

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 4

Wednesday, 31 August 2016

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

TRADE, TOURISM AND MAJOR EVENTS, SPORT

CORRECTED PROOF

The Committee met at 9:00

MEMBERS

The Hon. R. Borsak(Chair)

The Hon. D. Clarke

Mr J. Field

The Hon. S. Mallard

The Hon. P. Sharp

The Hon. B. Taylor

The Hon. L. Voltz

PRESENT

The Hon. S. Ayres, *Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport*

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 CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2016-2017. Before I commence I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay respects to the elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present. I welcome Minister Ayres and the accompanying officials to this hearing. The Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Trade, Tourism, Major Events and Sport. Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live by the Parliament's website. In accordance with 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 also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside their evidence at the hearing, and so I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they make to the media or any others after they complete their evidence, as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In these circumstances, witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Any messages from advisers or members of staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee's secretariat. Minister Ayres, 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. A transcript of this hearing will be available on the Parliament's website from tomorrow morning. Could everyone please turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister, 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. For all other witnesses, I ask that you each in turn state your full name, job title and agency and then swear either an oath or an affirmation. The words of both the oath and the affirmation are on cards on the table in front of you.

SANDRA CHIPCHASE, Chief Executive Officer, Destination NSW, sworn and examined

SUSAN CALVERT, Executive Director, Trade and Investment, Department of Premier and Cabinet, affirmed and examined

MATT MILLER, Chief Executive, Office of Sport, affirmed and examined

PAUL DOORN, Executive Director, Sport Infrastructure Group, Office of Sport, sworn and examined

JANETT MILLIGAN, Executive Director, Venues NSW, Office of Sport, sworn and examined

NICK HUBBLE, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Olympic Park Authority, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Trade, Tourism, Major Events and Sport open for examination. The questioning of these portfolios will run from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m. As there is no provision for a Minister to make an opening statement before the Committee commences questioning, we will begin with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, given your comment that your department has held initial market testing for private operators to run sport and recreation camps, will you confirm if all 11 camps are included in that market testing or whether Narrabeen, Lake Ainsworth and Jindabyne are exempt?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have undertaken market soundings with a number of non-government entities including not-for-profits around partnering with the Government in delivering sport and recreation services across our sport and recreation camps. We have through that market sounding explored all of those 11 centres.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, given that sport and recreation camp participant numbers increased last year by 14 per cent, their net costs were reduced and customer satisfaction was high at 91 per cent for the 73,000 children who attended them last year, why are you privatising sport and recreation camps?

Mr STUART AYRES: We are very interested in making sure that the numbers of people who attend our sport and rec camps continue to grow. We are also very, very proud of the work that happens at those centres. For a number of years now families, young children, charity groups and community groups have been utilising those centres. We want to make sure that those centres continue to be available for all of those groups—in fact, we want to make sure that they are available to more people. We think that there is capacity across those centres and that there are opportunities available for partnership with non-government entities to enhance the offering, and that is something we should consider.

I note the comments from the member about the net cost of services reducing; that is correct. Over the last four years we have taken the net cost of service down from in excess of \$7 million, which meant that these centres were running at a loss of \$7 million—just so we are clear about that. We have been able to reduce that to around \$4.6 million, so that is still a loss. Obviously, we would love to be able to get to a point where we are not running those centres at a loss, because that loss means those funds are not being directed into other forms of sport and recreation. I think there are opportunities for us to explore partnerships with non-government entities, and that is a good thing.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: The sport and recreation camps are already increasing their participant numbers by outstanding amounts and already there are huge numbers of participants. Really, Minister, it costs peanuts to run these camps—the net cost is \$2.6 million.

Mr STUART AYRES: No, the net cost of service, which is the loss that we run across the 11 centres, is \$4.6 million.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That is not what the annual report says. The annual report says it is \$2.6 million.

Mr STUART AYRES: I can say to the Committee that the net cost of service across all of these centres in the last financial year was \$4.6 million. That obviously includes all of the overheads associated with the running of these centres. We want to make sure that the sport and rec centres continue to function as sport and rec centres. I think it represents good policy; it also represents good public policy to ensure that we lower the net cost of service so the taxpayer is getting value for money and the taxpayer ensures that the maximum amount of revenue that is allocated from Treasury to this portfolio is directed to enhancing participation in and accessibility to sport. That means where I have a net cost of services in the negative, which is the case for these sectors, I will explore ways to reduce that. If I do that, I can invest those funds that are allocated to this portfolio into other sport and recreation activities.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Let us go to that. Minister, can you confirm that the New South Wales Government still intends to provide \$40 million as part of the stadium funding for rugby league development centres?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Will Brookvale Oval receive the funding offered to it during a phone call between Mike Baird and Sea Eagles boss Joe Kelly?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have made our remarks very clear regarding the centres of excellence program and \$40 million has been allocated. We are working on the development of our guidelines for applying to that fund. Those funds are available to National Rugby League [NRL] clubs in New South Wales. They will need to be matched at a minimum dollar for dollar. The dollar-for-dollar arrangements can come from a third party, so it does not just need to be the NRL clubs—for instance, a council could partner with an NRL club to access that pool of funds.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Or, say, the Federal Government, which has already offered \$10 million to Manly.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, that is a very good example of a third party.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So Manly already meets the criteria you are laying down?

Mr STUART AYRES: Manly has access to Commonwealth funds. It would still need to meet the requirements that are set down in the guidelines, which have not been released yet because we are currently finalising them. When they are released, they will be available for the public to read.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: How did you come to the idea that you need \$40 million for rugby league development centres without any guidelines?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, we have allocated funding. As part of our stadium strategy, we have allocated \$40 million for the development of centres of excellence. That was also part of the negotiated work that we did in this case with the NRL around long-term content, and that \$40 million allows for the investment into centres of excellence across New South Wales. That \$40 million will be made available to those NRL clubs but must be matched dollar for dollar.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Why did netball and rugby union miss out?

Mr STUART AYRES: Netball and rugby union have not missed out on centres of excellence. This program is targeted towards the NRL clubs. Netball Central has already been constructed at over \$27 million—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Yes, under the last Labor Government. Are you saying that rugby league has only one development centre? Is that what you are telling me?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I am not.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You are talking about one netball development centre. I am asking why netball and rugby union are missing out on this development centre funding.

Mr STUART AYRES: The netball centre of excellence had a cost of more than \$30 million—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Yes, we know, because the Labor Government funded it, but why does netball get only one and rugby league is allowed to have as many as it would like?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not think it is as many as it would like; I think it is a \$40 million fund. We are talking about allocating in excess of \$30 million to Netball Central or the netball centre of excellence, and we have provided a pool of funds to the NRL clubs for the development of centres of excellence, provided they meet our guidelines. That is \$40 million. We have an allocation of more than \$30 million to centres of excellence for netball and a \$40 million allocation to centres of excellence for rugby league.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Ten years ago we made one allocation to netball. Since that allocation, what other allocations have there been?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not think we could call it 10 years ago.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: When was it?

Mr STUART AYRES: We opened the centre a bit over 12 months ago.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: When was the funding allocated? It was allocated by Kevin Greene, was it not?

Mr STUART AYRES: All I can tell you is that the centre opened in this term of government.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Tell me this: Who is growing the events market? Is netball growing the events market?

Mr STUART AYRES: Netball is doing a fantastic job of—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Is it growing the events market? Is it expanding the games and events coming into our venues?

Mr STUART AYRES: Netball does play a number of games, of course.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: It is getting a second team, is it not? It is going to have more events, is it not?

Mr STUART AYRES: Netball will have a second team, yes.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So why is netball missing out when you are talking about a stadium strategy and growing the events market on development centre funding?

Mr STUART AYRES: It is not missing out.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You have got \$40 million. Why are the NRL people the only people who can apply? Why are netball and rugby union not allowed to apply?

Mr STUART AYRES: They are not applying because this fund applies specifically to NRL clubs. That is why we have allocated funding to the development of Netball Central. It is also why we have allocated funding to the development of the Australian Rugby Development Centre, which is currently under construction.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That is a replacement of an existing centre. Minister, what discussions have you had with UrbanGrowth NSW regarding an indoor sporting venue on the current site of Wentworth Park?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have announced that we will conduct a feasibility study as part of our Major Stadia Network for the development of an indoor facility in the CBD precinct. That feasibility study has not started yet and is due to start at the end of the year, after funds are appropriated to it. That feasibility study will consider a number of other sites across the CBD precinct. In direct discussions with UrbanGrowth NSW, it has indicated that it is interested in the Wentworth Park precinct, not exactly in the site but in seeing what facilities are community oriented and could be developed across that precinct.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So Wentworth Park is being included in the feasibility study as a potential site.

Mr STUART AYRES: Of course. It is in the CBD precinct.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Would that be with a view to building, say, a 12,000-seat indoor sporting venue?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would not predict the figure, because that would be putting the work before the feasibility study. We have clearly outlined that we believe a piece of work needs to be done to identify whether there is unmet demand for indoor facilities in the CBD precinct after the changes to sporting arrangements post the development of the International Convention Centre Sydney [ICC], which saw the conversion of the Sydney Entertainment Centre into the ICC and the development of the ICC Sydney Theatre. That theatre has a different configuration from the entertainment centre. We think that while sport facilities or sporting events could take place in there, the configuration is clearly not designed for it. We believe that indoor facility needs to be part of a feasibility study to ensure that we continue to meet the demands of both the communities and the events sector.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: In May this year, according to your diary, you met with Tennis NSW, Basketball NSW and other sporting organisations. What did you indicate to them, or what did they indicate to you, were the needs for the indoor sporting venue?

