Committee?

Ms JONES: The information that I have is that the Western Sydney community sports precinct was a joint Federal Government and Penrith Panthers project delivering an entertainment, leisure and sports hub in the region. At the time of the announcement it was a multipurpose community facility.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How often does this happen, Minister, that you make election commitments to deliver, in this instance, sporting facilities through the Office of Sport and then continue to use the Office of Sport to deliver completely different facilities? Is it happening all the time? How many projects is the Office of Sport funding that are not in fact sporting facilities?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will ask Karen Jones if she wants to answer that question.

Ms JONES: As I said before, the decision was actually made to use the Office of Sport given that we have established processes and procedures in place to administer—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sporting facilities.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Just hold on.

Ms JONES: —election commitments for infrastructure projects with sporting clubs. We have a lot of election commitments and also grant recipient processes that we actually administer. In terms of the content of each one of those, that is something I would have to take on notice. There are hundreds.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So it is in fact possible that there are other infrastructure projects that the Office of Sport is delivering that have nothing to do with sport? There could be more?

Ms JONES: I am not saying that. What I am saying is that we are more than happy to have a look through those election commitments and other applications that we are processing for you and give you back that detail and that breakdown.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Let us go back to the series of events prior to the 2019 election. Sporting facilities have been abandoned. The Office of Sport is still delivering the project. We may come back to a few more questions about how that decision was made, but we are in the lead-up to the 2019 State election. Ms Jones, at what point was your office given an assurance from the Federal Government that their co-contribution to this project was secure? When did that occur?

Ms JONES: Let me see if I can find that information for you. Just bear with me for a second. The information I have in front of me at the moment says in October 2017 the office received advice from Panthers indicating that they had received formal advice from the Federal infrastructure department that they had approved their request to change the project to include a community centre with flexible community spaces, community public exhibition and art spaces, a lobby and office space, a convention centre and associated car parking.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Why then was it necessary to secure an email from the Deputy Prime Minister to Senator Marise Payne on 15 January in relation to the project?

Ms JONES: That is something I would have to take on notice and go back through the notes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, you indicated earlier that there had been some conversations within the Office of Sport about transferring the carriage of the project to another agency, considering that this project in fact now had nothing to do with sport but you said it was the Office of Sport that decided internally that that was not the way to proceed.

Ms JONES: We did actually canvass other government agencies to determine whether or not the election commitment was best placed with them. Those other agencies included the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Greater Sydney Commission and also the Department of Industry. However, the decision was made that it should stay with the Office of Sport given our history with the project and given that we had the established processes and procedures—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It was in fact an internal recommendation from the Office of Sport that it be transferred to another office. That was in fact the initial recommendation from the office, was it not, that it be transferred to someone else?

Ms JONES: Once the project had changed scope, and so that the sport component was no longer part of the original scope, there was instigation from the Office of Sport that perhaps we should actually canvass other government agencies to see whether or not it was best placed with them.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Why didn't anyone else want a bar of this project?

Ms JONES: That is something I cannot comment on. I have no idea.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, we are back on 24 January. We have a funding agreement signed by the Minister for the project—

Dr GEOFF LEE: Sorry, which—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: For the now Western Sydney Community and Conference Centre—they dropped "Sport" from the name, still on the Office of Sport letterhead obviously. That funding agreement, which is a legally binding document, is given to Penrith Panthers and a few weeks later the Office of Sport and the Minister's office request a copy of that signed, legally binding funding agreement back from Penrith Panthers so that they can sign a new funding agreement with delegated authority to Mr Miller.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Sorry, Ms Jackson, what year?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In 2019. Can you give us any clarity as to why that series of events may have occurred—why a legally binding funding agreement given to an outside organisation, in this case the Penrith Panthers, would be requested back so that they could be reissued a new funding agreement?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I have a look at that document? Sorry, I am not familiar with the document.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You can see it has Minister Ayres' signature on it there.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Again, what I can say about it is that it was signed on the twenty-fourth and that predates my tenure as acting Minister. Maybe Karen Jones can have a look at that and make any comment about it, or maybe help Ms Jackson on her query or question.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, do you have any probity concerns in relation to a Minister signing a funding agreement, a legally binding document, and it being given to an outside organisation, only to have that legally binding document requested back and a new funding agreement signed under delegated authority? Do you have any probity concerns? This is occurring weeks before the 2019 State election. Does that concern you at all?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will certainly ask the secretary to answer those questions about the process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have asked you. You are the responsible Minister at this time.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you have any probity concerns in relation to that series of events?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I have certainly—

The ACTING CHAIR: I will ask the Minister to stop. We have a point of order.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: The Minister, well canvassed in the past, is entitled to answer the questions he chooses fit, including to refer it to another person at the table.

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes, the Minister is able to refer it and then, if you are unsatisfied with that referral, you can address it in a later question, and I think the Minister was midway through answering.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr Coutts-Trotter, do you have any probity concerns?

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Jackson, we might let the Minister initially answer and, if he wants to refer it for further answer to Mr Coutts-Trotter, he can do that and then we can come back to you again.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you, Chair, I will certainly refer it to the secretary to make comment about your question.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I guess, in general terms, it is completely unremarkable for a Minister to delegate decision-making to an agency, and in the course of negotiating the detail of funding agreements of any kind it would be totally usual for the agency to accept responsibility to do that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely, I accept that is the case. Is it indeed unremarkable for a funding agreement to be signed by a Minister, delivered to an outside organisation—a legally binding document—and to be requested back and a new funding agreement signed under delegated authority? Is that unremarkable business of this Government?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I am not familiar with—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are you familiar with any other instance of that?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Allow him to answer.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: He is answering.

The ACTING CHAIR: To the point of order: I think Ms Jackson had a pause, which was misunderstood as the end of her question, but it was not.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is a very generous interpretation.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can you recall any other instance within your substantial cluster and time in the public service where this has occurred in relation to a funding agreement?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I am not—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: No, you are assuming that I actually am familiar with the sequence of events here, and I am not so—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have described a sequence of events.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: You are inviting me to answer based on an assumption about a sequence of events, which I am not comfortable doing.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Minister, even if you delegate—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Oh, Shaoquett, you're here!

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Even if you delegate, are you not, as the Minister, still responsible to have oversight of what is being signed off?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will refer that to the secretary.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You are the Minister.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you not understand delegated authority?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order—

The ACTING CHAIR: One question at a time. Minister, I think the question was to you in your capacity as a Minister, so if you could endeavour to answer it that would be of assistance to the Committee.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly if there was ever delegated authority, yes, the Minister is ultimately responsible, but as to the fine points I will ask the secretary to answer.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Delegation includes constraints on decisions about the value of money that can be committed, time frames and the like, and it would be usual for an agency to understand and act within those constraints.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What is the financial limit of the delegated authority that can be given to the CEO of the Office of Sport?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I will turn to Karen because those delegations do not run through me.

Ms JONES: I think the Minister has the delegation to delegate any sort of prescribed value to the chief executive of the Office of Sport. But in terms of any necessary limits, I can take that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You are now the CEO of the Office of Sport?

Ms JONES: Correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are you aware of the financial limit of—

Ms JONES: I am definitely aware of my financial limit.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And what is that?

Ms JONES: That is \$3 million.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: This project was for \$12 million, so that is in fact four times the financial limit of your current delegated authority. That seems a bit unusual, does it not, Ms Jones?

Ms JONES: No, it does not, because how election commitments, particularly for infrastructure projects, are actually administered is they are broken down in terms of delivery milestones, and that actually forms part of the funding agreement. So if you look at the back of any of our funding agreements you will see a schedule of milestones and the breakdown of what needs to be achieved as part of that milestone before funding is actually released.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: This is a \$12 million project and the financial limit of the delegated authority of the CEO is \$3 million, yet the Minister delegated the authority to the then CEO, Mr Miller, to sign off on the project, and you are saying there are no probity questions around that occurrence?

Ms JONES: In terms of the actual delegation powers of the Minister to the chief executive in relation to this particular project, I will take that on notice and provide you some advice on that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, I quote from Minister Ayres' office—or in fact from an email from Anne Gripper based on a conversation with the Minister himself that he did not want his signature on anything to do with the Panthers project. Why? Why did the Minister not want his signature on anything to do with the Panthers project?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I certainly cannot speculate on that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was it because it looked bad?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, as I said—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was that why?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I cannot speculate—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was it because it was bad?

The ACTING CHAIR: You have to let him answer.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: He is mumbling.

The ACTING CHAIR: Provided it is transcribable, the Minister is allowed to answer as he sees fit.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies. I withdraw the "mumbling" comment.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I can mumble if you want me to mumble.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, let us not go down that path.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Would you like to answer my question.

Dr GEOFF LEE: What was it again, sorry?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was it because it looked bad?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I should say, to be clear, I cannot speculate on the question that you ask. Obviously I have been acting Minister for six months in this portfolio. That is my answer.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Obviously the Minister is not only the Minister for sport but also he is the member for Penrith? Is he not?

Dr GEOFF LEE: That is correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was Penrith a target seat for the Liberal Party in the lead-up to the 2019 election? Was it an electorate into which you were putting campaign resources and effort?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say every electorate throughout New South Wales we wanted to win, including Parramatta—and that is probably the most important one as far I am concerned personally, not from my ministerial capacity, but Parramatta was a prime focus in that time.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: If I were to look up expenditure details in the lead-up to the 2019 election in terms of where the Liberal Party was directing its resources Penrith would be right at the top of the list, would it not?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I firstly say I do not understand how that relates to my portfolio responsibilities into which the Committee is investigating—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am asking questions about how \$12 million that was intended to be spent on sporting facilities for the people of New South Wales got spent on a facility that had nothing to do with sport. How has that happened? I am putting to you, Minister, that it was because the then Minister, Stuart Ayres, was very concerned about his election prospects in the 2019 State election.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that from 2019 I think every single member of the Coalition was very concerned about their prospects of being re-elected.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So this kind of thing was happening all over the place?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, I am saying—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: People were signing off money from agencies for projects that have nothing to do with those agencies?

The ACTING CHAIR: You have to let the Minister finish.

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, I am saying that any good member is always concerned about getting re-elected because it is a tough gig. It is a hard thing when you have electorates, to hold on to those seats. To say that there are swings that happen in State elections, especially State and Federal elections and very strange outcomes. I say when you are a candidate, sitting for an election, you take nothing for granted and that is why we work so hard at doing that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is that why you might push for a project to occur which would be funded through, for example, the Office of Sport which has nothing to do with it? Is that concern about re-election a motivating factor in the series of events that led to \$12 million being spent on a facility that had nothing to do with sport through the Office of Sport—that very valid concern you have just identified?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that every single member, me included, always pushes as much as we can for our own election and this project you are talking about was an election commitment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Let us segue a little bit then perhaps into pre-election commitments. I give you a copy of the successful applicants. I will start with the regional sports facility grants. Are you satisfied that the former Minister for Sport, Stuart Ayres, did not interfere with the allocations of grants to any sporting organisation in the 12 months prior to the New South Wales election?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Sorry, what was that again?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are you satisfied that the Minister for Sport did not interfere with the allocation of grants in the 12 months leading up to the 2019 State election?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes. Can I say that I am advised that the due process was followed and I am more than happy for Karen Jones to talk about the process that we have for all our grant programs.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I refer to one grant to start with. I understand my time is about to expire and I will come back to it. I ask you about the grant for the cycling project in Wagga Wagga on 18 August 2018. Why was that grant allocated in Wagga Wagga before the applications for this grant round had even closed? Why was that one done?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Whose question is that?

The ACTING CHAIR: I think it is directed to you, Minister, and then if you want to direct it anywhere else.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Obviously that was well before my time. I am more than happy to ask—it is pretty self-evident. You are asking the same questions, keep going to preface it. I will keep prefacing my answers. But I am more than happy for Ms Jones to be open and transparent. If you can do, we will take it on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, can you provide any information about the \$6.9 million?

Ms JONES: The Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund was a grant program that was run in conjunction between the Office of Sport and the Department of Premier and Cabinet at that time. The actual Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund was a \$100 million grant program and it is actually run in two rounds. The first round was in 2017 and I think you will find that the Wagga Wagga project to which you refer was actually considered as part of that round and the second round was in 2018.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The grant announcement in Wagga Wagga in August 2018 was made in the weeks running up to the 8 September Wagga Wagga by-election. Minister, was the Liberal candidate, Julie Ham, at the announcement of that grant?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I have no idea.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Indeed, she was at the announcement in fact.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Okay.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Does that ring any alarm bells for you?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I cannot speak. No, I mean—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No. We will come back to that.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am sorry, I was not at the Wagga Wagga by-election. I was in Parramatta.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr Coutts-Trotter, I accept that you are not in a position to give a comprehensive answer based on the series of assumptions that were put to you about the signing of the contract by the Minister and then the request to have it rescinded and then signed under delegation. I accept you are not in a position to provide comprehensive answers on that now but I would invite you to take that on notice and review the relevant documentation and advise the Committee whether you have any concerns, having reviewed the documentation.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I am happy to take it on notice and I will respond as I can.

The ACTING CHAIR: Are you aware of any circumstances to your knowledge—and you have extensive experience in the bureaucracy—where there has been a request to withdraw a contract that has a Minister's signature on it so it could be replaced by another contract signed under delegated authority? Are you aware of that happening in your experience?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Not that I can recall but it is my best recollection. It could have happened previously but I cannot recall it.

The ACTING CHAIR: It would not be unreasonable to say that that would be a highly unusual occurrence?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: No, I would not characterise it in those terms. I really should not. As I say, I am not familiar with the detail of this. I should look at the detail of this before offering any kind of characterisation.

The ACTING CHAIR: So rather than poke and prod again I note you have taken it on notice. I would appreciate your answer within 21 days. Minister, have you asked to review the documentation leading up to the grant for the Panthers club?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly I have been advised by the Office of Sport that the process was followed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But my question was whether you had asked for some assurances. I asked whether you have sought to review any of the documentation leading up to this quite clearly controversial \$12 million grant.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that, as I said, I have been advised by my office that the appropriate processes were followed.

The ACTING CHAIR: Would it surprise you if the Executive Director of Sport and Recreation, in an email on 24 May 2018, referred to having a black folder on this issue?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am not sure where you get—what you mean by—a "black folder"?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think that is the very question, is it not Minister? Are you aware of anyone in Sport and Recreation having these things called "black folders" where they dump emails?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No. Certainly the Office of Sport manages the grants process. Maybe Ms Jones can inform.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Jones, is there a practice of having black folders in Sport and Recreation where you add troublesome emails?

Ms JONES: Again, if I can have a look at that document to which you are referring that refers to black folders that you are prefacing.

The ACTING CHAIR: I am more than happy to show you the document. I am asking whether there is a practice in Sport and Recreation to have things called "black folders" where obviously troubling emails and communications are put?

Ms JONES: No, that is not right.

The ACTING CHAIR: Have you sought to find the black folder that the Executive Director for Sport and Recreation had in relation to the \$12 million grant to the Panthers club?

Ms JONES: Again, if I can have a look at the email that would be very beneficial to my answer.

The ACTING CHAIR: I am more than happy but I will just read the key points onto the record, "Hi"—and I will not name the individual officers but this has come from the executive director—"This is another issue on which I value your record/history kicking prowess. The email chain below follows one stream of the discussion. There are a couple more emails which may be relevant to add to your black folder on this issue." And then there is discussion about the Minister wanting to achieve the \$12 million grant to the Panthers club and the transfer of responsibility to another agency. I will show you the email and maybe you will give me your considered response.

Ms JONES: Sure.

The ACTING CHAIR: Are you aware of the existence of black folders in your agency?

Ms JONES: I am aware of this black folder, yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: What was or is the black folder referred to?

Ms JONES: The black folder contained some documentation, some information, around the actual community centre.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, will you review the black folder and provide a copy of the black folder to the Committee?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that—I will take advice. On advice, yes—

The ACTING CHAIR: Let me guess. You will take advice, it may be commercial-in-confidence and you will get back to us on notice.

Dr GEOFF LEE: That was the answer I had too.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is that right?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes, thank you, Mr Chair. Sorry, that was great advice. You should be a lawyer.

The ACTING CHAIR: I just heard Mr Coutts-Trotter, actually.

Dr GEOFF LEE: That is why we have him. He is good.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Thank you.

The ACTING CHAIR: So you will provide us the answer on notice. Minister, this is not a flippant issue.

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, I know.

The ACTING CHAIR: The thought that there is a black folder that exists where there are, on the face of it, these highly controversial communications about the delivery of \$12 million of public money, which you were not aware of as the acting Minister, that is problematic, is it not?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No. As I said, we will review that. We have committed to reviewing that, we will look at it and, if appropriate, we will release that information to you.

The ACTING CHAIR: You have not reviewed any of the documentation. You have just asked for a bland assurance, but you have not done your job as a Minister and actually reviewed the documentation.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The Office of Sport administers that grant process. I have been made aware and advised as the office manages the funding agreements.

The ACTING CHAIR: We might just move on to some other issues in your portfolio responsibilities, Minister.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Good.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are aware that older women are the fastest-growing demographic for homelessness in New South Wales?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I take your word for it. Homelessness is —

The ACTING CHAIR: Do not take my word for it. Ask your secretary.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: That is true. Small numbers, thankfully, of older women, but the fastest increase in numbers of any group.

The ACTING CHAIR: There are structural reasons for this, including the gender pay gap and the absence of adequate superannuation.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, now that you are aware of the issue, what is your plan to address it?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly homelessness is a terrible issue that not only affects older women, but veterans and a whole range right throughout the community. We have an ageing strategy and the New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that every person in this State has a safe and affordable place to live. Housing choices is priority area three of the New South Wales Government's Ageing Strategy. Under the ageing strategy, New South Wales agencies are working with other levels of government, businesses and the not-for-profit sector to support improving housing outcomes for people. We have the Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW strategy, which has the biggest social housing building program of any State or Territory across the country. It is part of a \$22 billion Communities Plus building program, which is delivering 23,000 social housing dwellings, 500 affordable housing dwellings and 40,000 private dwellings over 10 years.

Over \$1 billion of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund has contracts in place to deliver 3,480 social and affordable housing dwellings throughout New South Wales over the next four years, with over 46 per cent of dwellings intended for people over 55. Providers awarded the contracts through this tender process will be awarded homes and can access tailored support for those on social housing waiting lists for terms of 25 years. An example of that is the city of Shellharbour, which is working with older women to look at the possible housing options for the future of its city. I should thank you for the question because I think the issue of homelessness, especially for older women, is of significance. The Government is doing a whole-of-government approach to address those significant issues for the community, which is a terrible affliction of what one would say is quite a wealthy and prosperous society in New South Wales. Mr Coutts-Trotter, do you want to add anything?