Mr STUART AYRES: Basketball at the time indicated that there was a strong need for an indoor facility in the CBD precinct, particularly after demolition of the entertainment centre.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: We know that because Phil Hudson is already on record as saying that, is he not?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, but I think it would be worth informing the Committee that I suspect the position of the Sydney Kings has somewhat changed since their ownership has changed.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Again, the media has reported that.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am sure the media has reported that. But yes, I met with Basketball NSW. It indicated that it believed there was demand for a facility in the CBD precinct. Tennis also would like to be able to access an indoor facility for tennis events in Sydney. Currently the only facility that we utilise for major tennis events is Sydney Olympic Park. It is an outdoor arena and obviously it is subject to weather changes. It is worth noting that the Apia Sydney International Tennis Tournament, which has been held here for a number of years, has been impacted by weather particularly in the past few years. That has meant that often matches have had to be played late into the night and into the early hours of the morning.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: How many tennis courts would you need to run the tournament?

Mr STUART AYRES: That is a good question for Tennis Australia.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Did you not ask Tennis Australia? You said you were talking to them about the tournament, which is currently held at Sydney Olympic Park. Again, the Government has invested in the construction of a purpose-built tennis facility. How many courts would they need to run the tournament?

Mr STUART AYRES: They would probably need at least one major facility—a show court.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Would they need 10, 12, 15?

Mr STUART AYRES: And 12 other courts.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Whatever the indoor sporting venue you would need to build in the CBD, if you wanted to shift it, it would need 12 courts.

Mr STUART AYRES: That is on the premise that you wanted to shift the tournament or you wanted to run another major event.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Right. So you are committed to running the event at Sydney Olympic Park?

Mr STUART AYRES: It is not my event; it belongs—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: They cannot do it without the 12 courts. You just said that.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, but I am not committed to shifting any event from Sydney Olympic Park.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Unless you build a 12-court facility, it is staying at Sydney Olympic Park, is it not?

Mr STUART AYRES: Or they could choose not to conduct the event in Sydney.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: But it is the Apia Sydney International Tennis Tournament, so it either stays at Sydney Olympic Park or you build a 12 court facility.

Mr STUART AYRES: Not wanting to be rude, but if we do not own the event and the facility no longer meets the standard required by the owners, they may choose to take it away.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have a follow-up question about Wentworth Park. You just indicated that the new indoor stadium would not necessarily be on the site of Wentworth Park. Are you suggesting that it would be on the surrounding green space?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I am saying that there is the old Wattle Street site that is currently vacant. I think there were discussions about it being the site of a new school, but that is not going ahead. I understand that that has also been considered. I would have thought that that site would be included in our feasibility study.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to tell this Committee that there will not be any loss of green space in the CBD as a result of your investigations about an indoor stadium?

Mr STUART AYRES: I cannot give a commitment that we will not be taking away any green space. That is the whole purpose of the feasibility study. If you do not conduct a feasibility study that explores sites across the CBD, you cannot make a good decision.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Are you aware that the Parramatta PCYC sold its Hassall Street, Parramatta, site for \$31 million?

Mr STUART AYRES: I was aware that it had the site on the market. However, I must admit that I was not aware that it had sold it, nor did I know the price.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Did you meet with John Chedid, the former mayor of Parramatta, regarding locating Parramatta PCYC on land currently owned by Venues NSW?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would have to check my diary. I cannot recall whether I met him specifically to deal with PCYC. I would have met representatives from the City of Parramatta Council about the development of the stadium. I would have to check to establish whether John Chedid was at any of those meetings.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Have you met with anyone regarding placing PCYC facilities on land owned by Venues NSW?

Mr STUART AYRES: I have definitely spoken to the chief executive officer of PCYC about requirements for many of its facilities. It has expressed an interest in being involved in the development of the Parramatta Stadium. He indicated that it had a site in the Parramatta central business district that it was looking to sell and that it would be interested in being part of that development.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Did you inform the chief executive officer of PCYC that it was the only organisation in the scope at present for inclusion in the Parramatta precinct?

Mr STUART AYRES: No.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You did not?

Mr STUART AYRES: No.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: I have a document here stating that "the CEO speaks with the Minister's office regularly and he assured him that PCYC is the only community organisation that is in the scope at present for inclusion in the adjacent precinct." Did you not have that conversation with the chief executive officer?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. I repeat what I just said: I obviously have spoken to the PCYC chief executive officer and we have indicated that community groups will be able to be part of this development. We have also indicated it can be built in as part of the design process. However, we have not given any guarantee that PCYC would be the only community group that could access the Venues NSW site.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: When you invited stakeholders to lodge expressions of interest was it the only community organisation included?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I do not think so.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: No. Can you tell me who else was included?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You have to take it on notice?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Will your Government commit to fully funding the rebuild of the Parramatta and District War Memorial Swimming Pool, not only to conducting a feasibility study?

Mr STUART AYRES: We are currently developing the new stadium at Parramatta. That stadium will be larger than the facility opened in the mid-1980s. That will require the relocation of the Parramatta pool. We have been working with Parramatta city council across a number of infrastructure assets that have been developed at Parramatta, including the relocation of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, light rail lines, and the development of the new Western Sydney Stadium at Parramatta. As part of those discussions, we have been working with the council to determine a site for the pool. We understand that the council has a preferred site on the southern end of the golf course. We will continue those discussions with the council. This is a very good example of the State Government and local government working together to ensure that we upgrade important facilities for the community. Where things are displaced because of those upgrades, we will work together to ensure that there is no loss of accessibility in the community. The Parramatta pool is a good example of that.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Will you commit to fully funding the rebuild of the pool, not only to conducting a feasibility study?

Mr STUART AYRES: This is worth saying again. There are ongoing discussions. It is about the New South Wales Government working in conjunction with the Parramatta city council. I think the council is

getting a good result out of this Government. It is getting a new Western Sydney Stadium, a new Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, and it has had significant investment in roads to make the city more accessible. It is only fair that the New South Wales taxpayers have an appropriate conversation with the council about the facilities we invest in, and where a relocation is required—as is the case with the pool—we must work together. I do not think that creates an obligation on the New South Wales Government to fund the complete relocation of the pool, particularly when ongoing maintenance and running of the pool will be a council responsibility.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You said that it will be on the southern end of the golf course. That is Parramatta Park Trust land, is it not?

Mr STUART AYRES: I said that is the preferred site identified by the council.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That is Parramatta Park Trust land.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: The trust has legislation that protects its land and that allows leases under certain conditions, does it not?

Mr STUART AYRES: I understand that, but that Act is not my responsibility.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: The Act will have to be amended because the current pool is mentioned in it. Your stadium is going over Parramatta Park Trust land.

Mr STUART AYRES: Most of the stadium is on the land allocated to Venues NSW. I understand there is a small portion of the stadium that will go within the existing park boundaries. This is part of the discussion around developing a more than \$300 million stadium on a relatively confined site. This is about taking—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: It is not relatively confined. You found enough room to put an indoor sports and recreation facility on the land, and you had discussions with PCYC about it.

Mr STUART AYRES: No.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: How much of the \$31 million received for the Hassall Street, Parramatta, site is coming back to the taxpayers of New South Wales?

Mr STUART AYRES: That is a question for PCYC.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: No, it is not. It is a question for you because you are the person who has been having discussions and who has configured the stadium in such a way that it is taking land from Parramatta Park Trust—one of the oldest public parks in the world—to provide an indoor sport and recreation facility.

Mr STUART AYRES: We have not made any commitment to provide an indoor sport and recreation facility.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: It is in your application. What do you mean by saying that you have made no commitment? You have it in your plans.

Mr STUART AYRES: We asked for expressions of interest—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You have it in your plans; it is a commitment. You have put in an application and it is there.

Mr STUART AYRES: They are expressions of interest around delivering a stadium at Parramatta.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You are doing an indoor sport and recreation facility there, are you not?

Mr STUART AYRES: We are not giving a guarantee because we—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Why did you put it in your plans?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Point of order: The Minister needs to be allowed to finish his answer without constant interjections.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Please allow the Minister to complete his answer.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Go on to the next person. We will come back to it.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Minister, when do you expect New South Wales will stop exporting coal?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think New South Wales will continue to export coal for a substantial period. It is the largest merchandise export that this State sends overseas. It is also worth noting that the coal price has

been in decline for a significant period. That will put pressure on the establishment of new coalmining facilities. Where there are a number of government backed entities that are investing in coalmines, particularly where countries are still reliant on coal as a baseload power source, there is a long-term secure position for coal coming out of New South Wales. It is fair to say that it would be good public policy if we continue to expand other parts of our merchandise and servicing exports to reduce any reliance that New South Wales might have on coal. As I said, it does take up a large portion of our merchandise exports. We should be working to expand in particular the services sector so we are not subject to significant fluctuations in the coal price.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Minister, did I hear you say it is the largest export merchandise?

Mr STUART AYRES: It is the largest merchandise export.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I was of the understanding that in the last financial year it was exceeded by agricultural exports. Are they considered merchandise exports?

Mr STUART AYRES: I am not sure what figures you are referring to.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: It is the value of those exports. I believe agricultural exports have now just exceeded coal.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am happy to confirm the figures. You might well be pooling together some agricultural services to create a figure that is slightly larger. There is no doubt though that the growth opportunities around agricultural exports are very clear and it is an area that New South Wales should be continuing to pursue vigorously.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: In Shenhua's 2015 annual results it reported:

Global demand for coal is expected to manifest a downward trend in 2016 as impacted by the slackened global economy growth, structural adjustment of energy, slow energy consumption growth and climate change. The coal supply will be excessive, and prices of thermal coal will remain low.

Do you agree that coal globally, particularly the seaborne export coal market, is in structural decline?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not know whether I would refer to it as structural decline. We too quickly jump to the phrase "structural decline" when we are talking about cycles that in many cases last decades. So over the course of the past five years if we were to argue that coal was in structural decline right now, I do not think it would be difficult for us to go another five years to find a return in coal price. There is no doubt at the moment though that there is a large supply of coal on the global market. There are significant changes in government policy in many countries that are reducing the demand for coal in some of those countries. I still see a long-term play for coal out of New South Wales, but it is not the only story.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: At the moment coal exploration and mining exploration generally are down significantly, and we have obviously just had the buyback of the licence at Carroona. Do you believe it is a cyclical decline and we will see exploration growth and mining growth in future?

Mr STUART AYRES: The market is broken into two groups when it comes to investment in coal at the moment. A number of businesses and State-owned enterprises will not want to invest in coal because of their inability to get a good return on that investment because of where the coal price is at. That will be matched by a number of people engaged in coal investments who think that coalmines will be at a very good value right now at the bottom of what most economists would call a cycle. That will encourage some people to be investing in coalmines at what would be competitive prices. They are in large part placing a bet that the coal price will return or will at least recover. As someone who oversights the trade opportunities for New South Wales, trade of coal continues to be an important trade commodity for New South Wales, but we do need to diversify.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Have you or your department been involved in conversations with representatives of foreign governments regarding the licence buybacks potentially in the Bylong Valley or Shenhua Watermark coalmine?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I have not been in discussion with the buyback at Shenhua. I have not been in discussion with people surrounding the buyback in the Bylong Valley.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Obviously you have an interest in expanding trade across the board, not just in coal. There was significant debate around the consideration for the approval of the T4 coal loader in Newcastle. Many in the community in Newcastle would have liked to have seen that port space utilised for a more general purpose. Given we have Shenhua broadly reporting a decline and we have just had the buyback of Carroona, would you like to see some of those facilities made available for more general purpose exports and imports as opposed to just coal?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. The arrangements that we have established are part of a contract. Consistent with my earlier remarks I still see a long-term export trade opportunity for New South Wales when it comes to exporting coal. The coal loader that exists at Newcastle is an incredibly well located strategic asset. It allows for the ease of movement from our coalfields, particularly those located in the Hunter region. It allows for those to be distributed at the lowest cost through an accessible port. Whilst I understand that people would like to see other access available at that port, it is largely a decision for the operator of the port.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I move on to some questions around tourism. Obviously a lot of our tourism in New South Wales is based along the beautiful coastline. There are six marine parks across our coastline. Climate change is one of the most significant impacts on the future health of those environments that people love to go, and coal is obviously a massive contributor to that. Has your department started thinking about how to prepare the tourism industry along the coast to deal with the impacts of climate change?

Mr STUART AYRES: We already consider environmental impacts for a number of the things that we do across tourism. It is important to recognise that Destination NSW is the agency whose primary responsibility is to act as a demand driver. We also work very closely with a number of government agencies around ensuring that the policy settings of this Government are advantageous towards tourism. We know that ecotourism has strong prospects for growth whether they are coastal, inland or regional—for want of a better term—opportunities. They continue to be part of our offering. We often case study regional and ecotourism offerings through our marketing campaigns. There is no doubt that internationally Australia is seen as a safe, clean and green country. That is an advantageous marketing position that we will continue to exploit. To that end I will always advocate for us to balance our positions across government to ensure that we do not make decisions that reduce our capacity to take advantage of the tourism product.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: There is a great tourism opportunity coming up in and around Sydney at the moment—the consideration by the Government of the Hawkesbury shelf marine bioregion assessment. There is a proposal out there by some environment groups for the creation of a marine park in the Sydney region. Has your department taken notice of that? Have you formed a position on whether that would be a good idea for the tourism sector in and around Sydney?

Mr STUART AYRES: I have not made any remarks or provided any commentary about that marine park assessment. I would be more than happy to meet with representatives who are proposing it and hear what they have to say.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I would like to talk about the regional destination networks. I believe a number of the regional tourism organisations created in 2011 are being replaced by destination networks. Could you give us an update on where things are at with the establishment of those regional destination networks?

Mr STUART AYRES: We announced earlier in the year that we would be creating six destination networks around New South Wales. Two of those are in what are described as Sydney surrounds—Sydney surrounds north and Sydney surrounds south. We also have a North Coast destination network, a southern New South Wales destination network, a Riverina-Murray destination network and a country outback network. We advertised for the establishment of boards and chairs for those networks as the first stage of developing the new structure. After the establishment of those chairs and boards we will then go through the recruitment and employment process for each of those networks. I can advise the Committee that we had in excess of 600 applications for the board positions and we are starting interviews for them today.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, in June 2014 your Government announced that \$500,000 would be spent on developing a Western Sydney tourism events and conference strategy. The commitment to developing the plan came out of the Government's Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan. Minister, where is the strategy?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have undertaken a series of pieces of work particularly relating to the destination networks that include the Hawkesbury, Penrith and the Blue Mountains. I have also worked closely with the Deloitte Shaping Future Cities program, which identified tourism as an important driver for Western Sydney. Beyond that, we have not developed a formal strategy document for Western Sydney tourism.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Even though you committed in June 2014 that you were spending half a million dollars on such a strategy, you are confirming today that it has not been done?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have invested in Western Sydney tourism. What we have not done—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, the commitment, very specifically, was:

Growth in Western Sydney's economy will be vital to the future economic prosperity of the State as a whole. We will support the expansion of Western Sydney's visitor economy with new funding of \$500,000 over two years to develop a Western Sydney tourism, events and conference strategy in partnership with industry.

That has not been done. Is that correct?

Mr STUART AYRES: That is correct. We have not completed the Western Sydney strategy.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you going to complete one for Western Sydney?

Mr STUART AYRES: That is the intention, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you tell me how much you have spent so far in relation to the \$500,000 commitment?

Mr STUART AYRES: I can take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In June 2014 your Government announced that a company called MI Associates had been appointed to work with Destination NSW to produce a 10-year cruise development plan for New South Wales. The announcement stated that MI Associates would partner with organisations ICK, GHK and Hill PDA in the plan's development. Did this occur?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would have to take on notice the individual companies you have referred to, but the cruise development strategy is well underway. We are nearing the final stages of that 10-year development plan. It has been an extensive piece of work. We have worked closely with cruise industry stakeholders, as well as with many other people across the tourism sector. I think it is an exciting piece of work. We see strong growth rates across the cruise sector. We do need to plan for future growth. It is a piece of work that is nearing its conclusion, but it is an incredibly detailed piece of work. When we are planning for the future of an industry over the next 10 years, I think it is important that we get it right.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, do you know that, when you first announced the development of this plan some two years ago, it was due to be completed by the end of 2014?

Mr STUART AYRES: It was not announced by me, because I was not then the Minister.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, but it was your Government and your portfolio.

Mr STUART AYRES: I can say very clearly to the Committee that a report and a strategy that outlines a plan for 10 years that comes out of a portfolio that is my responsibility is going to be thorough and is going to work for the community. It will not just be a document that meets a deadline that was definitely not set by me.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You note, though, that the first deadline of the end of 2014 was not met?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think that is self-evident if I have not released the strategy.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I also note that, in the Destination NSW prospectus for July 2015 to June 2016, the commitment to that plan said that it would be completed in late 2015. That was when you were the Minister—is that right?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You are saying that it is still yet to be completed, so the second deadline was also missed?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think it is worth noting here that this is not a piece of work that is done by Destination NSW. It is a piece of work that is done by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. But, yes, that is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Originally it was with Destination NSW, which gets me to my next question. In the Destination NSW prospectus the strategy identifies that it remains incomplete and has now been bumped to the Cities Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Is that correct?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Ms Calvert, are you able to answer questions in relation to this?

Ms CALVERT: Unfortunately, I do not head the Cities Branch.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am more than happy to answer your questions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, as you are aware, the cruise industry is incredibly important to New South Wales. The bells have been sounding from the industry for a long time in relation to capacity constraints and the increased size of the ships that are coming into our harbour. It is also incredibly important that, if they stop in Sydney, they are also able to stop in ports like Newcastle and Eden. Yet you are two years overdue with a strategy that your Government announced with great fanfare. Why is it so late?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think you have just identified a number of other ports. I think it would be a terrible decision for us to release a report that was solely focused on Sydney Harbour. I think the opportunities—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I did not think it was ever going to focus solely on Sydney Harbour. Are you saying that the original announcement was for a strategy that was just going to be dealing with Sydney Harbour?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, that is not what I am saying. I am saying that it requires an extensive piece of work to be able to identify future growth opportunities across multiple ports in New South Wales. We continue to work closely with the cruise sector. It is an appropriate decision that a policy document of this nature sits with the Cities Branch. I still oversee the development of it and I will still release it. But it will be released when it provides the information that this sector needs to grow.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Given that the strategy sits with the Cities Branch, can you guarantee that Eden port is going to get a reasonable look-in?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, I can.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Would you be able to provide the Committee with a breakdown of what has been spent in Destination NSW in relation to the development of this strategy, in particular on the contracts let to the organisations I mentioned in my first question? I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, I will take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, your department estimates that the regional business conference sector brings in about \$290 million worth of spending and \$11.6 million worth of pre- and post-conference touring and also employs around 2,300 people. In March 2015 your Government committed \$6 million to implement a four-year New South Wales regional conference strategy, due for release in May 2015. Minister, has this strategy been finalised?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, we have announced, as part of the destination networks, the creation of a regional conferencing unit inside Destination NSW. We have also allocated the funds to which you just referred to be available through the destination networks. That was part of the documentation we released. We are strongly of the view that there are growth opportunities around regional conferencing. The destination networks are structured and designed to be able to partner and work with local governments and non-government operators across regional New South Wales to take advantage of that. We have developed that regional conferencing unit to work specifically with those councils and those non-government operators, as well as the destination networks, to deliver on that commitment.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Despite a commitment to produce a New South Wales regional conference strategy that was due to be released in May last year, that has not been done?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, we have included it in the destination networks.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What you are saying is that the \$6 million to implement a plan is being implemented through the creation of more Sydney-based positions within Destination NSW?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, we are directing the \$6 million to regional communities to attract regional conferences to drive their local communities.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How many people are in the regional strategy unit?