The ACTING CHAIR: Could it focus on older women rather than the general statement that we got from the Minister?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, sure. The Social and Affordable Housing Fund in its second round of grants funding specifically targeted housing for older women and asked for the non-government sector to respond with proposals. I would have to get the note back to give you the detail of the nature of those responses, but it was a policy priority in that process. There are a range of private rental subsidy products again that respond to people's priority needs. As you have called out, older women are a particularly vulnerable group and both through the priority social housing waitlist and in the allocation of private rental subsidy products we intend to make a priority of the needs of those older women.

Dr GEOFF LEE: If I could add, my learned colleagues behind me have also reminded me that I have tasked my advisory council, headed by Kathryn Greiner, to look at the issue in a more in-depth way so that we can find innovative solutions to this important issue.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any targets we can hold you to by the end of this year for a reduction in the rate of homelessness for older women?

Dr GEOFF LEE: We do not have those set targets at the moment, but I am more than happy to get back to you. I will take it on notice and see if we have those targets available at the present time. I am sure we will have another opportunity.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Of course, part of the challenge—

The ACTING CHAIR: Beyond what is contained in the ageing strategy.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, but, regardless of the strategy it is contained in, the challenge, of course, is developing a measure that is more regular than the Australian Bureau of Statistics six-year census, so a whole lot of work, as you would know, Mr Shoebridge, is going into one dimension of homelessness, which is street homelessness, and we are attempting to establish a baseline measure in 77 local government areas around New South Wales so that performance can be better assessed on a more regular basis than a six-year census.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, that leads me to my next series of questions. Given Sydney has the highest rate of any major capital city of street homelessness, what has been the reduction, if any, in the rate of street homelessness given it is one of the Premier's Priorities?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am more than happy to take that on notice.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: We could take a more complete answer on notice. But, as you would know, Mr Shoebridge, there is currently only one local government area that undertakes a biannual census of people who are experiencing street homelessness, that is the City of Sydney.

The ACTING CHAIR: It is the biggest one. It is the big issue.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: It is the biggest one, but we have seen a 23 per cent reduction in the number of people experiencing street homelessness between February and February. I think the census takes place in February and August. So the February to February measure is a 23 per cent reduction.

The ACTING CHAIR: Can you be sure that there has not been a displacement effect, and what are you doing?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: No.

The ACTING CHAIR: We are coming to the same point. What are you doing to ensure that we have a more comprehensive measure of street homelessness? One of the obvious places you would start if you wanted to expand the measure would be Parramatta, Minister.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Parramatta is absolutely part of the process of conducting a so-called street count of people who are experiencing street homelessness, energetically led by Minister Ward, with the strong support of the Premier.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, as the local member, will you approach City of Parramatta Council and try to get it to prioritise cooperation with the State Government to get the count started at least by August this year so that we have more comprehensive data?

Dr GEOFF LEE: There would not be a bigger champion of homelessness than me in Parramatta. We live and breathe it every day and we understand—

The ACTING CHAIR: Will you knock on the door—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Just let him answer.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I do not know if this falls in my portfolio but I am happy to answer it as the member for Parramatta. I regularly approach Parramatta council about the need to find solutions to homelessness. In fact, around about two years ago we did a special campaign with the then Minister, Pru Goward, in looking at reducing homelessness in Parramatta. We reduced it by 28 people. We actually put them in emergency accommodation then we transitioned them to some permanent accommodation. Just from memory in terms of raw numbers I think it was about 25 of those people whom we housed actually stayed in their house over the long term, which is fantastic. That is a huge focus of me as the local member because of its impact and because of the desperate nature of homeless people.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, given it cuts across your ministerial portfolio and your responsibilities as the local member—and I am not challenging your personal interests in it—will you knock on the door of the Mayor of City of Parramatta and encourage him to put in the resources and work with the State Government to do the count?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I already have—

The ACTING CHAIR: I can tell Mr Coutts-Trotter wants to say something about this so once you have finished we will bounce to Mr Coutts-Trotter.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I already have and I will continue to knock on the mayor's door and the general manager's door to sort this situation. But I think it is most important that Minister Ward, who has carriage for most of the resources in this, and I work very closely. Minister Ward and I work very well, as does the council, on issues.

The ACTING CHAIR: You can bring him along when you knock on the mayor's door.

Dr GEOFF LEE: In one of Minister Ward's first roles within his first couple of weeks he visited Parramatta Mission, looking at the services that they offer and meeting some of those homeless people at lunchtime. I remember him serving those when we were standing there. One thing I can say about Minister Ward is he likes to get out there and visit every single agency and really experience it.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr Coutts-Trotter?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: There is an assumption that there is some issue standing in the way of a street count in Parramatta and I really do not think there is. From memory it will be complete by the end of March.

The ACTING CHAIR: All right. Through you, Minister, perhaps of Mr La Posta, what is the number and percentage of people employed in the New South Wales public service who are culturally and linguistically diverse?

Mr LA POSTA: In terms of the overall public service?

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr LA POSTA: I will need to take that question on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you know what the trend is? Has there been a positive trend insofar as the public service is more accurately reflecting the community?

Mr LA POSTA: In the last count, unfortunately not.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any numbers that you can give to us?

Mr LA POSTA: I can take the specific numbers on notice but I am aware that there was a decline.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you know the nature of the decline?

Mr LA POSTA: No, but I have met with the acting Public Service Commissioner to raise this issue with him.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, were you aware of the decline in the diversity, or rather than the diversity, the way in which the public service reflects our community?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, not on those specific measures that you have just outlined I was not.

The ACTING CHAIR: Will you undertake to at least communicate with Mr La Posta and his office and come back with an answer to us about what the decline is and what the reasons for the decline are?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I certainly will undertake that, absolutely. I will do our best to get back to the Committee.

The ACTING CHAIR: Will you also undertake to provide the Committee with any advice that you have about the strategies you will be undertaking to reverse the decline in diversity in the public service?

Dr GEOFF LEE: We will do our best to fully look at those reasons and see what we can do.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I know you are busy—and we covered this before—with six different portfolio areas, but do you not think if you have responsibility for this that you should be on top of it, particularly if you have seen a reverse in a key indicator like this?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, clearly I disagree with your premise. I think we have great staff. We have people like Joseph La Posta who heads up Multicultural NSW and does a fantastic job on a range of issues.

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes, but you are the Minister and you are not even aware there has been a decline. Do you not find that problematic? I do, so I am asking you to explain why.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am just saying there are as many issues across many portfolios. Certainly we rely upon our expert staff to look at that. The Public Service Commissioner works on these measures and I undertake to work with them.

The ACTING CHAIR: What about a simple issue: Have all the New South Wales Government agencies actually prepared multicultural plans as is required under the State's framework?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly I am advised that all agencies have prepared their plans. Do you have anything to add to that?

Mr LA POSTA: That is correct, Minister. We go through a process of the Multicultural Policies and Services Program where we assess them. And in fairness to the Minister, Mr Shoebridge, my intention was to have a discussion with the acting Public Service Commissioner and then provide recommendations to the Minister in terms of specific strategies to help address that trend. That meeting only happened about a week or so ago because the results are still only reasonably recent.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, prior to our questions today and the reporting of this issue publicly did anyone raise any concerns with you in relation to the Office of Sport delivering a \$12 million project that had nothing to do with sport? Had anyone raised any concerns with you about that or any questions prior to today?

Ms JONES: Not beyond what I have said to you previously around us canvassing other agencies to determine whether or not they could take on the election commitment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In your time as CEO—and there was some time as well as acting CEO—

Ms JONES: That is right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —of Office of Sport, no-one at any point raised any questions or concerns with you about this project.

Ms JONES: As I said, we have had some discussions around canvassing other agencies to take on that election commitment and those conversations have occurred whilst I have been either acting or as the CEO.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was that at the prompting of Minister Sidoti?

Ms JONES: It was at the prompting of or was a discussion with both Minister Sidoti and Minister Lee.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Both Minister Sidoti and Minister Lee suggested to you that it was inappropriate that the Office of Sport was delivering this project that had nothing to do with sport and asked you to find alternative arrangements for the delivery of that project?

Ms JONES: Not along those lines. There was general discussion around the election commitment and whether or not there was another appropriate agency that could take on the election commitment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Presumably from that they were suggesting that it was inappropriate for the Office of Sport to be delivering a project that had nothing to do with sport?

Ms JONES: Not necessarily. It was just down to whether or not the Office of Sport was still best placed to continue on with the election commitment, given that it no longer included sporting activity.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: With the obvious conclusion being that the Office of Sport was not best placed to deliver projects that had nothing to do with sport, they were concerned enough about that to raise that with you?

Ms JONES: As I said before, it was a general discussion—not in those certain terms was that asserted to me.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Both Minister Sidoti and Minister Lee raised questions in relation to the delivery of this project by the Office of Sport. Subsequent to that did you go out and once again try to secure alternative arrangements for the delivery of this funding through other agencies?

Ms JONES: We have had discussions with other government agencies around whether or not they would be in a position to administer the election commitment going forward.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How recently did, for example, Minister Lee raise those questions with you? How recently did you go out and have conversations with other agencies? When did that last occur?

Ms JONES: Those conversations have been ongoing for a number of months.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So despite the fact that it is your evidence that there has been a decision made that the Office of Sport is best place—in your evidence—to deliver this project, in fact there is still an ongoing and current conversation prompted by the Minister's concerns as to whether that is in fact the case.

Ms JONES: As I said before, the Office of Sport is in conversations to canvass other agencies—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Who are you currently in conversation with—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Just let her answer. She is doing her best.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies, Ms Jones.

Ms JONES: Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can I just say, acting as the Deputy Chair, if you have any issue, take a point of order.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Seeing you invite me to, I will take the point of order that I have repeatedly raised that witnesses are entitled to answer the question without interruption from Ms Jackson. Ms Jackson has now been doing it repeatedly and this is not the first time.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I have your point.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I will do it formally if you want me to, otherwise the Hon. Rose Jackson knows she has to restrain herself.

Ms JONES: Can you repeat the question?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies. Can you give us a list of the other agencies that you are in an ongoing dialogue with about the potential transfer of the management of the project?

Ms JONES: I am happy to take that on notice and provide you with some documentation around conversations that we have had in terms of the transfer of the election commitment. That will outline what agencies we have had conversations with.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We may come back to that. Minister, I want to go to the document that I provided you with on the regional sports grants. There are 21 grants listed there. How many are for seats held by the Labor Party?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In regional areas?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: For your information, Labor holds six seats in regional New South Wales. How many grants out of those 21 grants went to those electorates?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Unless I went forensically through each one—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There are only 21. I can tell you that the answer is one.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Okay.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many are for other electorates held by Independents or minor parties?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I suspect you know the answer already.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is one. So 21 minus two, Minister, how many went to electorates held by Government parties, the Liberal Party and The Nationals?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can you—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So 21 minus two is 19.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Okay.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Out of 21 grants from the regional sports facility grants it was 19. This is a \$100 million project. Some 19 went to electorates held by the Liberal Party and The Nationals, one went to the Labor Party, one went to Wagga Wagga. We have already discussed that one. It was obviously Liberal prior to the by-election but subsequently independently held. Does that seem reasonable to you, Minister?

Dr GEOFF LEE: The projects are all evaluated based on a merit-based process. At the risk of saying I was not Minister then—I do not want to say that for the tenth time—I would certainly refer to Karen Jones from the Office of Sport for the administration and to describe the process.

Ms JONES: The process for the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund, like I explained before—it was a \$100 million fund for broad infrastructure projects across regional New South Wales. There were two rounds conducted as part of that program. The process is that there is a series of guidelines and methodologies to govern the assessment process of grant applications. They were prepared and had the oversight of an independent probity officer.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: When the list of projects were approved a recommended list of approved projects was provided to the Minister from the Office as a result of that process and the oversight from the committee you described. Were there any notes or amendments or comments made by the Minister on that brief when it was returned to the department?

Ms JONES: I would have to take that on notice in terms of the specific brief, in terms of any comments or anything that was made on that brief if there was any. I am happy to take that question on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That would be useful but do you recall whether any amendments were made to the list?

Ms JONES: If I could just outline the process, that might assist in answering the question. The actual process is that we do go through an expression of interest [EOI] process first and foremost. That is where we call for applications. Applicants can include local councils, sporting organisations, even not-for-profit organisations that submit their applications. Expressions of interest are then assessed by an independent assessment panel with oversight of a probity officer. That independent assessment panel is required to assess it in line with the grant guidelines which have a number of criteria that outline the priorities for that program. Out of the expression of interest process, that is then referred to the Minister for consideration. In the actual assessment methodology there are additional considerations that the Minister may take into account.

Those additional considerations are more of a broad government approach as opposed to an individual application approach. That includes looking at things like growth corridors or areas of need and through that process the Minister does have the ability to look at projects of merit and decide which ones would then proceed to a second stage. The second stage is where we then go out and ask those that have been successful for the second stage to prepare what we call detailed applications or business cases depending on the value of the projects. Once received we again go through that assessment panel process, again with oversight from the independent probity officer. Through that process again we put forward projects of merit for the Minister's consideration, who then has the ability to draw on more broad government initiatives in deciding what projects actually get funded.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And did the Minister draw on any of those broad general political or government priority frameworks in making the decision about the finalists?

Ms JONES: I more than happy to take that on notice and go back through the notes around that process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That will be useful. Having had that process described to us by Ms Jones, I go back to you, Minister. At the conclusion of that process in which the Minister, in Ms Jones' description, had two opportunities to put his input into the process—between the EOI and the second stage, and the second stage

and the final stage, drawing on his general Government priorities—does it concern you that as a result of that process 19 of the 21 grants were awarded to electorates that were held by Government MPs? Does that raise any alarm bells with you?

Dr GEOFF LEE: There is a process involved. It has a method—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Minister has two opportunities in that—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: Let him answer.

Dr GEOFF LEE: There is a process that we follow. Ms Jones, I am sure, does not want to outline it again.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, we have got the process.

Dr GEOFF LEE: There is a process outline and the Minister has that ability to have a look at those and make their decisions and their recommendations based upon the whole-of-government priorities, making sure that it aligns and that the process is being followed correctly based upon the strategic outcomes of the Government, whether they are growth corridors—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Strategic electoral outcomes of the Government?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: The Minister is entitled to answer without interjections from the member.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, I will rule in that regard.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Part of that ministerial discretion is looking at whether it achieves specific outcomes of the Government, such as catering for strategic growth corridors or centres of the population which are growing and need extra facilities, need extra infrastructure. Every one of those people were eligible to apply and there was a whole list of government organisations, sporting organisations, incorporated, community-based, not-for-profit sporting organisations and including those organisations providing sport and recreation programs which benefit the community. Even education facilities such as schools, TAFEs and universities could apply in conjunction with local councils or local sporting State authorities and private enterprises. As I said, there is priority funding for proposals that establish regional sports hubs or enhance or establish regionally significant sporting facilities.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you for that description of how the projects work and how funding decisions are made, as Ms Jones already outlined. I go back to the question: At the conclusion of all of that, the facts are not in dispute. At the conclusion of all of that 21 grants from the regional sports grants were awarded, 19 went to Government seats, one went to a Labor-held seat and one went to an Independent seat. Does that concern you? Does that raise any alarm bells that this is in fact the New South Wales sports sports?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly I can say to you that there is a process that was followed. Probably what was not picked up by you was that there is a probity officer that supervises this whole process. I am advised by the Office of Sport that that process was followed.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We can move on to the Greater Sydney Sports Facility grant. This is a smaller grant funding pool of around \$30 million. Minister, how many of those grants were allocated to a Labor seat?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am sure you know but I don't.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Tell us.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Tell us, if you can, Ms Jackson.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It was two.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: I take a point of order against the apparent Deputy Chair. I do not think it was an invitation for interjections from members.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: It is not "apparent". I am the deputy chair. I am merely wanting to assist the Minister, Geoff Lee.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Right.

Dr GEOFF LEE: You're on my side, aren't you, Shaoquett.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Always.

Dr GEOFF LEE: That is great.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It was two, Minister.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you, Ms Jackson.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will just go into little bit of the detail. One of those was in the Granville electorate. It was for the Cumberland local government area for Granville Park and it is a neighbouring electorate to yours. Would it concern you if the local member was not invited to that announcement? Would you expect to be invited to an announcement of the funding grant of \$2.7 million in your electorate?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I do not know those specific circumstances.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Would you be expected to be invited to an announcement of \$2.7 million in your electorate? Would that be an expectation you would have as a local member?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Does it concern you that the local member for Granville, Julie Finn, was not invited to that announcement?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am not sure that she was invited or whether she was not invited. I have no knowledge.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: She was not invited. Does it concern you that the announcement was made with the Liberal candidate for Granville, Tony Issa, and Scott Farlow, MLC. Does that concern you?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Was that in the election time? I am sorry, when was it?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Indeed, it was. The announcement was made on 23 January 2019: New South Wales Government approves a multimillion dollar grant for Granville Park. Local member, Julia Finn, not invited. Liberal candidate, Tony Issa, and Scott Farlow, MLC, made the announcement. Does that concern you that public money is being used in that way a few months before a State election?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, no. I certainly cannot comment on who and who was not invited because I had no involvement in that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You already indicated that it would be your expectation to be invited as a local member to an announcement in your electorate months before the State election. The local member is not invited. The Liberal candidate is invited to the announcement of a grant delivered under the greater Sydney sports grant. How can we have any faith in this grant pool at all, considering facts like these?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, if you want me to tell you, we have a process that we follow. Can I say it is a two-stage process in terms of the Office of Sport and Karen Jones administers that as the CEO of the Office of Sport. It is a two-step process. Stage one is the expression of interest phase. Stage two is a detailed application and business case. An independent grant panel is convened to assess both stages.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We have been through the stages, Minister.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, you asked me the question. Can I say you asked me the question why I have confidence. It is because we have that two-stage process. There is an independent grant panel for each of those stages and all the stages are overseen by a probity officer.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The result of the greater Sydney sports funding and the regional sports grant funding is that, in total, of 36 sports grants awarded in the year leading up to the most recent New South Wales State election, 29 went to Government-held electorates, three went to Labor electorates, and four went to Independent electorates. Are you seriously telling me that on those results you have absolutely no questions for your predecessors? I appreciate these are not your decisions. You have absolutely no questions for your predecessors as to how this does not look fairly and squarely like a New South Wales sports rort?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, certainly I can say that I have been advised by the Office of Sport that that process was followed, overseen by a probity officer at every stage. I am more than happy for Karen Jones to make comment if she can on that process that we went through.