Mr STUART AYRES: It is not a strategy unit; it is a regional conferencing unit.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How many staff are in that?

Mr STUART AYRES: I can take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is Ms Chipchase able to tell me?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will take it on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you tell me where they are located?

Mr STUART AYRES: They are located in Sydney. It is also worth noting that Destination NSW has a number of regional zone managers who work with operators in regional New South Wales across a wide range of tourism activities, not just regional conferencing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Funding for those zone managers—does that come out of that \$6 million that was announced in March 2015?

Mr STUART AYRES: No.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you be able to provide a breakdown to the Committee of the \$6 million that was announced in 2015—where that has been allocated?

Mr STUART AYRES: It is in the destination network funds. It is available by application.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But, just to be clear, there is no actual regional conference strategy as announced by Deputy Premier Troy Grant in March 2015?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have included regional conferencing as part of the destination network reforms.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But there is no actual formal written strategy as promised?

Mr STUART AYRES: If we are making government policy around having to produce documentation, then I think it—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Documentation you promised.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: A strategy you promised that is not here.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Yes, he promised he would deliver, but—

Mr STUART AYRES: I think it is fair to say that we have included regional conferencing as an incredibly important part of our reforms to regional tourism. That is why we have allocated the funding and rather than having an inordinate amount of that money allocated to a consultant to develop a strategy, we have made it available to communities who know how to run regional conferencing activities.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And staffing public servants in your unit in Sydney.

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I said that the \$6 million was made available to regional communities through the Destination networks.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: All of that \$6 million?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, we have Western Sydney, the cruise strategy, the New South Wales regional conference strategy—all of them promised, none of them delivered. What other items under your commitments made to the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan are outstanding?

Mr STUART AYRES: I understand that we have met a number of the reporting lines. I can give you, on notice, an exact figure. I understand that the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan had quite a number of reporting lines. My latest advice is that we are well through three-quarters of those Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan requirements. The figure might be higher than that. I am happy to provide that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you provide all that in detail? Given that the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan seems to be only three-quarters completed, and a number of strategies have been outlined, are you concerned that the figures relating to the New South Wales share of domestic visitors are basically declining in almost all areas?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I actually do not agree with your figures. Domestic visitors—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am drawing on the figures that are reported by Destination NSW. I am taking figures from 2011 when your Government came to office to the latest figures, which are for December 2015. The share of domestic visitors to New South Wales has declined from 34.1 per cent to 32.3 per cent over that time. Are you disputing those figures?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would have to take those figures on notice to check.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am happy to provide them for you if you like, Minister.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am happy to take them on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am reading from this document. It is clearly one of yours. In that case, will you also take on notice, and do you agree, that the New South Wales share of domestic visitor nights has declined from 30.7 per cent to 28.3 per cent since your Government came to office?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would have to check those figures.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Again, Minister, I direct you to figures from your own department. The average length of stay for domestic visitors has declined from 3.4 to 3.2. Do you also accept those figures?

Mr STUART AYRES: Once again, I would have to check those figures.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you also accept that the share of expenditure in New South Wales has declined from 29.1 per cent to 27.8 per cent as a result, one would presume, from fewer visitors and fewer nights?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would have to check those figures as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: While you are checking those figures, can you check the figures relating to day trip travel for domestic visitors, which are also down? Domestic day trip visitors are down from 32.3 per cent to 30.9 per cent.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am more than happy to take that on notice as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Expenditure, therefore, is also down from 32.4 per cent to 31.8 per cent.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am happy to take that on notice too.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, are you concerned about these declines?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think it is worth saying let me check the figures to see where they sit currently.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, these are your own figures. I am not trying to be tricky. They are on the website. If I said that I was making them up you would say, "Look on the website. They are all there." Are you committing to address the question of how you are going to arrest this decline given they are your own figures?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think it is worth noting that you have spoken specifically about domestic visitation. One of the things that we work on closely is making sure we balance both domestic and international visitation. We have made our macro commitment to ensuring that we lift or set a target of doubling overnight visitor expenditure. That is the focus of what this agency is geared towards.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You have a problem then, based on those figures?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. You have only stated domestic figures.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am happy to talk about international figures as well. We can talk about visitors and nights. This is the share relating to New South Wales compared with the rest of Australia. I note that there are some reasonable figures relating to nights and average length of stay, but I would say they would not be massive growth in meeting your commitments. I note that the share of international overnight travel for New South Wales has also declined from 50.9 per cent in 2011 to 49.9 per cent ending in December last year. Is that correct?

Mr STUART AYRES: I have to check. No, I will say this—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you not know your own figures and targets?

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You must be the first Tourism Minister who does not know the number of overnight stays for visitors to New South Wales.

Mr STUART AYRES: It is worth pointing out that those figures are continually updated. I would not want to provide inaccurate or out-of-date information to the Committee.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, these are the year-on-year figures to the end of 2015. I know there is a quarterly update where the figures now do not show the tracking across all of the years. Can you give a commitment to this Committee that the reporting will track all of the year-by-year figures, not just select a year such as 2014-15 or 2015-16 in the way that you present the information?

Mr STUART AYRES: The Committee knows that the figures—if the Committee does not know, we utilise international visitor surveys and domestic visitor surveys to track ours. It is a standard procedure that allows us to benchmark our performance against other States.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you committing to providing the year-on-year figures in your information? That is what I am asking.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You accept the information that I have given you is correct, given you seem to know so much about it?

Mr STUART AYRES: Not at today's date.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not talking about today's date; I am talking about the ongoing decline of your very ambitious targets for tourism, which are worthy but seem to be failing, and how will you address that?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not believe they are failing. If you wish to selectively choose figures that are just on domestic visitation and not talk about international visitation as part of the overall visitor economy—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have talked about international. Are you not concerned that the share of domestic travel in New South Wales for our tourist operators is declining?

Mr STUART AYRES: My focus is on ensuring that we attract visitors that will drive visitor expenditure. We talk about attracting high yielding customers, we talk about creating tourism product that drives yield. If you talk about a headline figure of share, effectively you are talking about a percentage that has little or no economic reference if you are not prepared to balance that with visitor expenditure. Hence the reason we have established a target for doubling visitor expenditure and not talking about—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You are going to struggle to meet that, based on these figures, are you not, Minister?

Mr STUART AYRES: You have once again chosen to talk about overnight stays or a raw number. You would be better looking at—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, I am talking about the percentage share of New South Wales in 2011 compared with 2016, which has been trending downwards. Is that not of concern to you, Minister?

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Even in the international market.

Mr STUART AYRES: The focus for us continues to be on attracting visitors that drive visitor expenditure, so the share in isolation does not provide a reflection of the Government's position.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Who drives regional tourism? Is it the domestic market or the international market?

Mr STUART AYRES: We would want both happening.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Who drives it?

Mr STUART AYRES: We would want—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Overwhelmingly it is a domestic market.

Mr STUART AYRES: We want both people. Internal New South Wales visitors—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That is not the question. At this point in time, who drives regional tourism?

Mr STUART AYRES: The New South Wales Government is focused on driving visitor expenditure across all of New South Wales, including regional New South Wales. If you want to cast aspersions around our capacity or our desire to work with tourism operators across New South Wales to attract both interstate—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: I am not casting aspersions. That is an outrageous claim. I am asking you which sector drives regional tourism. Is it the domestic market or the international market? It is a very simple question.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am saying to the Committee that this sector needs to grow in both domestic and visitor expenditure.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: If domestic tourism is down, where will the biggest impact be?

Mr STUART AYRES: Domestic tourism is not down. We are talking about visitor expenditure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We are talking about the share that New South Wales has compared to the rest of Australia and it is declining. Are you not concerned about that?

Mr STUART AYRES: You are referencing an overall number of people.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: A minute ago you said you were not sure about the figures. You are either sure about the figures or not.

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I said I would take them on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: They are your figures, Minister.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am saying to the Committee that this Government, since 2011, has stated consistently that our target is to double overnight visitor expenditure. If we were to bring more and more people into the State and the visitor expenditure was declining, then obviously we would be providing less economic value to the State. Our focus is about driving visitor expenditure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Has the Regional Visitor Economy Fund been fully expended so far for 2015-16?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will defer to Ms Chipchase.

Ms CHIPCHASE: No, it has not. Those funds are being transferred into the next financial year. They are not lost. They will go back into the pool.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: As an addition? You get \$7.2 million every year; is it in addition? Does anything unused go straight over the top so that the pool is bigger?

Ms CHIPCHASE: Correct. The program finished this year, but some applications were delayed and some people have not expended their funds. Those funds are just being transferred over and they are available on top of the allocations that are already there.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, you seem to have advertised a lot of positions at Sydney Olympic Park—your chief executive officer, sales executive, executive director, business events sales executive. Did Alan Marsh leave his position because you advertised his job?

Mr STUART AYRES: No.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: He did not leave his position because you advertised his job?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. Alan Marsh—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Did you advertise all the senior executive positions at Sydney Olympic Park?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. Alan Marsh has served this State in an exemplary fashion. He is an outstanding public servant. He has overseen the development of Sydney Olympic Park over a number of years. He has entered retirement. He goes with my well wishes. I have nothing but positive words to say for him. I think he has worked very well with the former chairman, Michael Knight, in seeing the development of Sydney Olympic Park over the past number of years. We will continue to see growth at Sydney Olympic Park. I have only positive things to say about Alan, and wish him well in his retirement. It was his decision to come to me and say that he wanted to spend more time with his family and enjoy his retirement. Upon telling me that he would not be seeking reappointment for his job, we advertised for that.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You had advertised that job before that point.

Mr STUART AYRES: No; that is not correct.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Mr Hubble, was your job advertised, and did you have to reapply for it?

Mr HUBBLE: No, my job was not advertised. There is a process that is advocated by the Public Service Commissioner about senior executive roles. The Office of Sport went through a process of reappointing roles.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So you had to reapply for your job?

Mr HUBBLE: I did have to reapply.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Was that just a matter of putting in an application, or did you have to do psych testing and do interviews?

Mr HUBBLE: The process incorporated a written letter of application and provision of a resume. It also involved psychometric testing and a behavioural-based interview.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: How many jobs did people have to reapply for at Sydney Olympic Park.

Mr HUBBLE: It was all senior executive roles under the new arrangements advocated by the Public Service Commission. The number was about nine roles.

Mr STUART AYRES: Just for the reference of the Committee, it is called the Government Sector Employment Act.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, you sent out a media release on 20 June 2016 advising that new members had been appointed to Sydney Olympic Park Authority board. When were these members appointed?

Mr STUART AYRES: Let me check the date. I do not have the date in my head, but I can tell you that they have all started; I was at their first board meeting.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: When were they appointed?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not have a date here for you. I will take that question on notice and let my officers find the date. I am sure we can get it to you before we finish the proceedings.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Would 1 June be correct?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will let them check the date. I do not know the actual appointment date.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, when did you advise the outgoing chair, Michael Knight, and the incoming chair John Fahey, that you had made new appointments?

Mr STUART AYRES: Michael Knight indicated to me a number of months ago that he would not be seeking reappointment in the job. So we advertised for board positions a number of months ago when Michael indicated to me that he would not be seeking reappointment. We filled his position—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You are stating to me that Michael Knight said that he was not going to recontest his Chair job and then you decided to advertise for Sydney Olympic Park Authority board members. Is that what you are saying?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. I said that we advertised a number of months ago for board vacancies that existed. When Michael indicated to me that at the expiry of his term he would not seek reappointment we appointed a new Chair.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That was because Michael Knight said that he did not want to be the Chair of Sydney Olympic Park Authority. You did not inform him, at any point, that you were going to appoint a new Chair?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. Michael had done a good job. He came to me and said that he felt that his time as the Chair had come to an end. I think this Government had reappointed him at least once. He had indicated that at the end of his term—which, I think, was 31 May or 1 June; it might have been at the end of the financial year—he would not be seeking reappointment.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Was it 31 May, 1 June or the end of the financial year?

Mr STUART AYRES: Sorry, 1 June was when they started.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: If they were appointed on 1 June why did it take you until 20 June to notify the public? Your press release is dated 20 June.

Mr STUART AYRES: They took up their roles on 1 July.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You just said that Michael Knight's chairmanship finished on 31 May or 1 June.

Mr STUART AYRES: Sorry, that is incorrect. He finished on 30 June or 1 July at the end of the financial year.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So you are telling me that they did not start on 1 June but on 1 July.

Mr STUART AYRES: That is correct. Their appointments started on 1 July.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You advertised all of these positions, so you had written applications from every member that you appointed to the board.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Every new member: John Fahey, Romilly Madew, Pippa Downes and Matt Miller—Matt is from Sport and Recreation—all made written applications for their board appointments?

Mr STUART AYRES: I understand—I am advised—that that is what has taken place.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You are advised that that is what has taken place?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, I would like to ask you a few questions about events. Why is the men's Asian Cup funded by Destination NSW, and the New South Wales Government has not come to the party on the women's Asian Cup?

Mr STUART AYRES: The AFC Asian Cup was not funded entirely by Destination NSW, but the Government did appropriate funds as part of a national endeavour to have this event in Australia. New South Wales, I understand, contributed around 25 per cent of the funds. The Commonwealth contributed around 50 per cent and other States contributed 25 per cent.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: But it is true that Football Australia has come to you about funding the women's cup, isn't it?

Mr STUART AYRES: The Asian Football Confederation [AFC] Women's Asian Cup, like any other event, will go through a standard return-on-investment process that we undertake for tourism events in New South Wales. We continue to work very closely with the Football Federation Australia [FFA] as well as with international sporting agencies.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: But it did approach you.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Did you agree to put in a bid?

Mr STUART AYRES: We are continuing to work with the federation around whether we proceed with applying for that event.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: But we are almost at the point where you have gone past that. Are you saying that you are still in negotiations with the Football Federation Australia and you may still bid for the Asian women's cup?

Mr STUART AYRES: We understand it has not been able to secure Commonwealth funds at this stage.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Yes, but it has approached you as a State to do it. It is not looking at it as a nationwide bid, is it?

Mr STUART AYRES: We will always work with sports, but they need to provide an appropriate return on investment for the New South Wales taxpayer.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Women's sport, as you know, is a growing and emerging market. I have heard you speak about how important it is to push for equality for women in sport. If the State Government does not come on board and start funding these events how is that ever going to happen?

Mr STUART AYRES: We are continuing to fund women's events. In fact, we just announced only last week that the World Rugby Women's Sevens Series will be integrated with the men's World Rugby Sevens Series. That will take place in February next year.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Are those women being paid the same as the men?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think that is a question for the Australian Rugby Union. Unfortunately, I do not pay athletes.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Isn't the point with respect to pushing the barriers, pay equality and breaking the glass ceiling about setting the standards? We know that we have an outstanding women's World Rugby Sevens team. You just said that you are going to fund an event for men and women. Shouldn't the women be paid the same as men? It is a simple question: should they not?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would love to be able to see more women getting paid more money to participate.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: No. Should there not be pay equity for these women, given that the State Government, the New South Wales Government, is going to put in the money to back this event?

Mr STUART AYRES: I would always encourage sports to pay their athletes the maximum money.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Encourage them, yes, but why do you not set that as a criterion in an event when you have the gold medallists that will be the stars of an event—that they are getting paid the same amount of money. We will come and support your event, if you give us pay equity.

Mr STUART AYRES: Are you suggesting that if Australian Rugby Union [ARU] does not provide pay equity for the women's rugby sevens, we do not invest in their event? That would be a bit self-defeating, would it not?

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: We set a standard across the State that there should be pay equity. These sports are asking for significant investments from the New South Wales Government. I am not sure that it is unreasonable for us to ask that, when these women step out on the field, they are paid the same as the men. Is that an unreasonable thing for the taxpayer to expect—that people doing the same work in the same job in the same event get the same consideration? Is that not a basic principle?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. I do not think it is unreasonable to expect it.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: All right. So the Asian Cup—you will consider funding the Asian Cup coming to New South Wales?

Mr STUART AYRES: All events are assessed on their return-on-investment criteria.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So you do not take into consideration emerging markets and where women's sport is going as part of the criteria?

Mr STUART AYRES: When it comes to investing tourism dollars—we are not talking about sport—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: We are talking about events dollars.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, well, events dollars is tourism dollars in New South Wales, particularly when it is funded through Destination NSW. We base our investments on a return-on-investment requirement.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: What was the return on investment on the beach volleyball at Manly Beach?

Mr STUART AYRES: I can provide that figure to you.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: I mean, that is how you are basing it.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes. We run a rigorous commercial approach to what events we attract to New South Wales, which is about driving visitor expenditure. We benchmark our investment against what we believe visitor expenditure will be.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: And some events you get because you have a standing within those international communities about a commitment to equity and diversity. Is that not true?

Mr STUART AYRES: I have no doubt that our commitment to diversity and equity across sport makes New South Wales an attractive proposition for many locations.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Minister, I would like to bring us back, if we could, to the regional destination networks. You had just started to let the Committee know that you had advertised for the establishment of the boards and chairs. Could you continue to let me know where we are up to with the establishment of those networks? Have those chairs now been appointed and have the boards been appointed?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, they have not been. That process is underway. I understand the first round of interviews is taking place later today. I do not know whether Ms Chipchase wishes to offer any further information on that.

Ms CHIPCHASE: That is correct. We are also working at a time line for, once we get the chairs, then to do interviews for the board positions. If you have a look at our destination network brochure, we have a time line in the back around getting destination management plans together, business plans and budgets, and working on communication strategies with local stakeholders. But through this whole process we are still ensuring that with things like our Regional Visitor Economy Fund, groups can still apply for that. They can apply for funding for their regional flagship events and, of course, if they have major event opportunities, they can still apply for that. The world does not stop because of the destination networks. We need heads on beds every night.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I understand that the time line for the first six months that is in the brochure is that there is quite a lot to do in those first six months. The first point is to get the expressions of interest out for the chairs and board members and directors.