Ms JONES: Yes. Thank you, Minister. As I outlined previously in terms of process for the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund, I take this opportunity just to correct the record a little bit there as well. The Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund was a joint initiative, like I said before, between the Office of Sport and the Department

of Premier and Cabinet and the regional office, which meant that the actual process for deciding on the Minister's decision in terms of projects to get funded was also joint with the Deputy Premier for that program.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sorry, apologies Ms Jones. Did the Deputy Premier have that same capacity to—

Ms JONES: Correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, great.

Ms JONES: In terms of the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund, it is a very similar process to the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund. So, again, expressions of interest; oversight of a probity officer with the independent assessment panel; inviting projects; successful projects due to come through for stage two with a detailed application and/or business case, again dependent on value; assessment again of those projects with the independent assessment panel and probity officer, with projects of merit put forward for the Minister's consideration.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I heard a little buzzer. Has David Shoebridge gone?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, he has gone. We have 15 minutes.

Dr GEOFF LEE: So the Hon. Trevor Khan can ask questions on behalf of David Shoebridge?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No.

Dr GEOFF LEE: No? We are not allowed to do that?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Shaoquett, why don't you ask a question?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you very much.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I was trying to help you out, guys.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Just in terms of the black folder, Ms Jones, is that code for the Black Panthers?

Ms JONES: No, it is not.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Does your department speak in code?

Ms JONES: No, we do not.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Are there colour-coded folders in your department?

Ms JONES: No, there are not.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Where did this black folder come from?

Ms JONES: I think it is just describing a folder where notes are actually kept.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Minister, I know you are passionate, as you say, for Parramatta, as you are for multiculturalism. Can you tell me the Government's commitment in grants for multicultural grant care facilities and seniors sport centres as to how much was allocated?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Sorry, in what period of time?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Well, there was one grant that was allocated. Your department ought to know and you ought to know how much was allocated for the grants for multicultural age care facilities and a seniors support centre.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Okay.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: There is only one grant. Perhaps I can assist you, Minister.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No, no. Let him answer.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Well, he is not answering.

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, no, no. I just want to give you the right answer, that's all. I do not want to mislead you. I think it is important that we get this right.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is there anybody else who can answer that question?

Dr GEOFF LEE: If you can find it quicker than I can, Joseph, you can answer.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes, Minister.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: It was an election commitment.

Mr LA POSTA: There was an election commitment made.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How much was that?

Mr LA POSTA: It was \$32.5 million over four years.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How much of that has been awarded?

Mr LA POSTA: With the election commitment?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Of the \$32 million.

Mr LA POSTA: When you say "awarded", can you just be a bit more specific?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How much was awarded? Was it broken down in different years?

Mr LA POSTA: Yes, it was.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In 2018-19 was there an allocation?

Mr LA POSTA: That is correct, for each of the four years of the election.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How much of that \$32 million was awarded for 2018-19?

Mr LA POSTA: In terms of the exact number?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes.

Mr LA POSTA: For 2018-19?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes.

Mr LA POSTA: I can take that on notice.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Minister, do you know who was awarded that allocation in 2018-19?

Dr GEOFF LEE: In terms of election commitment?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In terms of the grant for multicultural age care facilities and seniors support centres. The election commitment was \$32.5 million over four years.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Do you want to do it?

Mr LA POSTA: If I can through the Minister, no problems.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you.

Mr LA POSTA: There was a series of commitments made for that \$32.5 million. Are you wanting me to identify each of the community organisations where those commitments were made?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: First, have the 2018-19 moneys been awarded?

Mr LA POSTA: First and foremost, with any government process we need to ensure due diligence and the ethics in the acquitting of those fundings, so what we have sought to do is take senior legal advice in terms of how to construct those agreements to meet the election commitments. As a consequence of those things, what we have done is we have created legally binding documents with each of the parties that were given election commitment funding. What we have sought to do is set up milestones to ensure the ethical allocation of taxpayer funding.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Who was awarded?

Mr LA POSTA: Which organisations were awarded?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes.

Mr LA POSTA: The support for the construction of Our Lady Maronite Care aged-care centre in Harris Park, support for the construction of the Lebanese Muslim Association Islamic aged-care centre in Lakemba, the Antiochian Church aged-care facility, the Coptic aged-care facility and the Indian aged-care facility.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Who made the decision to allocate that money?

Mr LA POSTA: They were election commitments.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Who signed off on those election commitments?

Mr LA POSTA: I cannot speak to that, Mr Moselmane. They are election commitments.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Minister, who signed off?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Again, that was before my time as Minister. I am more than happy to get back unless Mr Secretary is aware.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: It is not a departmental process. It is a political process to choose election priorities. It is a political process.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes, but let me assure you, Mr Moselmane—

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: As it always is.

Dr GEOFF LEE: —at the New South Wales State election we committed to provide support to multicultural communities right across New South Wales. I am proud to say that we are delivering on our commitments whether that is festivals, events or projects in programs that benefit multicultural communities in every corner of the State.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Were they open to all organisations?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I would have to take that on notice.

Mr LA POSTA: It is not a department matter, Mr Moselmane. They were election commitments that were made. What I will reaffirm is that there is absolutely a need in this day and age, with roughly 55 per cent of the population aged over 55 or 60, to have nuanced aged care for our very diverse and multicultural communities. We come from 307 different ancestries, speak 215 different languages and practise 146 different religions. It is critical for us—and I know this personally, with my own grandmother in an aged-care facility—to have appropriate and nuanced aged care. With the intention of those projects, I am really proud of the fact that our agency is involved in them because we are delivering on exactly that: nuanced aged care for each of those communities.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How much of the \$32.5 million was already allocated for 2018-19?

Mr LA POSTA: Again, with speaking to the specifics, what we have sought to do as an agency is ensure the acquittal of those funds. Those processes are still being undertaken with each of those communities. Some of the communities have agreements signed, executed and paid in terms of milestone payments, but we are still working with others on the finer details to get clarity around their specifics.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can you tell me what electorates they are in?

Mr LA POSTA: I cannot. Again, in terms of the allocation of that funding, it is not even a consideration for us over (a) where the funding is allocated; or (b) the electorates they are in, because they are election commitments.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You indicated Our Lady of Lebanon, for example.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I can help you. That is in the Parramatta electorate.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: What about the Lebanese Muslim Association?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, which electorate is that?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am not sure. I do not think it is in Parramatta.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Tell us about that, Shaoquett.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Interruptions are disorderly. I asked and the Minister responded that it was in Parramatta.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have a couple of questions about the Sydney Speedway. You would obviously be familiar with the commitment that the Minister for Transport and Roads has given to Barry and Felicity Waldron, the leaseholders of the speedway, that they would be engaged with as the leaseholders in relation to the announcement that they are going to rebuild the speedway at another site, possibly at Eastern Creek. Can you tell us why you have broken that promise to engage with them?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Firstly, the New South Wales Government is definitely committed to relocating the raceway and the Office of Sport and Transport for NSW are currently investigating options for developing new facilities at the Sydney motorsport precinct in Eastern Creek. A forum to discuss the options for the Sydney motorsport precinct was held on 15 November 2019 with representatives from Speedway Australia and Sydney Speedway attending. The outcomes of the meeting were positive, with stakeholders agreeing to work collaboratively together towards the creation of a world-class motorsport precinct in and around the existing Sydney Motorsport Park. A subsequent meeting of stakeholders occurred on Tuesday 4 February, with discussions regarding the master planning of the precinct also taking place.

Transport for NSW has committed to lead and fund the development of a master plan for the precinct in full consultation with the stakeholders, including the speedway, the Western Sydney Parklands Trust, landholders of the Sydney motorsport precinct and the Office of Sport. Transport for NSW advises that it expects the plan to be available for stakeholder consultation imminently. The master plan will identify options for further enhanced motorsport activities in the area. The New South Wales Government is committed to delivering for the people of New South Wales a world-class speedway. I will continue to update the House on that. I will ask Karen Jones, who leads for the Office of Sport in terms of the relocation of the speedway project, to comment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Either Ms Jones or the Minister may want to comment, and I appreciate that you have reiterated the commitment to relocate the speedway, but I am specifically interested in why Barry and Felicity Waldron, the leaseholders of the current speedway, have not been involved in the negotiations? They were not invited to the second meeting that you described in February this year. Why has the Government reneged on its commitment to engage the leaseholders of the current speedway in all of that detailed planning that you have described about the future of the site?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will let Ms Jones answer that as a lead agency. But I certainly understand that Sydney Metro is looking at engaging or is engaging with them currently. But for a more detailed answer, I will ask Ms Jones.

Ms JONES: Thank you, Minister. In terms of the actual speedway project itself, it does actually form part of a broader master plan approach that the Government has taken for the western Sydney motorsport precinct. As the Minister outlined, late last year the Office of Sport did hold a significant workshop with stakeholders—and Sydney Speedway were invited and did attend—to talk about the future of the motorsport park and how we can turn the precinct into a world-class motorsport precinct for New South Wales. Subsequent to that we have formed what we call a precinct control group, which involves not only the Office of Sport but also Transport for NSW, representatives from Sydney Metro and the Western Sydney Parklands Trust.

We also have entities that are involved in the speedway development, including dragway and Speedway Australia, which is the national sporting organisation for the speedway sport. In addition to that, Sydney Metro is talking to Sydney Speedway and the personalities and people you are talking about in and around their existing leasing arrangements over the existing facility and the potential to transfer those leasing arrangements into the new speedway facility. Those discussions are actually commercial in confidence at this time. But I can assure you that Sydney Metro is engaging with those people.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: On 18 December a Government spokesperson stated that an announcement for the site of the new speedway would be made shortly. That was on 18 December; it is now March. When is the announcement going to be made?

Dr GEOFF LEE: We have been very clear in terms of that. I will Ms Jones to talk—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So you are not able to give us anything? I am asking you as the Minister. This was a Government decision to build the metro and move the speedway. A Government spokesperson said the announcement would be made shortly. You have got nothing to offer the Committee?

Dr GEOFF LEE: No. In fact, I think this is a great news story about the first time in decades that we are actually able to build a new speedway because of the Sydney Metro and its needs. After that decision was made we have always said that our intention and the in-principle agreement—as long as we get them with all the western Sydney motorsport precinct—was to put it in western Sydney. The fantastic news is that for once we have

the opportunity to deliver a world-class motorsports precinct. Not only will we have speedway, but also dragway next door and potentially even karting and other motorsports to make it a truly international centre.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can I ask what you mean by "potentially karting"?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I think he was referring to Ms Jones.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, could you perhaps give us some information about why Eastern Creek karting was not invited to the meeting on 15 November and whether it is —

Ms JONES: It was actually invited.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And it continues to be engaged as part of the list of stakeholders that you are —

Ms JONES: The commitment that we gave as a result of that meeting in November was that we would continue to talk to stakeholders. As I explained, at the moment we are running a precinct control group. That precinct control group has oversight of the delivery of the speedway project within the precinct but also oversight of the development of a master plan. The purpose of that master plan is to actually canvas other stakeholders who are interested in coming onto the site. We intend to continue our engagement with Eastern Creek karting around that possibility.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, will you give an ironclad guarantee that going forward the Government will keep its commitment to Barry and Felicity Waldron, the current leaseholders of the speedway, that they will be included in any discussions about the new facility?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I can give the absolute commitment that we are going to deliver a world-class speedway. We have already —

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So you do not give the commitment that the leaseholders of the current speedway are going to be involved in that?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: How many times do I have to raise this issue? The Minister is entitled to answer the question. The interjections are disorderly.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I would ask you to throw her out, actually.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Nice try.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that we have already announced the potential to have a world-class motor precinct. We have already announced an in-principle lease for the new Speedway to be located in that precinct. Those discussions are ongoing to sort out the finer points and get it locked down. Can I say that Sydney Metro is actively engaging with the current operators at the Parramatta-Granville site and those negotiations obviously, as Ms Jones said, are commercial-in-confidence at the moment. As soon as we have those outcomes I am sure it will be announced.

Ms JONES: Absolutely. As soon as those negotiations are settled I am sure they will be in a position to let everybody know what that decision is.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, I want to briefly go back to the Greater Sydney sports grants round one. As we previously discussed, as a result of these grants, some geographic areas of Sydney received substantial grants and others received none—for example, the Penrith LGA received three grants for Mark Leece Oval, Mulgoa Rise sportsground and Jamison Park Oval. Why did the Penrith LGA have three grants awarded when similar LGAs in the vicinity, such as Fairfield, Liverpool, Cumberland et cetera received none? Cumberland did actually receive one, that was the Granville one, but Fairfield, Liverpool and some of the others, why did they receive none and Penrith got three?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say in response to your question that, as you would know, in 2018 the New South Wales Government launched the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund with \$100 million available over three years. The program was created to respond to the rapidly growing urban population of Greater Sydney and assists in ensuring facilities were upgraded and built to meet demand. It has a particular focus on upgrading or providing new facilities for participation of women and girls, enabling a multipurpose—a whole range of things—but the most important thing is the program is administered, obviously, by the Office of Sport. We have heard that before and we have said it before, but I think it is worth saying again, in terms of the process, how these grants are awarded. Stage one is the —

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We have limited time, Minister, we do not need to go through the process again. I have no questions about the administration.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That concludes our morning session. However, the Committee has decided that we will come back at one o'clock. The Committee will discuss whether the Minister would be asked to be recalled.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am more than happy to come back, but when will you make that decision? It is only that there is a funeral this afternoon.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We can make the decision now.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Can we just find out—because he has indicated a flexibility, but I think attendance at funerals is something that we should take into account—when is the funeral?

Dr GEOFF LEE: At 2.00 p.m. at Pinewood.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Do you want an extra half an hour, Ms Jackson?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It might be useful to do an additional half an hour now.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Take it off at the end.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is the Minister prepared to do that now?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes, absolutely. I am here to help.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: If so, there is consensus amongst the Committee that we proceed until 12 o'clock.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you, Ms Jackson. I thank the Committee about the funeral at two o'clock.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I was just indicating that we have had a good explanation of the process and, in fact, there are no questions that I have about the administration of the Office of Sport at this time. As has been identified, there were two points in that process where the Minister had the opportunity to give direct feedback based on his governmental political priorities and, as a result of that, Penrith LGA—these are the facts, this is the outcome—has three grants; Campbelltown, Blacktown, Fairfield, Liverpool, all big, growing LGAs in western Sydney, have no grants. I am asking for an explanation as to how does that square up?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will ask Ms Jones to respond, but I have been advised that the process that we have described, as you said, in intimate detail on multiple occasions, was followed. Certainly I would like to make the point there was a probity officer looking at all of the stages of that process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am interested specifically in the fact that Minister Stuart Ayres was the member for Penrith—a seat that was being targeted by the Liberal Party in the 2019 State election—did that have any impact on the outcome that I have described?

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said to you, I am advised that the process was followed and overseen by a probity officer, but I am more than happy to ask Ms Jones—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can I just clarify with Ms Jones, the probity officer was overseeing the decisions and recommendations from the independent panel, was he not?

Ms JONES: That is correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Not, in fact, the process within the Minister's office and his reflections on and feedback to the Office of Sport?

Ms JONES: That is correct. In fact, we had certified that process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Indeed. That makes sense to me that the probity officer worked with the independent panel to ensure that—

Ms JONES: They were in attendance.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That makes sense to me, but I think it is worth clarifying, Minister, that that is not the point in the process where I have questions. The point in the process where I have questions is the two occasions in which the Minister's office and the Minister had an opportunity to provide direction on the decisions that were being made—there was no probity officer in the room then—and, as a result of that, Penrith

LGA, his electorate of Penrith: three grants. Huge growth areas of Campbelltown, Liverpool, Blacktown, other areas of Sydney that tick all the same boxes except that they are Labor seats: no grants.

Dr GEOFF LEE: My understanding is, and Ms Jones will probably help me here, that in fact the seats are not part of the criteria. Who holds the seat is not part of the criteria.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I would hope not. Ms Jones, can you confirm that?

Ms JONES: That is correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am not suggesting that the Office of Sport or the independent panel had any consideration of that. I believe that they probably did not. What I am suggesting is the Minister knew what seats they were in. The Minister knows what projects are in his electorate, an electorate he is worried about holding, and he is the one that is ensuring that they are getting funded.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: What is the question?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can you give us an assurance that that has not occurred, and if that is what you are going to try and do, explain the fact that the outcomes are so unbelievably skewed to Government electorates?

Dr GEOFF LEE: At the risk of repeating myself—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is what we are up to right now.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I just do not want to bore you too senseless. I was not the Minister at that time. There was a process that was followed and it is probably best up to Ms Jones to indicate how those applications were put forward throughout those times as I was not there. I am just trying to be as open as I can. I just do not want to keep repeating myself many times at the risk of infuriating anyone here.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, can you tell us how many projects recommended for funding by the Office for Sport and the assessment panel were not approved? Do you have that information?

Ms JONES: Yes. I can run you through some numbers. There was a total of 154 expressions of interest that were originally lodged—this is for the Greater Sydney Sport Facility—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We are in Greater Sydney.

Ms JONES: Yes, for 2018-19; so it was the first version of that. Also, again, I correct the record in saying I think the suggestion before was that the Greater Sydney Sport Facility Fund was a smaller program.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies, because it is over three years.

Ms JONES: That is correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That was my error, Ms Jones.

Ms JONES: It is a \$100 million program over three years. We have had one round that has been completed and we are in the middle of the second round at the moment. The grant assessment panel assessed all 154 expressions of interest as part of the first stage of that first round. Out of that process we deemed eight expressions of interest to be ineligible and there were 146 that were eligible. The eligibility criteria is outlined in the guidelines that applicants have to meet. The recommendations from the grant assessment panel to the Minister at that time—there were a total of 26 projects and 16 of those 26 were recommended to proceed to stage two.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: By the Minister?