Ms CHIPCHASE: Which we have done.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You are going through that process right now. Do you think you will be able to complete that first six months program by the end of the year?

Ms CHIPCHASE: We always have stretched targets in this organisation. The Minister has made it very clear that he wants this moved as quickly as possible, so it is all hands on deck to make sure that we are delivering what we have said we will within that time frame.

Mr STUART AYRES: There is no doubt it is ambitious. I think we should be really up-front with that. We have taken what was a system that was struggling to function in the regional tourism organisation [RTO] networks and we have replaced it with a complete reform of regional New South Wales. We have set an ambitious time line to have it fully functioning but I have confidence that we will be able to do that.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How much has been allocated to pay the chairs and directors?

Mr STUART AYRES: We announced a package of around \$43 million across a number of different areas that included payments or remuneration for the members, the chairs and the boards and also included the Regional Conferencing Fund. It also includes the Regional Visitor Economy Fund. Around \$43 million is allocated to the destination network structure.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Is there a breakdown available that shows how much—

Ms CHIPCHASE: You asked a question about the chairs and the board directors. It is in the expression of interest [EOI]. It is \$20,000 per annum for the chairs and \$10,000 for board directors. We also have a small allocation for each of the destination networks because of the scale of them to cover some modest travel expenses. Obviously, we are expecting that the meetings will be held in the regions.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How will the \$43 million be broken up across the different network areas?

Mr STUART AYRES: I was explaining that to you just a bit earlier. We have allocated through our funding of the board structures as well and through the work that we did on the review of RTOs. One of the most significant required improvements was the professionalisation of the board structures and improved governance. We wanted to make sure that we removed, effectively, what might be described as vested interests that had started to engage across a number of these areas. One of the things that came out through the board of Destination NSW's review was remuneration for the board. That was about driving quality governance and driving a higher standard of people who apply to these boards.

We recognise across the large terrain or the vast expanses that are covered by many of these areas that you have to make this an attractive proposition beyond people's passion. I am still constantly surprised by just how passionate people are in regional New South Wales about their tourism products, but their passion only goes so far when they have to balance travel, family and their personal business. We also have allocated funding to the Regional Visitor Economy Fund. As part of that package we have allocated operational funds to sustain each of those destination networks, so that was another component to come out of our review, or the boards' review, which recognises that the previous RTOs often did not have a sustained operational model. They were constantly applying to the Regional Visitor Economy Fund [RVEF] to be able to sustain their own operation.

What we have done is fund each of those destination networks with a set figure that allows them to employ operational staff. An executive officer or a chief executive officer has a marketing or business development role as well as an administrative support person. Rather than having the old RTO model where the RTO spent more time working on itself and sustaining itself, these destination networks are moving more towards the destination management role and are partnering with, or working with, operators and local governments.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Has that breakdown of the operating allocation been made?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes. It was in our destination network documentation that we distributed publicly.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That is fine. In the document that you mentioned before, you talk about working with the RTOs to conclude any current projects and go through the transition, and that meetings have been held this month and last month. Has all that been concluded? Are they wound up now, or are they still operating, including for this?

Mr STUART AYRES: No. RTOs continue to function until they are replaced by destination networks. There are some RTOs that have wound up. Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism wound up over 12 months ago. Effectively, it went into voluntary administration. Inland NSW has also gone into a voluntary administration arrangement. It is probably fair to say that the Hunter arrangement, whilst not in any formal administration period, the previous chair publicly announced—and I think this is the phrase that he used—that it would be in dormancy. So it did not function in any practical fashion, but it had not breached any solvency position. They had already started to wind up. I think there was one other RTO that employed a 0.5 full-time equivalent [FTE], so the sustainability of that was in question. They will continue to function. RTOs will have the choice to wind up and no longer continue to function or, in certain circumstances, to continue to operate as a local tourism organisation. Given the size of the destination networks, we want diversity of product across those networks. Existing RTOs that maybe have a smaller area could easily continue to function as a local tourism organisation, or LTO.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Minister, I turn now to Aboriginal tourism. We have reached the end of the implementation period for the Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2013-2016. Is the evaluation of that plan's implementation complete? On the website you can see the last two years of reporting. Will a final report be done, or how is that proceeding?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, we will do a final report. My latest update was that 23 of the 26 recommendations were either ongoing or had been completed. It is an important role for us to continue to integrate Aboriginal tourism into many of the things that we do, not just in a regional setting. I think it is worth recognising the fantastic role that Aboriginal artists play, particularly in this year's Vivid Sydney. They were front and centre, particularly with the Songlines development on the Sydney Opera House. I think that Aboriginal tourism is an area that we need to continue to explore and work more closely with tourism operators. There will be many smaller operators that will want to seek support from Destination NSW. We want to support them in a way that allows them to grow their business, particularly in marketing offerings. We think there are opportunities, particularly through our international networks and interstate advertising, to showcase our tourism operators that have a strong focus on Aboriginal tourism. In my conversations with people internationally, there is definitely an appetite for wanting to understand more about Aboriginal culture. That should be reflected in the way that we promote New South Wales.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: When is the final evaluation on the 2013-2016 plan likely to be available?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not have a date for you, but I can provide a more appropriate date on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Will a subsequent plan be developed for 2017 onwards?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, we are currently undertaking our next strategic directions work. I think the board has a strategy meeting coming up in the next month. I have spoken to the chairman and the CEO about having Aboriginal tourism as a key focus for Destination NSW's work going forward. I expect that we would be updating or embedding Aboriginal tourism into most of the things that we do across Destination NSW.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: So possibly not a new plan, just embedding some elements of the plan into other plans?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes. I think that the need to always have a separate document or a separate strategy sometimes defeats the purpose when you want to make the Aboriginal tourism offering a part of so many of the things that we do across New South Wales.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It allows you to dump previous commitments, too, Minister.

(Short adjournment)

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Going back to women's sport and women's events, is it true that your decision not to contribute \$2 million to secure the Rugby League World Cup means the Jillaroos missed out?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, that is not correct. I understand that the Rugby League World Cup is still considering what it is doing with its women's tournament. The only thing I understand that it has committed to at this stage is hosting the women's grand final of the World Cup at the same location as the men's, which is Brisbane.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: But your agreement, which was withdrawn, was to secure the Women's Rugby League World Cup alongside two men's games, was it not?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, we do not have an agreement with the Rugby League World Cup—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: No, you do not, because you withdrew it.

Mr STUART AYRES: We negotiated with them and at the end of that negotiation we believed that what was being offered for the price that they sought was good value for the taxpayer. New South Wales has two events that are part of that Rugby League World Cup—in the men's tournament, because I understand the fixture for the women's tournament has not been settled. The men will have two games here at Allianz Stadium over the course of that event.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: The Asian Football Confederation Women's Asian Cup and the Women's Rugby League World Cup have not been secured by the New South Wales Government, and we have one World Rugby Sevens tournament for women. Is that correct?

Mr STUART AYRES: We also had the Netball World Cup located here. As I have said, we have just announced the sevens, which will be part of that tournament. We have worked extensively with other sports, including cricket, to enhance their programs. We are also doing regional work with Cricket NSW, particularly taking some of their Big Bash League teams which include a women's Big Bash team, to regional New South Wales, and we will continue to work with sports on utilising events to promote accessibility to sport for women. But when it comes to tourism events, we fund those events based on the capacity to return an investment for the taxpayer.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Does rugby league not return an investment to the taxpayer?

Mr STUART AYRES: We did not think the proposal that was presented to the New South Wales Government for the Rugby League World Cup represented good enough value against other events.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So the only criterion you are going to put forward for women's sport is return for money.

Mr STUART AYRES: No, that is not correct. I just said "for events".

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: For women's events. Is it value for money?

Mr STUART AYRES: When we are investing money from the Destination NSW budget into events, one of the key requirements, if not the key requirement, that we allocate those funds for is the capacity for that event to drive visitor expenditure. We will invest in or support women's sport like we support accessibility in other sports and investment in infrastructure for a whole host of reasons but, when it comes to tourism events, that is the primary function: Driving visitor expenditure.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Have you secured where the Sydney 500 V8 Supercars street race will be held in 2017?

Mr STUART AYRES: The V8s have announced that they will not be continuing at Sydney Olympic Park, and they have not yet released their final fixture for the 2017 year.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: But you would have been in discussions with them.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, we have been in discussions with them. They currently have the Supersprint at Eastern Creek, and they are exploring a number of sites around the country for the final round of their 2017 season. We will continue to work with them, but they have announced that it will not be at Sydney Olympic Park.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: I know they have announced it will not be at Sydney Olympic Park, but I know Newcastle is an area that would greatly like to get it. Have you had any discussions with them about taking the street race to Newcastle?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have obviously been in discussions with V8 Supercars around continuing that event in New South Wales. That event has to represent value for money for the taxpayer, and we have encouraged the V8s to consider locations outside Sydney.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Is one of those locations Newcastle?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, I think we can safely say that.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Are there any locations other than Newcastle?

Mr STUART AYRES: I understand that they have looked at other sites like Wollongong and Gosford, and we have encouraged them to not close their mind to non-Sydney-based locations.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Gosford has been ruled out, has it not?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think they had some challenges around identifying the right track, but I think the fixture for the V8s belongs to the V8s. We will continue to work with them, but where they choose to put their races is a matter for them.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: How are we going in securing Socceroo games for Newcastle?