Ms JONES: Correct. But in saying that, I think it is really important to note the approach that was taken in determining how many projects proceed to stage two. There was some discussion around the actual funding limit. Given that the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund is a \$100 million program over three years, it is safe to say that it is an allocation of around \$33 million per year for that program. The decision was made that we would invite only those projects that were just above that \$33 million limit to ensure that there was still some competitiveness in projects. But the reason for such a small number proceeding to stage two is that it does take quite an amount of resources, energy, time and costs for applicants to prepare detailed applications or business cases. Obviously, we do not want to burden organisations with that additional expense.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can you give us a list of the 10 projects that were unsuccessful?

Ms JONES: I can take that on notice for you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you. That will be useful.

Ms JONES: I do not have that information.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Take that on notice. That is fine. We have 16 project proceeding to stage two?

Ms JONES: Correct. After that, obviously if they go through the detailed application or business case process—again, independently overseen through the panel—the projects were put forward for consideration of the Minister, again taking into account, under the assessment methodology, those broader Government considerations.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Did all 16 go back to the Minister?

Ms JONES: Correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Good.

Ms JONES: They were considered to be projects of merit. With that, by understanding projects of merit, there was some flexibility there in terms of what projects could proceed to funding and what ones could not because they were all high-quality and high-calibre projects. With that, the Minister endorsed—I think you might already have the list—I think 15 applications that were then approved for funding.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you now have the information as to the one project that did not receive that?

Ms JONES: Hang on. Sorry, I have got my figures wrong. Eighteen projects went to stage two.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Twenty-six went to the Minister, 18 went to stage two and 15 were funded?

Ms JONES: Sorry, yes, that is my bad.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you have the three that were not funded? Is that there? That is a smaller number?

Ms JONES: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you, Ms Jones. That was quite useful. As you can see, Minister, there are various stages of the process there.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That has been his evidence.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There are a number of projects—11 at my very rough count; maths was never my strong suit.

Dr GEOFF LEE: But you are doing a very good job.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There were 11 projects that were put through the Minister that he has knocked off, rejected and has not approved. Do you think, Minister, if we look back over those projects there might be something in common between them?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I cannot speculate in terms of what the Minister, but certainly, Ms Jones, I think you have been very good at describing—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones has taken that on notice. We are going to get that information. Is it going to be of concern to you if, in fact, the majority of those projects were in Labor or non-government electorates? Is that going to ring alarm bells for you? Are you going to then subsequently call an inquiry into the exercise of ministerial discretion in relation to these grants projects?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Clearly the process has been followed, as I have said the sixth or seventh time.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I understand the process has been followed. I believe it has but the discretion has been exercised in a particular way and serious questions have been raised.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: My point of order again is that the Minister is entitled to be allowed to answer.

The ACTING CHAIR: I will be quite frank—I was a little distracted. It sounds to me like a concession against interest so we will let the Minister answer.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Mr Moselmane did a marvellous job in your absence.

The ACTING CHAIR: I hear you had an upgrade. Minister, you are entitled to answer the questions.

Dr GEOFF LEE: As I said, the projects have all been through a process. As I said before, at the risk of describing ad nauseam, it was actually before my tenure as Minister. I will defer to Ms Jones for the details of that process and how we went through it.

The ACTING CHAIR: The confirmation was before her tenure as the CEO and then she will take it on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The question was: Based on the information we already have about the successful projects, and the fact that there is clear and overwhelming evidence that they favour Government-held electorates and information we are going to get on notice about the projects that the Minister exercised his discretion to remove from the list, will you call an inquiry and ensure that there is an investigation into how decisions were made to fund projects under these grant rounds so that we can ensure that it was done in the best interests of taxpayers and not the best interests of the Liberal Party?

Dr GEOFF LEE: What you are talking about is what has happened in the past. I will actually discuss that and I am more than happy to take that on notice and get back to you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: When similar questions were raised at a Federal level Prime Minister Morrison asked the head of the department to look into it. Will you ask the head of your department today? We have raised questions about political interference in sports grants. Will you ask the head of your department today to conduct an investigation into this process to ensure that the public can have confidence in these grants?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I am more than happy to discuss my heads of department, including the secretary, look at the situation and then get back to the Committee. So I will take it on notice. The reason is that I am advised that the assessment methodology was followed.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I appreciate that you have been advised that but we have seen an outcome that has been massively skewed. We have now had information that the Minister on two occasions exercised his discretion to remove grants from the list. There are questions that need to be answered. The Prime Minister asked his departmental head to answer them at the Federal level and I am asking you to ask your departmental head to conduct an investigation into the sports grants so that the New South Wales public can have confidence in you.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I assure everybody that the process—the assessment methodology—was followed. I am more than happy to chat with my departmental heads, including the secretary, about what, if anything, is required to be done.

The ACTING CHAIR: Will you provide the detailed answer on notice?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will provide the answer on notice, yes, Mr Chair.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: What is the process? There was an extra half hour given. How is the timing divided up here?

The ACTING CHAIR: We are sorting that out in an amicable manner between us.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Collegiate.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We have 12 minutes.

The ACTING CHAIR: If you wanted to extend for a half an hour after, there is still the opportunity if you wanted to have any questions after.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No. There was a process whereby it would normally have been—this is an extra half that has been tacked on and the other half an hour—

The ACTING CHAIR: It would normally have been 15 minutes each for the crossbench and the Opposition but I have allowed the Opposition to take some of my time. Minister—

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes, Mr Chair, my apologies.

The ACTING CHAIR: That is okay. We were distracted as well.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I did my best.

The ACTING CHAIR: As the seniors Minister, have you sought specific advice on what the New South Wales Government should be doing to protect seniors from the coronavirus, given the fact that the older demographic seems to have, quite tragically, a significantly higher mortality rate from this dreadful disease?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Yes. After the drought, the bushfires and the floods, now the coronavirus is seemingly an impending significant issue in our community. As you said, Mr Chair, I think it is important that we make provision for our seniors right across, whether it is our seniors or our schools or all over the Government. I assure everybody that NSW Health, along with the NSW Chief Health Officer, are leading the Government response to this outbreak. I want to stress that this is a health issue. It is very important that everyone listens and acts sensibly and according to the public health messages and precautions in response to COVID-19. I will ask the secretary if he wants to make a comment about the overall Government response.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I could just add that, obviously, the response here is led by Health through existing response mechanisms but at the moment there are regular, daily, secretary-level discussions about what is a rapidly moving and rapidly changing public health advice and agency planning and response. Clearly, older people are more likely to be vulnerable to the virus than younger people, so there is a lot of work going on between the Commonwealth Health, Commonwealth aged care and public health leadership in each of the States as well as the leadership of the aged-care sector. We are talking about it, literally, daily at a secretary level and more regularly than that at a senior officer level. There is a whole range of operational questions and challenges to be worked through about providing a skilled and capable workforce within aged-care facilities as this thing develops. It is a day-by-day changing environment.

The ACTING CHAIR: But, Minister, my question was: In your role as the seniors Minister in New South Wales, have you sought any kind of specific advice about how older people in our community can safely protect themselves, given the fact that the mortality rate, particularly in those over 70 years of age, if they are unfortunate enough to catch this disease, is a multiple of what it is for younger people?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly from the start of the COVID-19 we have been talking to the department in terms of how we cope with seniors, as we cope with other departments, but certainly we are taking the lead of the New South Wales Chief Health Officer. NSW Health is taking the lead of all other agencies and we respond and we communicate daily, if not more frequently. It is important to follow their lead in terms of all our departments as a united government approach to addressing these issues. As you have pointed out, the impact on seniors can be devastating. I think it is important to manage the health issues followed by the experts in the area and follow their advice at the time.

The ACTING CHAIR: I assume that within your department there are people who have extraordinarily good links with seniors organisations across the State. What have you done to ensure that the information from NSW Health is getting out to those organisations so that this most vulnerable part of our community is properly protected?

Dr GEOFF LEE: I will let the secretary—

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The proper, effective communication of public health messages is part of the daily discussion. It is about not just thinking about the channels of those communications at a State level; it is also making sure the communications are coherent between the State and Commonwealth public health authorities. We are, obviously, thinking about older people who are social housing tenants and thinking about means of communication, operational questions that may come up, as well as, of course, the obvious questions about seniors who are resident in aged-care facilities. There is an awful lot going on. I try to keep the Minister and the office abreast of that but leadership here, quite properly, is with public health authorities.

The ACTING CHAIR: I accept that the leadership is with public health authorities but when it comes to issues like self-isolation for frail, elderly people, what steps are you taking to ensure that if self-isolation happens, frail elderly people have adequate access to food, have adequate visitations and are having their health checked because, I say again, this is a vulnerable population that you, as the seniors Minister, have responsibility for.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I agree with you totally that we must make adequate provisions for our seniors—in fact, everybody—in case of self-isolation. But as I said, and the secretary said, the situation is evolving, NSW Health is providing the lead, the Chief Health Officer is providing the communications and is leading up that, but certainly we are working across agencies and—

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I have been asking what you do. Each answer has simply been a reference to the fact that the Health Ministry is the lead agency. I accept that but I am asking what you do, what

those under your direction do. So far I have not heard anything and you, as the seniors Minister, have the most vulnerable cohort of our community under your care and protection.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Absolutely, and can I say to everybody: Rest assured that seniors are top of mind in terms of how we are coping—

The ACTING CHAIR: Well, I am not resting assured because I have not heard a single thing that you have done.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, may I finish, Mr Chair?

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Dr GEOFF LEE: They are certainly top of mind and the communication with the vulnerable seniors is of particular paramount importance to our agency. That is why we follow the recommendations and the secretary, as he said, is in constant communication in terms of what is the best—as this virus spreads throughout our society, and hopefully it will not spread too much further, but we have to take all precautions necessary, that we are responding appropriately in terms of what we need to say and how we prepare for the future.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I am convinced that Mr Coutts-Trotter is on top of the issue and knows all the issues but what I am yet to be convinced of is that you or those under your control have taken any action to ensure that vulnerable seniors in our community have the same level of knowledge and protection. Again, I ask you: What have you done?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, certainly I cannot change your opinion, but rest assured—

The ACTING CHAIR: You could be telling me what you have done.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, no, but I fear that no matter what I say, it will never keep you satisfied.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That reflects a flexibility that you do not demonstrate, Mr Shoebridge.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Can I say that the most important thing is to take the advice from the experts and follow it. At the moment the experts are talking about proper hygiene for people in terms of handwashing, coughing and those sorts of issues. We have not progressed past that in terms of public messaging. We will simply follow the advice of the experts as it occurs. I do not want to second-guess the health experts. Certainly, Mr Shoebridge, you will understand that this is beyond just seniors.

The ACTING CHAIR: I do.

Dr GEOFF LEE: We need to take a whole-of-government health approach and NSW Health should most appropriately lead that charge in terms of those responses.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I will give you an example that I think raises concerns about the lack of integration of government policy. I accept it is from Melbourne, but a Melbourne man went to a GP and was advised to self-isolate. He had just come back from holidays. He had no food or supplies at home and so, after being given the advice, as you would maybe expect, he went to the supermarket, stocked up on enough so that he could self-isolate for 14 days and then went home. Obviously that trip to the supermarket exposed a series of people to significant risk. What are you doing, particularly with seniors, to ensure that if they get the advice to self-isolate, that they can go home, without ducking into the supermarket, and be sure that they have two weeks or more of supplies at home? What are you doing?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Well, obviously we will work with other departments in terms of that. I was not aware of that case, but certainly we will work—

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you see the practical problem?

Dr GEOFF LEE: Absolutely, absolutely.

The ACTING CHAIR: Particularly if you have people who have mobility issues, you need to be stepping up and ensuring that if they do self-isolate and are advised to self-isolate that they have the supports in place. I want to know what you are doing to ensure the supports are in place.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Certainly. Can I say that all of those issues are being worked out at the moment in terms of the spread of disease. I am sorry if I am not giving you the answers that you want to hear.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are not giving any actual details, Minister. If you are going to take issue with—

Dr GEOFF LEE: No, I am just trying to be fair and trying to be open about it, and saying that NSW Health has the lead as the issue emerges. We want to cater for it but, as I said, it is a whole-of-government approach and we are working with—and the secretary can talk further about the different agencies that are working together to protect people in social housing, to protect other people in other vulnerable groups.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: It is thinking about points of contact and people who are best placed to identify people who need support and provide that support. So obviously there are questions about people who are residents in social housing, there are questions about people who are clients of home-care organisations, questions about older people who are living in aged-care facilities. Seniors are not a homogenous group. They are individuals with a whole range of different circumstances but we are trying to think through the mechanisms we collectively have to adequately communicate the public health message and then provide the kind of supports that we physically can.

Dr GEOFF LEE: And I can be assured that NSW Health is actually prioritising communities at risk like the seniors.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, unfortunately we have run out of time. Thank you for agreeing to stay back for this extended round of questions.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you for your indulgence.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And condolences.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you.

The ACTING CHAIR: For the balance of the witnesses in attendance, we will see you back at 1.00 p.m. Again, thank you, Minister.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you.

(The Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

The ACTING CHAIR: I declare the afternoon session of budget estimates open.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, I wanted to follow up on a comment that you made earlier in relation to the regional sports grants fund. When I asked some questions around the announcement of a grant in August 2018 for cycling in Wagga Wagga, you suggested that that was part of round one funding. I am looking for clarification. What were the time frames on the rounds? To start with, when was the grant announced?

Ms JONES: Let me see if I can get that for you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies, when was the fund announced?

Ms JONES: The expressions of interest for the first round of the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund opened on 7 August 2017 and closed on 7 March 2018.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How then do you explain the provision of \$4.9 million to Lismore City Council in February 2018?

Ms JONES: I can take that one on notice for you. I only have really high-level dates here.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is not really a matter of fine-detail dates. The fund was announced in August 2017—

Ms JONES: But in terms of the decision-making process, around how that came about.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, how a decision could be made to announce almost \$5 million under the fund in February 2018, when expressions of interest for round one were not closed.

Ms JONES: Here is the information I have for you; I am just taking some time to read through it. The 2017 expression of interest stage opened on 7 August 2017 and closed on 7 March 2018. The technical review panel assessed all 59 expressions of interest that we received. All applications under the 2017 program were eligible and it was opted to proceed them straight through to stage two, which is the assessment process and which, as I outlined this morning, was detail application or business case stage. Stage two actually closed on 4 May 2018.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: To follow up on that before we go back to Lismore, so 59 do the detailed business case work and all 59 of those go to Ministers Ayres and Barilaro. Is that correct?

Ms JONES: For the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund, correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The decrease of 59 applications to 21 successful applications was purely as a result of the decision-making process of Ministers Ayres and Barilaro? All 59 were put up by your office, and 21 came out from the Ministers?

Ms JONES: Thirty-eight applications were received under stage two.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We go from 59 to 38 and then those 38 go to the Ministers.

Ms JONES: Correct. Of those 38—I think this is an important point to raise—only 11 projects were deemed to be eligible at that point.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How did 21 get funded? There were 21 grants—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Ask one question.

Ms JONES: This is for stage one.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Two stages.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay. We go from 59 to 38 to 11. Do all 11 of the eligible applications in stage one receive ministerial approval?

Ms JONES: No, they did not. Of those, the independent panel recommended seven projects.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Right.

Ms JONES: Then I think that you will find that the projects that were actually granted funding are published on our website.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can look that up, but can you tell me how many were granted funding?

Ms JONES: They approved four.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We might come back to that, but I want to go again to the fact that applications for round one closed in March 2018, yet \$5 million was granted to Lismore City Council for an upgrade of Albert Park baseball in February 2018, before applications had even closed. How could that have happened?

Ms JONES: The decision-making process around that I will have to take on notice and get back to you on that one.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay. Let us then maybe go through round two. Did applications for round two open in August 2017 as well?

Ms JONES: They opened on 12 March 2018 and closed on 4 May 2018.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many applications were received?

Ms JONES: There were 97 expressions of interest.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many were then deemed eligible?

Ms JONES: Twenty-three were ineligible.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many then proceeded to the second stage?

Ms JONES: The independent assessment panel recommended 25 projects.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many received funding after ministerial approval?

Ms JONES: Let me go through the notes. The independent panel recommended 25 projects proceed and also provided a number of projects that were considered to be of merit.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: They recommended 25 but then there is an additional number that are not recommended but are of merit.

Ms JONES: Correct. They are considered to be of merit should there be more funding available.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many of those were there?

Ms JONES: It looks like there were 19 projects considered to be of merit. In terms of proceeding, the full 25 that were recommended proceeded to stage two and 13 of the projects of merit were also invited to stage two.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: They did their business case detailed work, and then how many of those were recommended for final approval by the independent panel?

Ms JONES: Sixteen projects.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And now we have the recommended projects and the of-merit projects all in the one pool and 16 go forward.

Ms JONES: Correct, 16 go forward.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are they all then approved by Ministers Ayres and Barilaro for funding? Do they all get the tick?

Ms JONES: That is right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That makes sense. Are you able to provide us information from your notes as to what the unsuccessful projects were?

Ms JONES: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That would be useful.

Ms JONES: Sure.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It would be good to get information about the unsuccessful projects—19 projects to 13 in stage two, I think.

Ms JONES: I will take that on notice and get you that information.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Just to be clear, that is the list of projects that I am interested in. Is the independent assessment panel the same panel for both the regional sports fund and the greater Sydney sports fund?

Ms JONES: No, it is not.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Let us start with the regional sports fund—and if the answers are the same for both then indicate that that is the case.

Ms JONES: Sure.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How were members selected?

Ms JONES: We actually go through a process. For both panels there is a Government chair. For the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund that chair is myself. And for the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund the ACTING CHAIR position was shared between the Office for Sport and the Department of Premier and Cabinet. In terms of panel members, we went with a sport specialist, an independent. In the case of Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund there was also a local government represent as well. There was oversight again by a probity officer at both the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund and the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund. Approval of who those people are on those panels is done by the Minister.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Office for Sport puts together those names and makes a recommendation to the Minister?

Ms JONES: Correct. We canvass the experience of these people, also the independence of these people, and we put forward those names.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Did the Minister approve the names that were recommended—

Ms JONES: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —or did he not approve or make amendments?

Ms JONES: No, yes. I said "no yes" then, but the answer there is they went forward as recommended.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is there a list? Can I have the names of the people on these—

Ms JONES: It is important that these people are independent and that they are not disclosed. The reason why I say that is because obviously we want to uphold the integrity of the panel and make sure that there is no

lobbying opportunities for them and also any retribution that might actually eventuate should people be unsuccessful.

The ACTING CHAIR: Could you describe the nature of where they are drawn from, the pools they are drawn from?

Ms JONES: I think I just did.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones did provide some information on that. I appreciate that, but you are aware that I raised with the Minister some concerns around the political nature of the grants that were approved. I do not want to unnecessarily cast aspersions on the members of this panel, but if we do not even know who they are, what assurances can we have about the decisions that they are making, because we are concerned that 80 per cent of funding went to Government electorates? I appreciate you have indicated that is not part of the decision-making of the panel—

Ms JONES: Correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —but that is the outcome that was received. We now cannot even find out the names of the people who were making the decision.

Ms JONES: In terms of actually providing the names of these people, as I said, I am hesitant in doing that, mainly also because of the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund, because that program is still open, particularly for round two. Those projects are still under consideration by those people. I think it is really important that we uphold the integrity of that panel by not disclosing the individuals involved. I am happy to take it on notice in terms of the credibility of those people and also provide information about where they have been selected from and their history and their background. I am happy to do that and provide you information on that. But in terms of individual names, I think that would be inappropriate at this stage.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Jones, I invite you to take the question on notice, including the question of the individual names, and then that gives you the opportunity to take advice and see how best to answer that question.

Ms JONES: Sure.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You mentioned that there was a set of criteria that the panel was using to determine recommendations. What was that or is that a written policy document or framework that you could provide the Committee on notice?

Ms JONES: Yes, absolutely. The guidelines are published on our website and are publicly available for both the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund and also the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund. There is also assessment methodology that outlines what other parameters can be taken into consideration.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will certainly pull that up, but I am assuming that part of that would be local sporting benefit or some sort of positive impact on local sporting outcomes and participations and those sorts of things?

Ms JONES: Correct. For instance, the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund for this year—the one that is still under consideration—had a distinct focus on female facilities.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How then, considering all the projects funded out of these funds are required to meet that outcome—I appreciate that the Western Sydney Community and Conference Centre is not funded specifically from these funds, but how do you explain the fact that funding is being provided from the Office for Sport for other facilities that have absolutely no local sporting benefit?

Ms JONES: There is a clear distinction to be made there. The grant programs, being the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund and the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund, are grant programs. They are administered through a series of guidelines that clearly articulate what the overall objective of the fund is to achieve. The western Sydney community centre was an election commitment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I do appreciate that distinction. But there is no requirement from the Office for Sport generally that funding provided for local projects have a positive sporting benefit or impact sporting outcomes. That is not something that is required generally from projects that the Office for Sport is funding.

Ms JONES: All of the funding that is run through the Office of Sport through our grant programs, as I said before, the objectives of those are clearly articulated in guidelines and parameters. But for election commitments, election commitments are different.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Election commitments need not, even though funding is administered through the Office for Sport, have anything to do with sport, from the office's point of view, from the department's point of view?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: The office does what it is told.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Ms Jones can answer that I guess.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The office is an agency of government. After the election there were lots and lots of election commitments and the allocation of those election commitments were moved between agencies on many occasions.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I can see that the answer is no, that there needn't be that. I am not going to ask you to comment on why that is the case; it is okay. Newcastle and Wollongong are two big cities in New South Wales, the second and third biggest cities. Where do they apply? Are they in the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund or are they in the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund?

Ms JONES: No, they were in neither.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What do our friends in Newcastle and Wollongong do if they want to receive funding for local sport facilities?

Ms JONES: There are a number of other grant programs both at the State level and also at the Federal level that they can apply for. I can list those here for you. Sporting organisations in the Hunter and the Illawarra local government areas were also eligible to apply for funding under other grant programs, including the Local Sport Grant Program, the Community Building Partnerships and Office of Responsible Gambling Infrastructure Grants.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was the decision to not have Wollongong and Newcastle in either fund based on departmental advice or were those the parameters that were given to you by the Ministers?

Ms JONES: The Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund, those parameters were determined by the Deputy Premier at the time.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You were given those parameters to work within?

Ms JONES: Correct. The Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund, obviously that is guided by the definition of what is greater Sydney as articulated through the Greater Sydney Commission.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: From memory, the boundaries of the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund or rather the fact that metro Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong are excluded is in line with the Government's approach to defining regional and non-regional employment. They are consistent boundaries, I think.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I appreciate that, but obviously the result of the application of those established boundaries and the boundaries for the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund—the outcome of that was that Newcastle and Wollongong, the second and third biggest cities in New South Wales, were excluded. Did the department specifically advise the Ministers of that outcome, to draw their attention to the fact that that had occurred?

Ms JONES: No, we operated within the parameters that the fund required.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I might ask my colleague Mr Moselmane if he has any questions.

The ACTING CHAIR: I am here for the duration. The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane has another minute.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you, Chair. I will just ask Mr La Posta with regard to my earlier question about the grants—and you said that it was election promises. In those election promises there are \$32.5 million. Have those \$32.5 million now been allocated for the next four years? Can you give us a list of which organisations are now listed to receive those grants?

Mr LA POSTA: Sure. Can I just give you a bit of context around it as well? It helps get to the point. During the 2019 State election commitments were made to provide support to multicultural community festivals

and projects, and also support for the construction of multicultural aged-care facilities, which was the point you were touching on before. There were two buckets of election commitments, for want of a better term. There was \$12.5 million to multicultural community organisations and associations over the period of 2019-20 to 2022-23 to support multicultural festivals, events and community projects in New South Wales. The \$12.5 million of funding included support for Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek, Indian, Bangladeshi, Korean, Filipino, Macedonian, Assyrian, Italian, Pacific Islander and African festivals and events. The funding also includes financial support for multicultural youth and seniors programs, building refurbishments relevant to multicultural facilities and other community support programs.

In addition, the funding will also be provided to support key sporting organisations to assist them in strengthening their engagement within multicultural community groups. There was an additional commitment to \$32.5 million in grants to multicultural community organisations over that same period to support construction and refurbishment of multicultural aged-care facilities and senior support centres across New South Wales. The \$32.5 million of funding included support for construction of aged-care facilities from the Maronite Church, the Lebanese Muslim Association, the Antiochian Church, the Coptic Church and the Indian community.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I will come back to those questions.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you want to finish that off?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Jeez, Mr Moselmane, are you going to insist on a bit of equity here?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, because they wanted to go. Can you tell me—

The ACTING CHAIR: I will just take that as a point of order there. I have said I will be here for the duration and I know the deputy wants to step ahead but we will allow you to continue this line of questioning.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Fair enough. The \$32 million—you have indicated the Maronite Church, the Antiochian Church and the Coptic Church.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How much of that \$32.5 million do they get?

Mr LA POSTA: Sure. No problems. Do you want me to run through each of them so that you have got the high-level number on each? Okay. The support for the construction of our Maronite aged-care facility in Harris Park was \$7 million. The support for the construction of the Lebanese Muslim Association Islamic aged-care centre in Lakemba was \$6.5 million. The support for the Antiochian Church aged-care facility was \$6 million. The support for the Coptic aged-care facility was \$6.75 million. The support for the Indian community aged-care facility was \$6.25 million.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you for that. Now I can move onto the next item. With the coronavirus outbreak there has been significant racist attacks on the Australian Chinese community. I am just wondering what has Multicultural NSW done to counter and respond to those attacks?

Mr LA POSTA: Yes. I thank you for the question. It is an incredibly important question in the current climate. The first thing I want to make very clear is that I condemn all racism. I condemn xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and any form of racism and hate in the State of New South Wales. Overall, we are a strong and connected society and it is incredibly important that we continue to maintain that and not leverage off our historical social capital and build on that going forward. The agency—and I think this is where The ACTING CHAIR was going before—has directly reached out to the Chinese community the minute that we were made aware of issues surfacing out of China. We have connected with a number of government colleagues. We have worked incredibly closely with the NSW Chief Health Officer and Mr Coutts-Trotter's executive team across the Department of Communities and Justice—an all-of-government approach.

I am privileged to be a part of the same conversation specifically focused on social cohesion with the secretaries and others because it is a very significant and important issue. As I was touching on before, we directly reached out to Chinese community leaders. We have worked closely with Study NSW to reassure the international student population. I released a statement in February that condemned any racism and encouraged the community to follow the one source of truth that Mr Coutts-Trotter was referring to before. We will continue to have buy-in and ensure that the nuancing across—we have translated all of the Government's material into different languages. We have sent members of our interpreters and translators to the airport to work with the new arrivals from Iran and speak Farsi to them so that all of our community groups are being appropriately supported through this crisis.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Were there coordinations with the police in terms of the violence? There was not just verbal violence. There were actual physical attacks on some Chinese members of our community.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes. Specifically with regard to the attacks, that question is best directed to the New South Wales police. What I can say is the police are very active members of our Community Resilience and Response Plan [COMPLAN] forum. COMPLAN is set up on specific incidents that impact on social cohesion in New South Wales. We stood it up after the devastating attacks in Christchurch. We stood it up after Sri Lanka. We have now stood it up again in the context of the coronavirus. That brings together the Anti-Discrimination Board, the New South Wales police and a number of different government agencies.

Accordingly, because of the seriousness of the coronavirus at the moment, many more agencies are becoming a part of that social cohesion forum to discuss the ramifications and impacts and terms of their business. I touched on a few of them before—Study NSW, small business councils, these sorts of people. With regard to the police, at our last Community Partnership Action [COMPACT] meeting there were no reported incidents of any race hate crimes that were perpetrated in association with the coronavirus. With regard to the Anti-Discrimination Board—and we touched base with our colleagues—there are two incidents of discrimination that they have recorded based on specifically the coronavirus.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: And is the Anti-Discrimination Board following those matters up?

Mr LA POSTA: I cannot speak on behalf of the Anti-Discrimination Board.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: No, but as far as you know?

Mr LA POSTA: I am happy to take that on notice. I met with the head of the Anti-Discrimination Board not two weeks ago to have this exact conversation as well, to make sure the two organisations were working in parallel.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You mentioned Islamophobia. As you know, there has been in recent times a November 2019 Islamophobia report, which made the point that there is an escalation of attacks on the Muslim community. What was Multicultural NSW's response to that?

Mr LA POSTA: Yes. Again, I want to reinforce the importance of condemning any violence or hate against any part of our community, particularly our Islamic brothers and sisters. You are right: There is an expressed negative sentiment towards Muslims. I think The ACTING CHAIR brought some data to us last year about quoting an article. We have since worked incredibly closely with the Scanlon-Monash Index, which assesses social cohesion and the five domains of social cohesion: belonging, worth, social justice, political participation, acceptance and rejection. Across the 12 years of surveys many of these measurements have been stable, although there is a decline in some indicators. One of those indicators is, as I alluded to before, a negative sentiment towards Muslims, prompting the Scanlon Foundation to remark:

... the level of negative sentiment towards those of the Muslim faith ... is a factor of significance in contemporary Australian society.

Accordingly, in a government context, our response is probably through—I will go from the top level and talk about a number of steps. First and foremost, the Government has a \$47 million package to combat violent extremism and to address key issues around racism and hate. Within our agency's requirements we have the COMPACT program, a \$9.2 million program that has now engaged 40,000 young people across 130 schools.

We have launched a campaign semi-recently called Remove Hate from the Debate—an online campaign that we did with the headquarters of Facebook, which is an online campaign looking at targeting tips and tools to address issues such as Islamophobia, racism and hate online. To date, that has reached over 700,000 young people online. Unfortunately, young people are often a target. Between 12- to 17-year-olds, 50 per cent of young people are subject to online hate. Unfortunately, racism and hate in our society today do not discriminate based off a religion or a race. It is an issue that we need to address and we look at it with a threat agnostic approach overall.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: My follow-up question on that—I have asked that question earlier on in a previous hearing—is in terms of Multicultural NSW and its communication with the Islamic umbrella organisations like the Australian National Imams Council [ANIC], the Lebanese Muslim Association, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and a number of them, to what extent do you communicate with them about how to address, and how they can address and teach their members how to address, issues of racism when they are subject to it on trains, at mosques and anywhere in society?

Mr LA POSTA: Can I say two things, Mr Moselmane: I am incredibly proud of our agency, off the back of the attack that happened in Parramatta where a young woman was viciously attacked going out for a social event with her children, to make a very profoundly strong-worded statement to the community, reassuring them that we stood against any Islamic attacks. Off the back of that instance, the Imams Council personally reached out to me to thank the agency, first and foremost, for such a strong statement to support their community and, secondly, to offer their support in an ongoing fashion to help address this issue.

We work incredibly closely with all of our umbrella organisations, such as the Lebanese Muslim Association, the Arab Council, the Imams Council and ANIC. Could we do more? Yes, absolutely, we could do more, but in terms of the work that we have and the resources that we have, we believe that the relationships that we hold are incredibly beneficial and, in terms of crises, off the back of Sri Lanka, we saw how those communities came together and we were able to reassure them and support them that, firstly, they were safe and, secondly, that they were really valued in an Australian society.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr La Posta, did you say the expenditure on countering violent extremism was included in the programs that deal with Islamophobia, because they seem to have quite different functions?

Mr LA POSTA: Yes. The Government has a \$47 million package that is across all of those issues.

The ACTING CHAIR: The countering violent extremism funding will not be addressing Islamophobia. They are quite separate issues. I assume expenditure will be spent on the broader community to address the rise in the indicator of Islamophobia, whereas I am assuming that, to the extent that there is expenditure on countering violent extremism that deals with the Islamic community, that would have a different purpose?

Mr LA POSTA: Yes. I think it is important to acknowledge that—and I touched on this before—we are aware that there are a number of different threats that impact on social cohesion in this State. Islamophobia is one of those threats.

The ACTING CHAIR: And it is a rising concern, as you have indicated. The data is suggesting it is a rising concern.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: I am not criticising—

Mr LA POSTA: No, no.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are following the data.

Mr LA POSTA: I think it is important to acknowledge that we see divisive forces at both ends of the spectrum and there are extremists looking to divide us. Our responsibility is to not break that down too much, but to think about it as a threat-agnostic approach. The Scanlon research talks to the fact that 85 per cent of people broadly support multicultural principles. Our responsibility is to strengthen that 85 per cent in the first instance so that we do not see decline in that percentage and then to think about how we influence marginal forces at both ends that are trying to undermine or impact on our democracy or those sorts of things. With respect to the specifics in terms of the breakdown of the \$47 million, I will need to take that on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes, but I say again, accepting your proposal that the bulk of the money is spent on ensuring that 85 per cent is solid and grows, to the extent that you are including funding on countering violent extremism, that is very much in those minorities at either end. That is why I am asking for the breakdown.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: How much of the \$47 million, which I had assumed was targeted mainly on that central 85 per cent, is being spent on countering violent extremism?

Mr LA POSTA: Can I talk to the program that we specifically oversee, which is the COMPACT program, which is addressing exactly that. With regard to the broader \$47 million response, that intersects with a lot of my government colleagues and would be something I need to take on notice. The COMPACT program is exactly to the point of what you are talking about, which is dealing with the capabilities within our communities to ensure that people feel supported to be able to profess their religion, speak their language, dress in the way they want and practise their cultural customs in the New South Wales context, as long as they abide by the laws of this State and this country. Specifically with regards to my agency, I can talk with absolute authority about the COMPACT program. With regard to the broader government response, I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr La Posta, the COMPACT program was a \$10 million part of that \$47 million package—

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: It was 10.8.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And my understanding is that only \$750,000 of that would in fact go to the issue that Mr Shoebridge has raised, which is Islamophobia, and the Community Action for Preventing Extremism [CAPE] program funded by COMPACT was the only part of that program that actually dealt with right-wing extremism and anti-Islamic sentiment, so when you break it down, that is not a particularly substantial financial commitment to fighting hatred directed towards people of the Muslim faith, is it?

Mr LA POSTA: Is that a question or a statement, in a sense?

The ACTING CHAIR: I think that is a question. It is asking whether or not you agree.

Mr LA POSTA: No, I do not.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Would you agree that when you break down the projects funded by COMPACT only one of them targets hatred directed towards people of the Muslim faith? That is the CAPE project, and that was \$750,000?

Mr LA POSTA: I disagree, and I have to be really strong on this. The reality is that we have 24 partners in our COMPACT program. I cannot speak to the whole-of-government response, but I can speak to the COMPACT program. There are 24 partner organisations with a conglomeration of 60 umbrella organisations that support us as a part of the COMPACT alliance—some whose funding has ceased but still buy into this program because of its significance. The whole ethos of the funding program is about building resilience and leadership and the skills and capabilities for us as a society to be able to address these issues.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: To the extent that you are providing funding and support to Islamic-based organisations, the primary purpose of that is to support young Muslim people who may have a propensity to be radicalised. I am not against that funding being provided, but you cannot claim that funding for the Islamic community is intended to stop them hating the Islamic community. That is not a meaningful expenditure. The only part of that project that was directed towards people who did express potential negative views towards the Islamic community was, from my understanding at least, the CAPE program and that was \$750,000.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes. In a sense, you are almost arguing the same but different points because, with regard to the \$47 million package, I cannot speak to that. The \$47 million package and the terminology around that is different from the COMPACT program. The COMPACT program is not about countering violent extremism. The COMPACT program is about uniting communities to respond to key social issues around racism and hate. The COMPACT program is not about deradicalisation, and I need to be really clear on that, nor is it about breaking into—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: So how do you allocate the \$700,000? Is it allocated or is it spent on programs? Is it allocated to umbrella organisations we have discussed?

Mr LA POSTA: Yes, Ms Jackson touched on the \$750,000 going to the CAPE program.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The partners were Youth Action, Macquarie University and the Challenging Racism Project at Western Sydney University. If the first step in countering efforts to divide is to deepen, strengthen, broaden relationships between members of the community, and particularly public institutions and particular community groups, then much of the focus of COMPACT is to do precisely that. It is to reassure communities that otherwise feel extraordinarily vulnerable that public institutions, public services, public service leaders are on their side and are available to them. We are taking ourselves back to the previous estimates and the Minister for Counter Terrorism, but the Government's counter-terrorism strategy explicitly calls out right-wing extremism. It is there, from memory, in the Premier's statement.

We funded and convened a major conference last year. The Government has funded specific research through Macquarie University beyond the CAPE program particularly to identify how right-wing extremist communities operate online. The police prioritise bias and bias crime, and that includes bias crime from people who would describe themselves as I guess white nationalists, so I think taken together it would be fair to say, and I join Mr La Posta in saying, that this is not something that does not get attention, it is not something that does not get resource and effort—it does.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr La Posta, I accept your position that none of the \$10.8 million attached to COMPACT is being spent on countering violent extremism. I suppose the question I would ask, and it flows from

what Ms Jackson was putting, is how much of that \$10.8 million is expressly allocated to dealing with Islamophobia—and it may be that you take that on notice—because the indication from Ms Jackson seems to be not challenged, at face value.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: The only distinct program is the CAPE program.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: And it is, you know, less than 10 per cent of the funds.