Mr STUART AYRES: We have a partnership with the Football Federation Australia [FFA]. That is a partnership that allows us to have Socceros matches, Matildas matches and Olyroos matches. It is a partnership that reflects both the demand for driving events activities, which is Socceros, and also supporting some of the growth components of football, which includes supporting the Matildas. I can safely say to this Committee that I am not sure there is any other State around the country that has created a multi-year partnership with the FFA that supports not just the Socceros but also the national women's team and the national youth team.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That is good, but I am asking you whether you have secured a game for Newcastle, which I heard David Gallop say would be a suitable venue.

Mr STUART AYRES: The Newcastle stadium is a very good venue. It is incredibly well run by Venues NSW, and it has hosted a number of matches in the Asian Cup through the course of those games that we secured in our partnership with the FFA. We have not locked those games into various venues. A lot of them are World Cup qualifiers and international matches where we do not know who the Socceros are playing against. I have a principle that is largely about putting the right match into the right venue, and we will continue to work with the FFA around making sure that we have got those Socceros, Matildas and Olyroos matches going to appropriate venues, often based on their opponents.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: What Matildas matches have you secured for this year?

Mr STUART AYRES: I can take that on notice. I might get someone to grab the partnership details, and I can give you the details for each of the years that we have secured games.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, it was reported that you put yourself into the process of negotiations between the Australian Football League [AFL] and ANZ Stadium to get the AFL a better financial outcome if the Sydney Swans were to play the Greater Western Sydney Giants in Sydney. What were the terms of that better financial outcome?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, the AFL has announced that Sydney Swans finals that are not against the Giants will be held at the SCG and Sydney Swans finals that are against the Giants will be held at ANZ Stadium. The AFL had an existing agreement with ANZ Stadium. Any agreement to change that is a discussion between the board of ANZ and the AFL.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Was Andrew Wu incorrect when he stated that you had been involved:

... NSW Sports Minister Stuart Ayres played a hand in ensuring a deal was done ...

Mr STUART AYRES: I think it is fair to say that only the ANZ board and the AFL can sign off on that agreement.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Yes, I know that, but did you have a hand in it?

Mr STUART AYRES: I am not sure what "a hand" means.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: I just read Andrew Wu's column, which states:

It's believed NSW Sports Minister Stuart Ayres played a hand in ensuring a deal was done between the three parties...

That deal was a much better financial outcome for the AFL. Did you have a hand in that?

Mr STUART AYRES: I am not sure where the financial arrangement comes from.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You had no discussions whatsoever with ANZ Stadium or the AFL about that final series?

Mr STUART AYRES: No, I spoke with the chair of ANZ. She kept me abreast of the negotiations that took place between the AFL, the Sydney Swans—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Did you proffer a view to her?

Mr STUART AYRES: I indicated that commonsense would be a good thing to utilise. There was obviously an appetite for the Swans to be able to play games at the Sydney Cricket Ground [SCG]. However, the arrangements for the finals are for the AFL to decide, and it had an existing contract with ANZ Stadium.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: And they got a much better outcome after you proffered a view to the chair?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not know what you mean by a "better outcome".

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: The Swans would have had their home ground advantage diluted if they had played at ANZ Stadium.

Mr STUART AYRES: The Swans are playing at ANZ Stadium.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: They needed to break the contract, and the negotiations meant that they secured an early release from the finals agreement with ANZ Stadium.

Mr STUART AYRES: They have an agreement. The AFL had an agreement with ANZ Stadium and it has struck an agreement with ANZ Stadium to facilitate Sydney Swans matches against GWS being played at the SCG. I understand that the AFL and ANZ Stadium have made a public statement indicating that members' rights at ANZ Stadium will be honoured at the SCG. I think they facilitated a ticketing arrangement should that take place. It is worth noting that regardless of the result on the weekend there will be a match at the SCG.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Who will win?

Mr STUART AYRES: I am barracking for the Giants.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You have upset only half of Sydney.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am proudly from Western Sydney.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Have you ever been briefed in relation to the key performance indicators applied to international trade officers?

Mr STUART AYRES: The key performance indicators?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are there key performance indicators in relation to international officers?

Mr STUART AYRES: We measure activity and the engagements of our international officers. We keep a record of the foreign direct investment facilitated by those officers. Where possible—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is that foreign direct investment something they participated in rather than any foreign investment that happens?

Mr STUART AYRES: That is correct. We keep a record, as closely as possible, of foreign direct investment that is facilitated through our international office network.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How do you define "facilitated"?

Mr STUART AYRES: Where we have had activity engagement—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is that meetings—

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, meetings and introductions between the investor and the business in which they are investing. I am not claiming that we could say that every dollar invested in New South Wales is facilitated by that international network. The Australian Bureau of Statistics keeps the statistics for foreign direct investment, and we would refer to that. However, we keep as accurate a record as possible of the work in which we have direct engagement. I think our value reaches far beyond that through indirect engagement as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is the figure for foreign direct investment as a result of facilitation through those officers publicly available?

Mr STUART AYRES: I am not sure whether it is public. I can provide a figure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I would like a breakdown for each of the officers. I am happy for that question to be taken on notice.

Mr STUART AYRES: I can provide the figure for what we generate through direct engagement by international officers.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I would also like the breakdown, not only the global figure.

Mr STUART AYRES: If that is possible, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But you are telling the Committee that there are no specific key performance indicators. There is a measure of activity and there is net—

Mr STUART AYRES: We measure the foreign investment and we are also able to point to individual trade opportunities generated by the work of our international team. A good example of that would be beef exporters in regional New South Wales being able to find a new location to export their beef, or it could be—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is if they have gone directly through the trade office?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Has there been an evaluation of any or all of the international officers?

Mr STUART AYRES: What do you mean by "evaluation"?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How are the international officers evaluated?

Mr STUART AYRES: We regularly conduct our own interviews and discussions with our officers to recognise—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When you say "we", who does that?

Mr STUART AYRES: Susan Calvert and her team. We also—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you participate?

Mr STUART AYRES: I talk regularly to our international office team. Do I do the individual performance appraisals? No, I do not.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But there are individual performance appraisals for each officer?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes. We undertake an annual assessment of what each officer has been able to produce in the way of activity, meetings, trade deals and foreign direct investment.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Minister, you agree that one of the uglier sides of sport is people who do not show any respect for referees. I tell the under-12 team I coach that the only way referees can learn is to referee. They will make mistakes in the process, but they should always be shown respect. Are you concerned that the constant criticism directed at referees by people in the major codes is a poor example for children?

Mr STUART AYRES: The major sporting codes have taken a particularly strong stance on criticism of referees and umpires.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Really?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will provide an example. If someone from a club criticises an NRL referee in the public, the club can be fined up to \$10,000.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: How many criticisms did Michael Chieka make in the past week?

Mr STUART AYRES: I must admit that I have not noticed Michael Chieka's comments about the referees involved in the game in New Zealand. However, I encourage all people involved in leadership positions in sport to recognise that competitive sport can take place only if someone can officiate the game, whether it be a referee, an umpire, a timekeeper or a linesperson. Those people are an integral part of the sports community. We cannot participate in fantastic levels of community and professional sport unless those people continue to perform those functions. They should be respected and applauded for the fantastic work they do. We need to ensure that at every opportunity we consider our criticisms. Questioning a decision that has had an impact on the match is often part of our sporting culture. However, when we do level a criticism we must recognise that officials are as important to the sport as any athlete or coach.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: When was the last time you publicly reprimanded a professional coach for criticising a referee?

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not believe I have publicly reprimanded a professional coach for talking about referees.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Will you run a campaign to stop this behaviour?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will always encourage those involved in sport, whether it be international sport, a national sport, or a local community sport, to continue to build a positive culture with regard to referees and officials. Where it is appropriate for me to make comments about that, I will always do so.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: How are you monitoring Working With Children Checks in sporting organisations?

Mr MILLER: We have been looking initially in our response to the royal commission with regard to internal policies and our sport and recreation centres. We have established that those procedures are sound. We have launched a program of performance audits internally with our own businesses. We run a series of programs with sports and sports talks where we bring to their attention the importance of doing appropriate checks. We recently held one of those in June or July this year. Moving into 2016-2017 the intention is to do some performance auditing of what actually happens between State sporting organisations [SSOs] and the clubs.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: So the reality is you do not know whether coaches have done their Working With Children Check or not.

Mr MILLER: We do not know whether the sports have actually done any performance audits of their sports.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You would not know whether a person out there that is required to have a Working With Children Check has actually had it done, would you?

Mr STUART AYRES: The obligation here is on each of those incorporated entities to meet the guidelines that have been set out by sports. The Office of Sport works very closely with State sporting organisations around establishing good governance practice. Included in that good governance practice is ensuring that they understand the requirements around Working With Children Checks. We also have a number of programs including things like the Play By The Rules program that is about changing or tackling behaviours such as violent behaviour in sport. We work closely with the SSOs. The Office of Sport does not oversight every individual involved in community sport in New South Wales.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: I know the office does not oversight it, but how do you know that the checks have been done? Do you get a report of how many Working With Children Checks have been issued for sporting organisations?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Mr Field?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you, Chair. Minister, I want to finish off the questions in regard to Aboriginal tourism. You mentioned the plan going forward is that it might be incorporated into other elements of tourism planning. One of the key issues of the parliamentary inquiry into tourism in local communities identified that the 2013-2016 plan should specifically address skills development for Indigenous tourism. I believe the Government supported that recommendation. What evidence do we have that the 2013-2016 plan helped build skills in this area?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will take on notice the reporting arrangements out of that individual plan to see whether there are any specifics that I can relay to you. I agree with you that skills requirements around tourism will continue to be an important challenge for us to meet. I am not sure whether Ms Chipchase wants to offer any comment.