Mr LA POSTA: But, again, the specifics of the CAPE program are not about Islamophobia, they are about understanding the behaviours and the motives of far right extremists. The CAPE program, in an incredibly accurate and disturbing way, was able to talk to us about the temperature check in terms of far right extremism violence a week before Christchurch. These are exactly the sorts of programs that we need to help guide our society and work with our government colleagues to inform us on those things. I apologise, I know the directness of your question, but it is a whole-of-community and a whole-of-society approach. It is about uniting people and bringing different groups together to understand it.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr La Posta to the extent that you can, will you provide the Committee with a breakdown on what is the \$47 million funding?

Mr LA POSTA: I need to take that question on notice because it does not sit within the remit of my agency.

The ACTING CHAIR: I accept that. The problem is it is 45 or 46 separate agencies so we could chase it up in five or six budget estimates, so to the extent that you can, will you take on notice the breakdown of it?

Mr LA POSTA: Certainly.

The ACTING CHAIR: Over the summer period we are all aware of the extreme smoke conditions that pretty much all of our major population centres faced. Did your department, Mr Coutts-Trotter, track the effect of that bushfire smoke in terms of mortality for seniors in New South Wales?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: No. There are ministerial responsibilities that are whole-of-government coordination functions for seniors. It does not mean that we are resourced or equipped to operationalise some of that. The gathering, the use, the interpretation of mortality data, public health data and an appropriate response to that is, of course, led by public health experts.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do I take it from that that the bureaucrats in your department attached to the seniors' responsibility have not been directing, driving or a part of that assessment about additional morbidity in seniors as a result of the bushfire smoke exposure?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: You can take from that there is no reason for us to intervene in the day-to-day and proper work of public health leadership. That is precisely what they do. They are constantly looking at vulnerable people within the population and thinking about an appropriate public health prevention or response strategy.

The ACTING CHAIR: Are you aware of any steps that have been taken to specifically improve resilience amongst seniors following the bushfire smoke exposure and directed to the potential for future bushfire smoke exposure?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Let me see if I can get a response on that from my colleagues in public health. Every day during that holiday period there were very explicit public health warnings that identified the kind of vulnerabilities people might have, given the predicted atmospheric conditions. They explicitly called out older people, people with asthma and other respiratory conditions. It is part and parcel of public health's day-to-day work.

The ACTING CHAIR: We come up with this issue, as you say, in a number of these cross-portfolio portfolios.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am conscious of trying to provide some capacity for some of the officials to go. I might ask some veteran-related questions so that the officials from Veterans may be able to leave after that. I apologise the way this is put together as we do not have a lot of flexibility.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You have plenty of flexibility. It is your call.

The ACTING CHAIR: I think the Hon. Rose Jackson is trying to help so the Hon. Trevor Khan should not get in the way.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is right. Ms D'Elia and Ms Mackaness, how many times a week do you meet with Minister Lee to brief him on veterans' issues?

Ms MACKANESS: I meet weekly with the office.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You meet weekly with staff from his office?

Ms MACKANESS: Yes, that is right. I meet weekly with the Minister's office.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How many times have you met with the Minister himself to discuss veteran's issues?

Ms MACKANESS: I see the Minister at veterans' functions but separately to that he is the current chair of the ANZAC Memorial Trust so there are meetings of the trust. He has chaired one meeting. I briefed him ahead of that meeting and I have met with him on a couple of other occasions.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Perhaps two or three times separate to that. Will you take on notice and confirm how many times other than that briefing for that one meeting you have met with him to discuss veterans' issues?

Ms MACKANESS: Yes, certainly.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you recall in those handful of briefings whether you requested a meeting to brief him on work you were doing or he requested to meet with you? Do you recall?

Ms MACKANESS: I have been requested to meet with him once to my memory, yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I want to ask a couple of questions about Anzac Day. I am sure you are aware of media reports that suggest Anzac Day ceremonies may be under threat from the coronavirus issue. Are you working with sub-branches on this? Can you give us any updates about where that might be up to in New South Wales?

Ms MACKANESS: Yes, certainly. I would like to actually backtrack and say I would like to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of our Defence Force personnel. I think it is a really important small portfolio and generally very bipartisan in its approach. The Defence Force is for the whole country. Anzac Day is led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in close collaboration with the RSL. The Dawn Service Trust is responsible for the dawn service and the RSL is responsible for the actual Anzac Day march. The Office for Veterans Affairs is very actively involved as the stakeholder representative in the whole-of-government meetings towards Anzac Day. The meetings are very important and there are a lot of stakeholders—transport, police, external agencies, the Red Cross, Taxi Council et cetera. It is a very important day and it is very well planned.

At the moment it is business as usual because it is such a significant day but we have had discussions on keeping abreast of Department of Health advice and advice generally because, as other colleagues have been saying, it is a rapidly unfolding landscape. We need to be very careful of the health of the general public. Yes, planning is continuing as if it is all going ahead.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Good news. There have also been some reports from some RSL sub-branches around increased security costs for Anzac Day services and some concerns that meeting those costs has, indeed, the potential to imperil Anzac Day services. Are you aware of any concerns raised by RSL sub-branches around increased security costs for Anzac Day services?

Ms MACKANESS: Yes, absolutely. I am really happy to answer that because generally Anzac Day is a great collaborative effort in every local community. RSL sub-branches at a regional level are usually responsible for organising and, generally speaking, they are organised in very close collaboration with police and local government. There have been some locations where the route has been traditionally through a main thoroughfare and there have been increasing concerns about the risk of hostile vehicle mitigation. In those locations there has been very good work, mostly by police, to encourage slightly different routes. In those locations generally people have taken on the advice and adjusted their routes for public and RSL safety.

There have been some costs associated with doing transport management plans. Generally, again, the local government tried to support that and the RSL has also tried to support it. Generally when a route is confirmed

as being safe, and the plan is in place, that plan is just there in place and reviewed every year. Every location is different.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So you are not aware at this stage of any services that have been cancelled because of these increased costs?

Ms MACKANESS: No. There was an issue at Epping last year that was overcome at the last minute. We have sent two letters in collaboration with the RSL and the Minister to encourage RSL sub-branches to begin early planning and to offer them assistance in their transport plan. My office has actually been really proactive in trying to ensure that communities can appropriately and safely commemorate Anzac Day.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think that there are not a lot of instances but I do know, for example, around the Lake Macquarie area there have also been some concerns and that the council has indicated that it is not in a position to provide the funding that you mentioned.

Ms MACKANESS: Again, I think a letter has just gone out encouraging any sub-branch that is worried about organising Anzac Day or costs to, in the first instance, contact the RSL. I speak to the RSL every other day. We speak to sub-branches often. My office is always available to help, because generally our whole remit is to ensure that the service and sacrifice of our Defence Force personnel is supported and honoured.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You may be aware that the initial scope of the regional seniors travel card did not include veterans. That has now been amended. Were you involved in making that decision or in making representations in relation to that decision?

Ms MACKANESS: I can also answer that. Thank you. The regional travel card was I think genuinely trying to support regional travel. Veterans operate under very different pension and support mechanisms, because the main responsibility is with the Commonwealth Government. I think when that was announced there were some veterans who were clearly missing out. Veterans are very vocal and able to raise their own issues and they did. My office then became involved and discussed with the DVA, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and put the Department of Veterans' Affairs in touch with Transport people to go through in detail the categories of veteran concessions and age groups and so forth. There is a different age limit for the veterans concessions and other concessions, so it is actually quite complex, and an additional couple of categories were included.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I want to follow up on an issue that we raised last year, which was the exclusion of Gold Card holders from the My Community Project initiative.

Ms MACKANESS: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am just wondering how that has finished up. I think representations have been made and there was an ongoing conversation with Service NSW about that.

Ms MACKANESS: Yes. In anticipation that you might want to know where that was up to, we have actually checked. The program is being reviewed and the evaluations are all being done. Overwhelmingly there has been positive support. There has been feedback to improve the program, but they have not finalised that yet. I think our representations have been made in terms of veterans.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Finally, I just want to ask about the Federal Government initiative on veteran suicide. I wondered what interaction or contribution your office either has made or will be looking to make to that process?

Ms MACKANESS: Sure. I might start with the fact that in November 2016 there was the first gathering of Ministers from all States and Territories with responsibility for veterans' issues. Since that time we have worked incredibly collaboratively. The Commonwealth has done a whole range of inquiries, reviews and reports into veteran health and welfare. Our office has actively contributed and been involved in all of those processes. There was a mental health forum last year and we coordinated people to attend from the hospital at Concord. In the veteran mental health and suicide space, we are very aware of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare studies. We are given all of the data, so we are actively keeping on top of those issues.

On the call for a royal commission, New South Wales came out in support of the need for further work in this space and you would be aware that recently there was the announcement of the Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention. Again, our office was involved in discussions and, being in the Department of Communities and Justice, the Coroner is in our department, so each coroner in each State will take a lead role in that work as well. There is a large amount of work happening in that space.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Just to clarify, would you have preferred to have seen the calling of a royal commission into veteran suicide?

Ms MACKANESS: This was a very contentious issue, even amongst the community, but I think this step has been a very good one in that there are powers now to work collaboratively, to look at data and research and really try and make a practical difference. There have been a number of inquiries at a Commonwealth level. I work very closely with Liz Cosson, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. She is genuinely working incredibly hard to lift practical outcomes. There has been a productivity commission and there have been a great number of improvements. Foremost, everyone wants to ensure that veterans are supported. It is incredibly important.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you have statistics on the number of New South Wales veterans that have committed suicide?

Ms MACKANESS: Yes, there are statistics. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, there were 419 confirmed suicide deaths between 2001 and 2017 nationally.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you have a New South Wales breakdown of that?

Ms MACKANESS: No, I do not.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you know how that compares against the general population? Is it a distinct problem that we see with veterans? That is the anecdotal reporting.

Ms MACKANESS: There is a critical time all of the studies are pointing to. We need to support veterans in transition; that is the absolute most critical time. So all of the efforts are going in and there is a lot of effort being done. We attend every transition seminar now as the New South Wales Government to point veterans to opportunities in employment programs, services and education programs that we offer. That is a critical point. The studies have shown that the younger veterans are most at risk. Defence Force personnel are less likely to suicide than the general population while they are still employed in the Defence Force and then the risk increases as they leave. The younger cohorts are more at risk than the older cohorts.

The ACTING CHAIR: As they are leaving and seeking to transition into alternative employment, is that where the risk factor is?

Ms MACKANESS: That has absolutely been identified. The Commonwealth Government has committed to six national veteran wellbeing locations around the country. We are working actively with them on the proposal for Nowra, but there are also a number of independent veteran centres that have sprung up. There is the Dee Why centre and there is one on the mid North Coast, so there is an enormous effort between Federal, State, local government and also the ex-service community to create these places that veterans can go to and seek support. I might add that there are a large number of veterans who leave the Defence Force and our Veterans' Employment Program focuses on the skills and transferability of veterans. They are highly trained. We have invested enormously in them. They are dedicated public servants.

The message we are trying to get out is that the majority are fantastic, they just need a bit of help in translating their skills and services to the civilian world and, beyond that, being connected to their community. There is a great program in Nambucca. The council there has done a fantastic job in connecting local business, the chamber of commerce, local government jobs, priority for veterans and welcome packs for veterans who move to that location. I think we will see a lot more of that happening in the future.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Those are the only questions that I had on the Veterans portfolio. Thank you for coming.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are both free to go.

Ms D'ELIA: Thank you.

Ms MACKANESS: Thank you very much.

(Ms D'Elia and Ms Mackaness withdrew.)

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I have some questions on the NSW Seniors Card and NSW Seniors Savers Card. I guess that is Mr Coutts-Trotter.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, that would be me, Mr Moselmane.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How many people have taken up the new Seniors Savers Card since it was launched?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I will see if I can get that data for you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I am not sure that I have that data for you, I am afraid. I will give you an answer on notice.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Take that on notice. Is the Government on track for meeting its goal of 60,000?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, I am sorry, I do not have an update on the numbers of people who have taken it up since it was launched in February—well, it became available from July last year onwards.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: But you will take that on notice.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, I will.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you. Does Seniors Card send out the information from third parties from time to time to cardholders?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, it does.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: On that, a resident has provided us with a letter in an envelope with the logo of both Seniors Card and the New South Wales Government prompting the resident to get a hearing test and offering a \$30 discount for in-store purchases. This is a commercial request, is it not, Mr Coutts-Trotter?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I am not familiar with that, but from what you have just described, yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I will give you a copy of that letter.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Thank you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is this a typical kind of letter that might be sent out by Seniors Card on behalf of third parties?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: This clearly has not been sent out by Seniors Card. It has been sent out by an organisation called Industrial Deafness Australia and it is making an offer for Seniors Card holders. I do not know whether this is an endorsed arrangement between Seniors Card and this firm.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The envelope, which we can also provide you, Mr Coutts-Trotter, although I did not bring it downstairs, I can assure you does not have Industrial Deafness Australia's name or logo on it. In fact it has your department's name and logo on the front and the back and the Seniors Card logo on the front. Who is paying for that?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I would have to take that question on notice. I simply do not know.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Have you sold the private information of seniors to organisations like Industrial Deafness Australia?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I will take it on notice and respond with details of our privacy policies. I do not think that we onsell information. I should know but I do not think I have advice to hand. That seems very unlikely but I will take the question on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Just to clarify, you have taken on notice the question of who has paid for the distribution of that letter, for example.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are there any parameters or guidelines in relation to who your department and the people that administer the Seniors Card partner with for this type of solicitation?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, there are arrangements to sign partnership agreements and there is due diligence done through the consumer protection agency prior to firms partnering with Seniors Card. The communications to Seniors Card members distributed by the Seniors Card reflect what our surveying of Seniors Card members and feedback tells us about the kind of information Seniors Card members want to receive by that means. I do not have a summary of the privacy policy but I am more than happy to provide that to the Committee.

The ACTING CHAIR: I suppose if you are taking questions on notice it is whether or not the use of those logos was authorised or endorsed.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes. I simply do not know. I will find out.

The ACTING CHAIR: And, if so, was there any commercial arrangement behind that?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I should not guess; I will find out.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can we have a list of the organisations with whom Seniors Card has partnered in a similar arrangement to Industrial Deafness Australia?

The ACTING CHAIR: If that is the case, any similar commercial partnerships.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Right. Well, that is right.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: And what information is disclosed to the seniors?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: If someone is a Seniors Card partner they are saying that they have a particular commercial offer for Seniors Card members. So in one sense if this is, as it seems, a commercial partnership it is akin to every other commercial partnership. Just to help us give some direction to the people who will be responding to this, you are specifically interested in what aspect of Seniors Card's commercial arrangements?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am interested in who Seniors Card has commercial arrangements with.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: That is distinct from corporate organisations of various kinds who have signed arrangements with Seniors Card, because there are about 9,000 of those, from memory.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I suppose to be more specific, who else could seniors expect to receive unsolicited letters from?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Okay. Again there is an assumption about the nature of what sits behind this letter. I will take the question on notice and respond to you.

The ACTING CHAIR: Perhaps there is an even easier way of describing it. Can you provide to us what the arrangements were, if there were any, that led to that letter being sent and what other arrangements are of a similar nature? That is what we are getting at.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Sure.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You mentioned due diligence. That is done by the consumer—

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: That is done by a division of the Department of Customer Service.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you have any more information as to that process? Because the website of Industrial Deafness Australia does not function. The call centre is based overseas and when you call it is very difficult to obtain clear information about the arrangement with the Seniors Card. I suppose I am putting to you—the due diligence is done not by your department, I appreciate that—as secretary of the department that administers the Seniors portfolio and the Seniors Card, do you have confidence in that due diligence process?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Absolutely. I do. We ask for a reputation check through our colleagues in the Department of Customer Service and they provide it. In a former life I had the pleasure of being responsible for the then Department of Fair Trading and I rate very highly their capabilities then and since.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: We will move on to the NSW Ageing Strategy. The NSW Ageing Strategy expires this year. What is the status of the new strategy?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: So the strategy concludes, I think, at the end of the calendar year 2020 and we are in the process of preparing for the creation of a four-year strategy beyond that. I am looking to see if I have any information of use to you. Okay, you can rest easy. The interdepartmental committee that oversees the implementation of the strategy has commenced work on the next Ageing Strategy from 2021. Consultation has started with an initial workshop with the interdepartmental committee members. They are my own department; the Department of Premier and Cabinet; NSW Health; Transport for NSW; the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment; the Department of Education; the Department of Customer Service; the NSW Trustee and Guardian; and Create NSW. A broad public consultation process will continue through the first few months of this year to inform the new strategy. So work is underway to prepare for the next four years.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is there a list of community groups that you communicate with?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I am happy to provide the Committee with that information.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you. What new funding will be allocated? Are you aware of any new funding?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: No, there is specific funding to create, coordinate, deliver on, evaluate and improve the strategy. As you know, it was framed as a four-year strategy with one-year action plans, but within those one-year action plans colleague agencies commit to do particular things under the strategy.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is there a distinct role being given to the Ageing and Disability Commissioner in the establishment of this Ageing Strategy that is distinct from the previous one because it is a new position?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Well, the commissioner is a new feature and was not on the field.

The ACTING CHAIR: Which is why I am asking.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Obviously the commissioner will have a distinct role because the commission exists, the commissioner's role exists. I am happy to see what we can provide by way of response on notice to the kind of consultation that is going on with the commissioner.

The ACTING CHAIR: I would have assumed that the commissioner would have been leading the development of the strategy. That was my assumption, which is why I asked.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The commissioner is a very, very significant presence here but there will be powerful and important contributions from Health, from Transport, from Planning and a whole range of other agencies.

The ACTING CHAIR: So it is not being led by the commissioner is your understanding.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I would need to check on that and I will do so in our responses to the Committee.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Mr Coutts-Trotter, I have some more general questions around scams to do with seniors.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Has the department provided any input or support to Fair Trading when it comes to protecting seniors against scams following the bushfires?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: In truth, I do not know. I would have to take that on notice and respond to you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Has the department broadcast any messages through its various channels toward seniors about scams during the bushfire and recovery appeals?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Again, I will take that on notice to make sure I can give you accurate information. I do not have a specific brief on that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Has the department provided any specific support to seniors who have been affected by the bushfires or the February storms?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The department is home to the former Office of Emergency Management, or the New South Wales disaster recovery entity. Much of the Government's response and support for individuals and for businesses actually moves through that organisation, so the answer is yes. I am happy if you like to provide some detail of the kinds of things that have been done specifically to try to support seniors in areas affected by bushfires.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That would be appreciated. Has the department issued any memorandum or advice to seniors during the bushfires that you would be able to provide to us?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: There may well have been communication from that part of the department with responsibility for supporting public housing tenants. There would be a range of areas in the department that may have communicated with seniors and communities during the bushfires. I will see what I can find out.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, particularly on issues like evacuation plans if there were any.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Sure, yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I just wanted to ask quickly: You mentioned that the COMPACT grants have expired, haven't they?

Mr LA POSTA: It is the final year of the program.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is right. So what is next for this important project?

Mr LA POSTA: It goes through a standard budgetary process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Have you—

Mr LA POSTA: Prosecuted a strong case? I hope so.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is really all I had on that. I wanted to check where it was up to.

The ACTING CHAIR: We will find out.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Please tell us what it is going to be.

Mr LA POSTA: Likewise.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I will try and ask that question about the CAPE project. When you said that the \$700, 000 addresses Islamophobia, does it also address issues with anti-Semitism?

Mr LA POSTA: Just give me a moment so I can get the language specific for you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Because there is been a rise in both the Islamic community and the Jewish community.

Mr LA POSTA: Yes, and Sinophobia most recently. The short answer is: Yes. It is fundamentally about understanding the motives of far right extremists or neo-Nazis and why they choose to behave in the way that they choose to and how we can better inform society to be able to negate, cope, deal and protect us against that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: And what action do you take? Do you talk to the Jewish Board of Deputies? Which organisations do you communicate or cooperate with?

Mr LA POSTA: With the CAPE program?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes.

Mr LA POSTA: That is one of our partners as a part of the COMPACT program. As Mr Coutts-Trotter said before, that is a specific part research, part community-led program. I am happy to give you the specifics on it. It is led by All Together Now. The partners include Youth Action, Macquarie University and the Challenging Racism Project at Western Sydney University. It is a four-year project due for completion in 2020 promoting resilience in responding to far right extremism. The project increases community awareness of the dangers of far right extremism by providing training for frontline workers across the State. There is a specific website that it links to.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I do not have any more questions for Mr La Posta.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr La Posta, you are free to go if you choose to.

Mr LA POSTA: I will get back to work and start answering your questions on notice.

(Mr La Posta withdrew.)

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The next thing I wanted to ask about is the expected completion date for Stadium Australia?

Mr DRAPER: The completion date for Stadium Australia is early 2023. The idea is that we will have it ready for the 2023 NRL season, which generally opens I think the first game this year is next week, so in mid-March.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: When will the winning tender be announced?

Mr DRAPER: We are currently in a tender process right now. That closes later in March.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are you tendering all works at the stadium?

Mr DRAPER: All works, yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And that tender will be issued for all works?

Mr DRAPER: Correct, yes. We are currently in that process. I will just check my notes to give you a really accurate answer. As I said, we are in the middle of a tender at the moment. We would expect the contract award to be mid-2020, somewhere around the middle of the year. We are also hoping to get the planning consent around the same time.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is there a shortlist of tenderers?

Mr DRAPER: We have got three tenderers.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Who is on the shortlist?

Mr DRAPER: Multiplex, Watpac and Laing O'Rourke are our three tenderers

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What is the scheduled closure date for Stadium Australia?

Mr DRAPER: It is around the middle of the year. I think we are designing it around being able to host a State of Origin game so we are talking about July as the likely decommissioning date.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: For the Sydney Football Stadium, I am pretty sure that you said this morning that the contractual completion date for that project is July 2022, is that correct?

Mr DRAPER: That is correct.

The ACTING CHAIR: It is 30 July, isn't it?

Mr DRAPER: Correct.

The ACTING CHAIR: Very close to not being July.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: A specific date in July.

Mr DRAPER: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The \$300 million loan facility provided by Treasury to the Sydney Cricket Ground trust for relocation and disruption, was that a bullet loan or a simple interest loan?

Ms MATHER: It is a \$250 million facility and it is on commercial terms. When the loan is mature it rolls over, so interest is payable and the principle will be repaid in due course as well.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And what is the updated figure for the relocation and disruption costs for the Sydney Football Stadium project in its entirety? What is the latest figure on how much that is going to cost?

Ms MATHER: In terms of disruption, it has been about \$27 million that we have spent to date, remembering that of that \$250 million about \$100 million was debt that was already on the balance sheet. It related to co-investments that were made in the Noble-Bradman stand and the Victor Trumper stand. So what we are talking about is \$150 million all-up for accommodation and disruption.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is that still an accurate figure? What are the projections for how much that is actually going to cost?

Ms MATHER: Because we are talking about a contractual completion date, which is 30 July 2022, what the disruption is about is the disruption of match schedules, largely. We are fortunate to have the SCG where we can actually accommodate quite a bit of that content. It really depends on what is happening from season to season, what the schedules actually look like, how much we can actually accommodate at the SCG.

The ACTING CHAIR: Were there or are there contractual obligations to have facilities available for, say, NRL games and AFL games? Do you have contractual obligations to provide facilities?

Ms MATHER: The way that the contractual arrangements work is they commit to hosting a set number of games. We have got quite long-term contracts for each of the sports. They are all different but they might contract for 10 games for the Roosters, or something like that. The SCG actually has quite an awesome schedule anyway so it really depends on how the schedule works across the entire network. When the NRL are looking at

the scheduling for the season they are trying to balance that against interstate games and other venues. It all fits in around all of that. I think we are hosting almost all of the Roosters games, for example, at the SCG.

The ACTING CHAIR: To the extent that there has been a 13-month delay in the completion of the stadium project, is there a cost to either your agency or the State Government to that because you are unable to provide contracted facilities? Is there a cost?

Ms MATHER: Yes. I know what you are getting at. Actually what we are talking about is, say, there is a delay between that period between what was originally envisaged of March 2022 and July 2022. It is in that original period.

The ACTING CHAIR: I think the original timetable was June 2021, then it became March 2022 and now it is July 2022. But does the extending of the completion date come at a cost to either your organisation or any State Government agency? Does that come at a cost because you are unable to provide a facility you are contracted to provide?

Ms MATHER: The disruption agreements that we have with the sports envisaged a late March 2022 so, on the basis that it is actually now July, it really depends on what the scheduling would have been for that period.

The ACTING CHAIR: So we can anticipate there will be additional costs payable by your organisation?

Ms MATHER: There may or may not be.

The ACTING CHAIR: Because of that delay.

Ms MATHER: There may or may not be. It is too early to foreshadow. As I said, say, for the Roosters schedule, we have been able to accommodate. In fact, last season we accommodated all of the schedule at the SCG and, for them, their attendances actually grew 20 per cent at the SCG compared to what it was on average at the—

The ACTING CHAIR: But that is only one of three major tenants.

Ms MATHER: It is, but take the Waratahs, for example. The Waratahs we were looking to host three. We had the option of three potential games at the SCG. Unfortunately, we have only been able to accommodate one so there will be a disruption of two, but it depends on—there is a formula. There is a formula for the calculation so it really depends on the attendance they are achieving elsewhere.

The ACTING CHAIR: Maybe we can just do this in a far simpler way. What have been the disruption costs paid to date as a result of this project—paid or payable to date?

Ms MATHER: To date it has been \$27 million.

The ACTING CHAIR: All right.

Ms MATHER: But this year has been a very unusual year because we are in a World Cup year, so it has been an unusual period.

The ACTING CHAIR: What are you budgeting for the disruption costs for this current financial year?

Ms MATHER: It is too early to actually call that at this point because it depends on a number of factors.

The ACTING CHAIR: But you must have a budget.

Ms MATHER: It varies. But, as I said, we have been able to accommodate pretty much all of the Roosters games and their attendances are up.

The ACTING CHAIR: That is only one of three major tenants. You must have a budget for what you assume in this current financial year will be the disruption costs, and I am simply asking what that budget is.

Ms MATHER: I will have to come back to you.

The ACTING CHAIR: Then can you advise the Committee what the additional estimated disruption costs are as a result of the extension of the deadline to 30 July 2022? That is from March 2022 to 30 July. But you must do budgets, Ms Mather. You must do budgets. I am asking you what you expect the budget costs are to be.

Ms MATHER: It may be close to zero. It really depends on whether we can actually host the content at the SCG.

The ACTING CHAIR: Given it has been \$27 million to date, if it is zero for that, that would be a major achievement. Perhaps you could tell us on notice why that will be.

Ms MATHER: Because this year is a very busy year with the World Cup whereas for that three-month period, if we are able to accommodate all the content at the SCG, our focus has been about minimising—

The ACTING CHAIR: Well, it is at least four months because if it was March 2022 and it is now the end of July 2022, that is at least four months.

Ms MATHER: Yes, but we will not know—

The ACTING CHAIR: So could you provide us on notice what you expect that cost to be?

Ms MATHER: I will be able to give you a better indication by November 2021 when we know what the schedule is for the 2022 season.

The ACTING CHAIR: See what you can do within 21 days.

Ms MATHER: Sorry?

The ACTING CHAIR: See what you can do within 21 days.

Ms MATHER: But the 2022 schedule is not known until November 2021.

The ACTING CHAIR: Well, you can tell us why you cannot give us a figure.

Ms MATHER: Okay. I can happily provide that.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I think it will be roughly what she just said, though, Chair.

The ACTING CHAIR: That is okay.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I just want to ask a little bit more about the LED curtain. We discussed it earlier, but there has obviously been, I think we can accept, some kind of let us describe it as communication breakdown in that the three codes or clubs that my colleague Mr David Shoebridge identified—Sydney FC, Sydney Roosters and the Waratahs—all were of the opinion that a curtain was either to be provided or was part of the program. Mr Draper, your evidence was that that was never the case. I guess I want to start by asking you, but also Ms Jones or Ms Mather, did any of you have discussions with representatives of those three codes, individually or collectively, about the provision of an LED curtain as part of the redevelopment?

Mr DRAPER: I will start. Ms Jones or Ms Mather may add to this, but I can certainly say that there were discussions all through the first half of 2019 about the design of the stadium with all of those stakeholders, all of those users, so there would have been plenty of opportunities. Given that it was published that we were not doing it, I would be incredibly surprised that they would not know that that LED curtain was not being included as part of the design. It was certainly never included in any of the designs that we presented to those users at any time during that period. We had no budget for it. It could not have been plainer than publishing a business case summary saying it had been taken out and was not going to be provided. So I cannot explain why they then expected it, but perhaps Ms Jones or Ms Mather may.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Jones, did you have any conversations about the provision of curtaining with those clients?

Ms JONES: So, similar to Mr Draper, I reinforce that the LED curtain was not included in the project. I think where the reaction has come from of the revised interest in that has been as a result of the changes to the budget for the project and the assumption was from the codes and clubs that that budget would now include the LED curtain. But Government has been consistent in its messaging advising them that that was never the case.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Did you, Ms Mather, have any additional information in relation to conversations that had occurred with those clubs on the provision of curtaining?

Ms MATHER: No. I think what Ms Jones and Mr Draper have said is correct, that when the decision was made to proceed with the stadium, the public announcement was also accompanied with, "This has been taken out and it would be proceeding without the curtain." That is not to say that the clubs actually still wanted it. They still value it. We understand that it is important to them. One of the things that we will be looking at is what other stadiums are doing around the country given that, as Mr Draper said, there is not one in existence in the world that has been delivered in an open-air stadium. What are other Australian stadiums doing to create that fan experience and create that differentiation between championships and club mode? Some of the interstate venues

actually have multi-coloured seats. That makes a difference. We can look at how we create better modality around the stadium by concentrating the crowds in particular areas.

We want the experience to be the best it can be. I think the other thing is that when I look at Bankwest Stadium, while Parramatta was recording lower than average crowds before, it is seeing really strong attendance at the stadium now. The hope is that the combination of some new initiatives and looking what others are doing, together with improved attendance because you are providing better facilities that people want to come and enjoy, will make a difference.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you. I hope that is able to be successful work that you are doing.

The ACTING CHAIR: It is going to have to be very successful to go from the average 15,000 at the Sydney Football Stadium to a 45,000-seat stadium.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Indeed. I suppose what I am interested in asking about is that we appreciate that the evidence is that the public statements on behalf of the Government were suggesting that there is no curtain in the provision for the rebuild of the stadium. But as we know, as there is evidence of and as you have attested to, there are ongoing private conversations happening behind the scenes about the project constantly, as there should be with these major stakeholders. One of the ways in which I think there might have been a misunderstanding is that whilst that was a public position, there were not necessarily assurances but at least indications being given privately that revisions to the project and revisions to the budget were on the cards. I want to again ask about private conversations and meetings that you or your agencies may have been having with those clubs. Was a revision of the project and revision of the budget to include a curtain part of that discussion at all?

Mr DRAPER: No.

Ms JONES: No.

Ms MATHER: No.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay. The mystery remains unresolved.

The ACTING CHAIR: Still behind the curtain.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. Mr Draper, is Stadium Australia going to be ready for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup?

Mr DRAPER: Stadium Australia?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

Mr DRAPER: I am not sure what month that is held in.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Australia and New Zealand have made a bid. I am wondering whether that is contingent on Stadium Australia being redeveloped.

Mr DRAPER: I do not know what month it is held in. I am just going to get some advice.

Mr ACHMAR: The plan is for Stadium Australia to be ready by the beginning of 2023.

Mr DRAPER: But when is the world cup being held?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I understand that it is in the middle of the year.

Mr DRAPER: Yes, it will be.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You may not know the answer to this, Mr Draper, but is Australia and New Zealand's joint bid for that world cup, which was announced here by the Premier—people may recall that Mr Sidoti fell over—contingent on Stadium Australia being ready to go?

Ms JONES: It is not necessarily contingent, but it has been included in the bid.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Mather, were there any specific events planned for the Sydney Football Stadium between March 2022 and July 2022 that have now had to be relocated because of the amended delivery date? Was there anything locked in that had to be—

Ms MATHER: No, not at this stage.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have a few more venues questions so I will quickly jump to them. They probably will not take too long. First of all I just wanted to ask about the WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong

and whether you were aware that a nationally televised basketball game was abandoned part way through because of a leaking roof?

Mr ACHMAR: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They should have used Australian steel.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: How did that happen? Is that a reflection on the assets management program or a lack of funding? It is obviously quite embarrassing. What is the cause of that?

Mr ACHMAR: That is right. On 2 February a NBL game was suspended due to a flash storm. The actual drip was very minor—it was a drip every 50 seconds. It was not great from a reputational point of view. We have engaged a roof consultant, as well as a structural engineer. They have detected the issue and rectified the issue. We are going through another period now where we are monitoring whether it has been fixed. We do regular maintenance. We take our safety and security very seriously at Venues NSW in general. There is a strong and robust safety culture. We have strong workplace health and safety management systems and crisis and emergency management plans.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are you aware of whether the roof had leaked before?

Mr ACHMAR: There was a leak prior to this incident. We did investigate and could not detect the issue.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But it has now been detected and rectified?

Mr ACHMAR: And rectified. We are going through a monitoring phase at the moment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I understand that there is a broader consultation program to look at the future of WIN Entertainment Centre. Can you give us an update on when that will be completed and when we might get a report back as part of that?

Mr ACHMAR: We are going through a precinct development plan at the moment. We have engaged with key stakeholders in the region. We are just finalising that consultation and reporting to the Government as far as the next steps in respect to a concept plan for that area.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is selling the WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong on the table as part of that?

Mr ACHMAR: Not that I am aware of. We continue to talk to the stakeholders, but I certainly have not heard any view as far as selling the entertainment centre.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Have you received any unsolicited offers for the redevelopment or purchase of the stadium?

Mr ACHMAR: Not that I am aware of, no.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think my colleague had some questions.

The ACTING CHAIR: If you are finished—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am finished on Wollongong, but I did have a few more questions.

The ACTING CHAIR: I have two further questions about coronavirus. Has NSW Health given any indication to your agency, Ms Jones, about what the triggers will be for there to be a call for the cancellation of crowds at sporting events?

Ms JONES: In terms of coronavirus and particularly our major stadia and entertainment venues, we will obviously take advice from the Chief Health Officer in relation to the next steps. So far the initial advice has been around general hygiene practices, which I am assured are in place or are in the process of being rolled out across our facilities. But should there be any social distancing requirements or things like that, we will obviously fall in line with government expectations.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Mather, have you been advised what the trigger will be to effectively say that no crowds will be gathering together at your venues?

Ms MATHER: No, but very similar to what Ms Jones has just said, the discussion with the Chief Health Officer was that the direction would ultimately come from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee. It would form a view and provide that advice to government, and then the Government would form a decision.

The ACTING CHAIR: Will that decision be made and implemented under the Federal biosecurity legislation in terms of directing sporting codes to not hold sporting events where crowds come, or is there State legislation that will be triggered?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: I will take advice but I am pretty sure that the Public Health Act would be the source of power. But I am happy to check.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is there contingency planning in place to give the necessary directions, Mr Coutts-Trotter, so that sporting facilities do not operate and gather crowds if we get to that point—I hope we don't.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: None of us hope that we get to that point. I would need to take advice on operational questions.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Mather, have there been any discussions with the trust about the potential financial assistance in circumstances where you are given a direction and you have to cancel matches, or if not matches themselves then at least public attendance at those matches?

Ms MATHER: Under these sorts of circumstances, all the contractual arrangements provide for a force majeure and this would fall into that category. So the focus, as everybody else has said, at this stage is generally on improved hygiene and awareness. I have also been collaborating with Mr Achmar as well to make sure that we have got a consistent approach across the network. So at this stage it has been about education and information—using our Internet Protocol television [IPTV] screens, for example, making sure there is appropriate signage in the bathrooms.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is it a two-stage planning process, one that the game may go on but without the crowds as the first response and only at a later stage, if you had further advice, would the game itself be cancelled? Do you know if that is—

Mr ACHMAR: We are talking to the hirers about those sorts of scenarios, but certainly no direction from the State or Federal government regarding the two stages. But we are constantly talking to our anchor tenants about those scenarios.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Jones, are there discussions going on about what the impact will be on community sports, like kids sports and the like?