Ms CHIPCHASE: Sure. Before the plan started we only had about five Indigenous tour operators in New South Wales that had export ready product. Because of the plan we now have 22 and that number is growing. One of the activities that has really worked has been the peer-to-peer workshops that we have put together where we have Indigenous tourism operators with perhaps more mature product that is export ready. We facilitate the workshops and then they mentor other businesses that are perhaps just starting out or even people who are just contemplating whether they go into business or not. It has been a great way to build professionalism, capacity and capabilities particularly in regional New South Wales.

We also do a series of workshops called NSW First. What we have done there is bring tour operators on to talk more generally about the fact that an Indigenous experience is basically in everybody's backyard. In New South Wales we have the largest Aboriginal population in Australia and we have fantastic artwork, both traditional and contemporary, right across the gamut of Aboriginal culture; tapping into that and making sure that it is in the destination management plans. Something we referred to earlier was the fact that it is great to have a separate plan, but it needs to be integrated.

When we are putting together the destination management plans for each of these new destination networks, Aboriginal tourism will be in every single one of those and, again, there will be action plans around it. We do not just want to talk about it; we want to be able to deliver it. That is why building these plans—and building the number of operators that we can include in international tour wholesaler programs, media

familiarisation visits and travel buyer familiarisation visits that we organise—is incredibly important to making sure that we are driving business, but also that the local areas are ready for the business.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Can you explain what you mean by "export ready"?

Ms CHIPCHASE: Sure. In order for New South Wales products to be sold internationally they have to have a commission structure for wholesalers and also for retailers, and they operate at different percentages. They also have to be able to take bookings online. Sometimes, depending on the size of the , they will have to have a general sales agent and also an online booking system to be able to handle the bookings. To become export ready means that they can manage the bookings in foreign currency and that they have an online booking system that means that they can access the international markets.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That seems like a very high bar for a tourism operator to reach. There is a lot of tourism activity that is not required to be export ready to provide a significant experience for domestic tourists, local tourists or even international tourists who are in Australia. They do not need to reach that.

Ms CHIPCHASE: Correct.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Are there any other skills development programs that are not focused on export ready?

Ms CHIPCHASE: Absolutely. Our NSW First Workshops are practical and hands-on. We have started doing webinars. A lot of our tourism operators are small business enterprises so they cannot get away from their business—they are busy operating the business—but what they can do is log on, have a look at the webinars and get their information that way. We do hands-on, practical courses by people in the regions—for example: how to get more PR for your product, service or destination; how to get on our websites and get connected; how to upload your information; how to use the internet; and how to become China ready. There are all sorts of opportunities. As the Minister mentioned, we also have zone managers. These are individuals who can sit with the operators in person, in region, at their business and assist them.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Are these specific to Indigenous skills development? They seem like they are quite generic programs.

Ms CHIPCHASE: As we said, with Indigenous skills development what we find works best is an Aboriginal tour operator talking to another Aboriginal tour operator about the lessons learnt. That has been really productive. We had a meeting two weeks ago about the next steps for us and also what we can do in the way of video footage and photography to help them have better sales tools to sell with.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How many face-to-face meetings of that sort do you think have happened in the past 12 months—

Ms CHIPCHASE: I would have to get you the number.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: —where there is an Indigenous mentor in tourism with an operator who might like to grow or an organisation that might like to develop a tourist product?

Ms CHIPCHASE: There are formal tourism workshops and then there is the one-on-one. I do not have the exact figure. There is usually one workshop every quarter and then other meetings are every second month. But then it is constantly on the phone and meetings.

Mr STUART AYRES: I will give you an example of a recently announced tourism product: Sydney Zoo at the Western Sydney Parklands. It has announced a formal partnership with Muru Mittigar, which is an Aboriginal organisation based in Western Sydney. It will bring on trainees through Muru Mittigar as part of an Aboriginal employment program to run at Sydney Zoo. It is also worth recognising the role that individual organisations play as part of meeting an Aboriginal offering that they see as a value proposition for their tourism business. That is where we should be focusing a lot of our effort. The Aboriginal offering as part of every tourism business is a selling point unique to Australia. No-one else can offer that. The capacity to integrate or demonstrate value for businesses to take up Aboriginal training opportunities and training engagement, facilitating connections with training providers like Muru Mittigar, is an area that we can continue to do work on.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I got the sense in the report recommendations that it was more about skilling up Aboriginal operators in their local region with their local product, operated by local Indigenous people. That seems quite different to the zoo product. Not to take away from its value in skills development for Indigenous communities and offering Indigenous product, but it seems there is a bit of a disconnect integrating it into those bigger products versus delivering those skills on the ground, having locally operated and organised products.

Mr STUART AYRES: I think this is the value of the destination networks. The previous RTO model never provided the time or the flexibility for those RTOs to be able to work more closely with tourism operators on how to enhance their product or how they would develop their destination management plans. The destination networks are able to work across a multitude of operators, whether they be local governments, training providers or tourism operators themselves. The network structure provides an opportunity for us to identify, in each of those nuanced locations, the areas where we can get maximum advantage. I think Aboriginal tourism will be part of that in almost all of those locations. But I think it is worth recognising that there will be competitive advantages, for want of a better term, in certain locations where you can put those partners together and get a very high-quality outcome. That might exist more frequently in certain locations than it does in others.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I would like to follow up on that. One of the much discussed selling points was having a national centre for Indigenous art and culture at Barangaroo. That was to be based in the Cutaway. What discussions has your department had on that and is it going to become a reality?

Mr STUART AYRES: I understand that discussions are still going on about what will take place in central Barangaroo. The long-term future of the Cutaway is, I think, largely a part of that. It has always been indicated that an Aboriginal cultural offering or centre should be a part of the development of Barangaroo. I am broadly in agreement with that view. I would want to see a little bit more detail, particularly on how it would function and how it would run. The Cutaway is an incredibly unique facility and one that perhaps we did not quite have a great understanding of until it largely became available, so I think we need to make sure we evaluate all of the opportunities for the Cutaway as Barangaroo continues to develop.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But you agree that there is an incredible opportunity, with Barangaroo, to have a centre specifically dedicated to Indigenous tourism, stories and art as part of our tourist offering?

Mr STUART AYRES: There is no doubt about that. There is a strong opportunity available for us to be able to tell the Indigenous story, and having it located in a place that is so important to the Aboriginal community would, I think, be a good thing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, is any funding provided to the roller derby leagues across New South Wales? It is sport, so maybe Mr Miller or Mr Doorn can tell us?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will take it on notice. One of the things that I will also look at is whether they have received funding through the Community Building Partnership program—which is where I suspect they may well have received funding from.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I appreciate that. There are leagues on the Central Coast, in the Illawarra, Western Sydney, the inner west and the Blue Mountains. It is a growing sport and there are particular considerations around finding appropriate flat tracks. Would you be able—I am happy for you to take it on notice—to provide any information on support you have provided or about discussions you have had with the roller derby leagues about supporting this growing sport?

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, I will do that. I have spoken to representatives of my own constituency who participate in roller derby.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, are you able to outline what work Destination NSW is doing with the National Parks and Wildlife Service specifically in relation to getting more tourists into national parks?

Mr STUART AYRES: I understand that National Parks run their own tourism activities. We work quite closely with them on coordinating product and marketing opportunities. Ms Chipchase, do you want to offer any more specific detail?

Ms CHIPCHASE: We are working with them on looking at things like joint shoots for drone footage—because, obviously, we want people to see where they are, how pristine the parks are. There has been some discussion about making sure that, if there is increased public access, there is more interpretative signage—so, when people are going into an area, there is signage telling them about the history of the vegetation and the local habitats. National Parks have also done a lot of work on their website so that people can book. Sometimes they have small cabins in various parks. The aim is to make sure that more of the general public know about them so that they do not just keep being booked by the same families every year—so that there is wider access to them. We would also like to see more trails.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When you say "trails", what do you mean?

Ms CHIPCHASE: I mean walking trails. In many other States across Australia there are walking tracks through national parks. They have to be safe, and of course they cannot damage the environment. But you cannot learn to respect the environment if you have no access to it and cannot understand how beautiful it is.

They are working with school groups, looking at what we can do in the way of access—but also information. People need to understand when they are open—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I wanted to ask you about the interpretive signage, which is important. Who is responsible for the interpretive signage?

Mr STUART AYRES: National Parks.

Ms CHIPCHASE: National Parks, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Only National Parks? You have no role in writing the interpretive signage?

Mr STUART AYRES: I think the easiest way to answer that is to say that I understand National Parks and Wildlife are developing their own tourism strategy. We have been working with them on that. I understand it is something they are looking to release early next year. My assumption is that things like signage will be an important part of that strategy. We will obviously provide input, particularly from a consumer perspective, based on the information we have around what drives good activity, through our visitor survey figures and through information obtained from domestic and international surveys around what visitors might wish to explore.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We know from the surveys—I am talking about international visitors in particular at this point—that they like nature. They like nature a lot. I am interested in other-language interpretation of our natural environment, whether you are actively pursuing that through that strategy.

Mr STUART AYRES: There is no doubt that our engagement with National Parks in the development of their tourism strategy will be about making sure that they make their product available to international tourists, and language is an important part of that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In the development of that strategy has there been discussion about further commercialisation of assets within national parks?

Mr STUART AYRES: That would be a decision for National Parks.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You do not have a view about it?

Mr STUART AYRES: Not immediately. I would want to look at it on a case-by-case basis.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister. I note that you have taken a number of questions on notice. You have 21 days to respond to them. Thank you very much for attending today.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.