Ms JONES: At this stage we would just be taking advice from the broader government around what sort of messaging and advice we would need to give out to community sporting groups.

The ACTING CHAIR: My last question is this: Has there been any discussion of a compensation package in the event that sporting codes will face significant financial losses if this happens?

Ms JONES: No, not at this stage.

Mr DRAPER: Chair, you asked me a question this morning and I said I would come back with more information. You asked me how much had been spent to date and I told you the figure for the stage one. I checked over lunchtime. The total for construction is actually \$46 million, because that includes what we spent in stage one and the commencement of works in stage two. And just for completeness, we have also spent money outside of construction contracts totalling \$18 million. So it is a total of \$64 million.

The ACTING CHAIR: And that is all part of the overall \$828 million envelope?

Mr DRAPER: That is correct.

The ACTING CHAIR: It was a \$64 million question.

Mr DRAPER: That is right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Hunter Sports & Entertainment Precinct in Wollongong, July 2017 community consultation takes place, finishes November 2017. Pretty much nothing has happened since then. When is the final plan going to be released?

Mr ACHMAR: We are finalising that community consultation. We have got about 40 stakeholders to consider. We are working with Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation in order to inform that stakeholder feedback into our strategic business case as well as the concept plan. There are a couple of things that have happened in that time as well.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am sorry, I had not finished my cup of tea so that was obviously not a fair comment and I withdraw. I appreciate things have happened, but you can obviously understand that it has

taken over two years now for the community consultation phase and, from your answer just now, it is still not actually complete. I appreciate what you have done to date, but when might we actually have a submission going to the Cabinet about this project?

Mr ACHMAR: This is a priority for us. We will have the strategic business case finalised very shortly.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Under some of the information that has been released so far, the sort of draft vision statement and those sorts of things, there is no funding attached to the project that I have seen.

Ms JONES: I can jump in there if that is all right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, please do.

Ms JONES: The community consultation process was quite extensive, as you have outlined, and there are a number of key stakeholders involved, which goes to some reasoning around why it has taken so long to collate those issues and to actually work through them. Venues NSW at the moment is in the process of preparing a strategic business case. Again, that process does take time. Once that strategic business case is finalised then they will be in a position to table that for further government consideration.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Other than very soon or as soon as possible, is there a time frame on the completion of the business case?

Ms JONES: Not at this stage. As I said, we are still working through the issues coming out of the community consultation and preparing the strategic business case.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And has funding been allocated as part of that?

Ms JONES: The funding at the moment is to the development of the strategic business case, and that is being financed through Venues NSW.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is there any funding attached—

Ms JONES: That will come out of the strategic business case.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So you are not able to provide us with information about what that figure might be?

Ms JONES: No.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is selling or leasing part of the precinct or the Newcastle Showground included as part of that business case? Is that one of the elements?

Mr ACHMAR: We are constantly talking to the showground board about how to integrate a show into the precinct plan.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And as part of those conversations is selling or leasing part of that land, or the showground in particular, part of the conversations that you are having with them?

Mr ACHMAR: I do not really understand that question. Selling or leasing? It is our land.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The showground?

Mr ACHMAR: Yes. It is Venues NSW land.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sorry. Venues NSW selling or leasing part of your land to fund the development of the precinct?

Mr ACHMAR: No.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is not part of what you are contemplating?

Mr ACHMAR: No, but the strategic business case, once finalised, there will be private as well as public investment.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But at this stage that does not include you selling part of your land to fund the development of the precinct?

Mr ACHMAR: At this stage, no.

The ACTING CHAIR: Or a long-term lease? Because a 99-year lease is effectively a sale. Is that part of what is on the plan?

Ms JONES: I think at this stage—

Mr ACHMAR: It is too early to tell.

Ms JONES: We are still going through what the community consultation process outlined, and then obviously going through a strategic business case means that you then identify what appropriate land uses, what might eventuate on the site.

The ACTING CHAIR: And will you make a strategic business case public so the community can see?

Ms JONES: Once the strategic business case has been finalised it then goes to government for consideration, and whether or not it is made public at that stage is a matter for a government.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Will the Newcastle Show remain at the Newcastle Showground as part of the master plan?

Mr ACHMAR: As I mentioned, we are talking to the board about incorporating the Newcastle Show into the plan.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is the intention at this stage?

Mr ACHMAR: That is right. We support the Newcastle Show. We give them free rent as well as a confidential sponsorship agreement.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies, I cut you off earlier. As you can tell from the nature of my questioning, the Hunter is an important part of the State, its economy is an important part of the New South Wales economy and this master plan process has been quite drawn out. I appreciate you are not able to give any kind of firm commitment in terms of when it might be resolved, although very soon. Other than there are some key stakeholders, why has it taken so long?

Mr ACHMAR: Forty different stakeholders and deciphering the feedback, that is the main reason, I guess. But, as I said before, we have been doing a few other things around the precinct as well, like the Knights Centre of Excellence that got development application approval late last year, and we are working on getting DA approval for the Newcastle hockey building there as well.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I wondered if you could give any more information just following up on the questions that I and Mr Shoebridge just asked. You mentioned that it is the intention to have public and private interests on the site. What is the contemplated nature of the private interests at this stage, if it is not selling part of the land?

Mr ACHMAR: Obviously nothing has been finalised. In order to develop the precinct into a vibrant community base there will need to be some private investment and that could come in the form of some of the assets that we are looking at with the precinct, like residential car parks. But none of that has been finalised.

Ms JONES: I was about to say that those options and the difference of developmental options will all be canvassed as part of the strategic business case process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I suppose we will wait and see on that one. I want to ask about Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre. I do not think we have had the public release of the potential sites for the Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre. Have I missed them?

Ms JONES: No, that is correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I understand that there are two potential sites.

Ms JONES: That is correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are they going to be publicly released?

Ms JONES: Yes, they will be. The closure of Myuna Bay Sport and Recreational Centre was publicly announced in December following a process of independent reports going to the integrity of the Eraring ash dam wall and the impact that it had on the existing centre. Subsequent to that decision, the Office of Sport and Origin Energy have come to an agreement around the delivery of a new sport and recreation centre within the immediate location—obviously outside of the inundation zone should the dam wall fail. But we have come to an agreement. A part of that agreement is that Origin Energy will be paying for the construction of a new sport and recreation centre. The sites that have been identified are Origin Energy-owned sites. The Office of Sport has commissioned a report that looked into the due diligence on those sites, particularly any planning constraints that might exist.

We have also developed a scope for the new centre in terms of what facilities we would like to have constructed on the new site. The process now is working out which of those sites best suits our requirements. We are working with Origin Energy on that. Once that has been determined, then we will be in a position where we can actually announce what that location is, why that site has been picked, and also work very closely with the local council, the local member and the local community around the benefits of the new sport and recreation centre for that community.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So that selection has not occurred at this point?

Ms JONES: No, it has not. It is still under consideration.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In terms of the scoping work that you did with Origin Energy, did that include a guarantee that the new site was suitable for all of the sports that were played on the former site?

Ms JONES: Yes. It was an interesting conversation with Origin Energy around the agreement that was reached. The Office of Sport was very strong in saying that it wanted a fit-for-purpose facility, recognising that a lot of our sport and recreation centres are now decades old and not necessarily up to contemporary standards or contemporary uses. That was agreed to. Instead of getting a like-for-like facility, the agreement is very clear in saying that we will get a fit-for-purpose facility.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Fit for what purpose?

Ms JONES: Fit for sport and recreation purpose. We are also looking at the overall community sporting needs of the local area and whether or not there is opportunity for a co-location on the site.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you have any information about how many beds will be on the new site?

Ms JONES: That is still a work in progress. We are looking at a similar number to what was existing at the existing sport and recreation centre, but again, with a fit-for-purpose facility, we are in the process of talking about flexible uses of accommodation. Previously accommodation was provided in dorm-style, if you like, which did not necessarily lend itself to small group uses or family uses. Again, using that fit-for-purpose mandate, we are asking for accommodation to a similar number of beds but in a more flexible configuration.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What sort of guarantees have been given to the staff of the former site that they will be able to return to work on the new site?

Ms JONES: First and foremost I want to acknowledge the role of our staff in our sport and recreation centres. They make up an incredibly important part of the Office of Sport, particularly the services that they provide to their regional communities within which the sport and recreational centres sit. Particularly for the Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre, again, as the chief executive, I want to acknowledge the disruption that that would have caused, to not only their workplace and work environment but also their personal lives and personal circumstances. For the duration of when there was the independent report for the wall, the staff remained on full pay. They had the option to return to work at a nearby centre should they choose to do so. Upon the announcement of the closure of the sport and recreation centre, the Minister, myself and the unions went up and spoke with the staff, actually just before the announcement was made, to give them that respect. It was at that meeting that I tabled the options that were available to them.

The options included redeployment to any of our other sport and recreation centre sites. There was retraining available should they choose to specialise in another area of the Office of Sport. Redundancies were also available. The sport and recreation centre staff, all of that has now been settled. The majority of the staff did choose to go down the redundancy path. I respect that choice. But for those staff who have chosen to be redeployed to other centres, they have been welcomed by those other centres. They also have the first option of returning to the sport and recreation centre at Myuna Bay or Lake Macquarie when it is finished.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Finally on that, is there any more clarity on a time frame for the announcement of the new site?

Ms JONES: I would hope that that would be very soon. Again, I want to acknowledge the role of these centres in their local communities. It is in everybody's interest to get on and build the new sport and recreation centre. To do that, though, we do have to go through a site selection process, a planning process, a planning approval process and, obviously, the construction. The sooner that we can do that the better. We have a project control group established to provide governance of the project. That project control group meets fortnightly to discuss the issues. At the moment the first and foremost issue that we are trying to resolve is site selection.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I am not fully out of questions but I do not think I have any questions—

The ACTING CHAIR: Why do we not just play through to the end.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay.

Ms JONES: Leave me on my own.

The ACTING CHAIR: I am worried about the last official. That would be a terrible situation.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr Coutts-Trotter knows it is going to be him. Was there an underspend—

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Mr Chair, is there not anyone who can go?

The ACTING CHAIR: I think we will just play this through to the end.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will push through. I have two topics left. The first is Active Kids. Was there an underspend of \$9.7 million in the Active Kids program in the 2017-18 financial year?

Ms JONES: In the 2017-18 financial year?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes.

Ms JONES: I will take that one on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Was money that was underspent on the Active Kids program reallocated to other sporting projects such as the Cricket World Cup, Institute of Sport and Commonwealth Games team apparel?

Ms JONES: Typically when you do have an underspend in projects, then the underspend is reallocated within the agency for other sporting initiatives that align with our strategic direction, if I can use that language. For the Active Kids spend, yes, there was a reallocation of some of the unspent funds for that program. It did align with Office of Sport objectives in that the Office of Sport canvasses everything from elite sport through to grassroots and making sure that funding is distributed accordingly.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Of course, an underspend in this case is a difference between the amount that was estimated, based on some assumptions of that application and take-up and what was actually the experience of the year. It is not as if there were people who had applied for vouchers who did not get them because we were holding money back. It was just a question of estimating.

Ms JONES: That is right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, I appreciate that. I checked recently on the dashboard and it says that there were 2,441,159 vouchers created so far. Does that sound correct to you, Ms Jones?

Ms JONES: Yes. I can confirm those figures and take them on notice if you like.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: From 1 July 2019 to 29 February 2020, there were 828,346 redemptions. That is based on the figures from the website. That is double the first year of Active Kids. That was from February. There is still some time to go. It may be as high as 1.2 million redeemed vouchers this year. Is that possible?

Ms JONES: Active Kids itself is an excellent government program. It is a program that is, obviously, targeted at physical activity amongst school-age children. Yes, year on year we are seeing growth in the program, which is great in terms of physical activity for kids.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, I agree. It is good to see vouchers created and redeemed. During 2019 Treasury states that there is \$291 million over the next four years. Is that figure for the funding of the project still correct?

Ms JONES: Yes, if I can just jump to where I think you might be heading, the Active Kids program is fully funded and will always be.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay, yes, you have anticipated where I am going. Firstly, does that figure include the Service NSW cost of administering the program?

Ms JONES: Yes, it does.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay, good. Obviously, I am concerned that money was reallocated in the early years when there was an underspend, as Mr Coutts-Trotter has said, simply because it was the early

stages, but now there is great enthusiasm for the project. Perhaps some of the work we discussed last year to promote the project in areas where it was not being taken up—that is all great, but I am obviously worried that the funding is not going to be there in the latter years because reallocation occurred in the early years when it was underspent and now we are exceeding forecasts. What is the assurance that you just provided based on if, indeed, it looks to exceed the funding envelope?

Ms JONES: Active Kids is a key landmark program of the New South Wales Government. The Office of Sport is incredibly proud to run that program. For us, it is a program that will be fully funded. I do not see or anticipate any changes to that stance.

The ACTING CHAIR: Will unspent funds be rolled over?

Ms JONES: If necessary that could be something that could be considered.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is good to hear.

The ACTING CHAIR: Well, no, it was, "If necessary that was something that could be considered." It is a substantial distance away from a yes.

Ms JONES: All I can say is that Active Kids will be fully funded. The source of funds, in terms of achieving that, if that means a rollover of unspent funds from previous years, if that is something that is agreed to by government then that is something that we will use.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is it not the case that the underspend for the previous years has, in fact, already been reallocated and spent?

Ms JONES: For this year we are tracking on budget or close to.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The question was: For the previous years the money that was underspent has, in fact, already been reallocated and spent on other projects, was it not?

Ms JONES: Correct, within that financial year, yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I suppose we will have to come back to this question in future years—

Ms JONES: Sure.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —if the project continues to grow and looks to exceed the funding envelope because of that. Anyway, we will come back to that. With the money that was redistributed in previous years, what was that money spent on? Where was that reallocated?

Ms JONES: That is something I can take on notice for you and give you that breakdown—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies, you finish.

Ms JONES: Because some of those unallocated funds—I mean, it is still a live situation. I can give you that breakdown in terms of where we are at and where those funds have been reallocated.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That would be useful. Was there any conversation within the office and with the department about the nature of that? That money could have been used to ease general budgetary pressures, it could have gone to elite sporting programs or it could have gone to other grassroots, kids or community sports programs. I wonder whether there was a conversation about what might be the most suitable place to reallocate that money?

Ms JONES: The allocation of those unspent funds goes to projects aligned with the Office of Sport's strategic direction.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That could be anything, though, from the netball world cup to local sports clubs.

Ms JONES: I think there is a representative spread in terms of, like I said before, the remit of the Office of Sport. We do everything from elite sport through to grassroots, and I think you will find that those funds reflect that.

The ACTING CHAIR: Talking about grassroots—women's basketball. One of the projects that I think would be very useful for promoting women's basketball would be some simple partnership programs with local governments to provide more basketball hoops. Are there any grant pools or the like that could be accessed for that?

Ms JONES: There are a number of grant programs that are run and administered by the Office of Sport that help facilitate grassroots sports and also infrastructure projects. The Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund, which we touched on before, is one of those as well as our local sports grants programs. What I do ask is that—every two years we run the Future Needs of Sport Infrastructure Study where we call out for councils and sporting organisations to give us their top 20 priorities in terms of infrastructure across the State. Not all local councils participate in that. The majority do but not all, and the same with sporting organisations, and we would encourage them to do that.

The ACTING CHAIR: When does that open?

Ms JONES: It is live so they can submit to us their needs now. At least that way we get an appreciation for what the actual demand is out in those areas.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have a couple more questions. Actually, I am getting a strong vibe from my colleagues, so I will put those questions on notice. That is fine.

The ACTING CHAIR: Are there any last questions, Ms Jackson?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, I will put them on notice.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Could I give you an answer to the question you asked earlier about the commercial offer from Industrial Deafness Australia? I have been able to go to the Seniors Card website and have a look at the privacy policy there. That makes plain that people have an option to elect to receive special offer—up to 12 offers via email if they provide an email address or up to 12 offers by post if they provide a postal address. The only time people's personal information is shared beyond using it to simply provide the core Seniors Card function is if people elect to receive special offers. I am advised that this is indeed one of those special offers. I will refer you to the website for the privacy policy but you did ask about other commercial partnerships, so I will take that to mean the firms that also provide special offers for people who elect to receive them.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, and the question of who pays for them.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The firm pays.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Using the New South Wales Government logo?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: The firm pays. In this case we did agree, clearly, to allow the Seniors Card logo to be shown. I guess that makes sense if people are electing to receive special offers facilitated by Seniors Card, then showing the Seniors Card logo on the special offer they receive makes sense.

The ACTING CHAIR: And you say you have done due diligence with those partners in advance?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, we do due diligence through, as I say, the Fair Trading function.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have a couple more questions. Is the Office of Sport aware of any conflicts of interest in relation to the Sydney International Equestrian Centre tender being issued to Barry Smith Motorsport Pty Limited?

Ms JONES: Yes, we are aware of some concerns and we have received some complaints around that process. The Office of Sport is currently undertaking a review.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Does the Office of Sport undertake due diligence before those contracts are awarded?

Ms JONES: Like I said, that process is under review at the moment. There was a procurement process that was run. That procurement process was informed by an advisory committee. The issue that you are alluding to was a potential conflict of interest around that advisory committee. I have since been made aware of that and am currently conducting a review into that process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Upon being made aware of those issues, how quickly did you initiate that review?

Ms JONES: Very quickly.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: When do you expect that might be finalised?

Ms JONES: We are working towards having initial recommendations coming out of that review finished in the next couple of weeks for that then to potentially be referred through an independent reviewer and investigator as well, should it be necessary, and then forwarded for government consideration.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Did the Office of Sport receive any correspondence from Stuart Ayres, the member for Penrith, regarding a loan to the Nepean Hockey Association?

Ms JONES: Yes, we did.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What was the nature of that correspondence?

Ms JONES: It depends on—I think there was some correspondence. If I have got specific dates then I can take that on notice and get that back to you.

The ACTING CHAIR: Could you table the correspondence with the Committee, Ms Jones? I know you do not have it now but can you do it on notice?

Ms JONES: I do not have it right now but I can do it on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I do not have the specific dates of the correspondence but if you were able to take on notice tabling that correspondence so that we could have a look at it, that would be useful.

Ms JONES: Sure, that is fine.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr Coutts-Trotter, Ms Jones, Mr Draper, Mr Achmar and Ms Mather, thank you very much for your assistance this afternoon.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.