



# Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid

**Hearing Date: 27 February 2024**

**Questions taken on notice**

**Directed to:** City of Greater Bendigo, Andrew Cooney

**Received Date:** 14 March 2024

1. **Joe McCracken, page 31**

**Question Asked:**

Okay. Did the city of Bendigo make a contribution to the Shepparton bid at all?

**Andrew COONEY:** I believe we did. That was before my time, but yes, I believe we were involved in that bid.

**Joe McCracken:** Do you know how much it was?

**Andrew COONEY:** No.

**Joe McCracken:** Are you able to take it on notice and get us some information about that – like when, how much and that sort of thing?

**Andrew COONEY:** Yes.

**Response:**

The City provided a contribution of \$6,000 toward the prefeasibility for the 'Shepparton' bid. I have attached a letter from the Mayor at the time, Cr O'Rourke which confirms this (Item 1).

2. **Joe McCracken, page 31**

**Question Asked:**

... Did council make a submission to the VAGO audit as well, which was on Comm Games?

**Andrew COONEY:** Yes, we did.

**Joe McCracken:** Can we have a copy of that too, if that is okay?

**Andrew COONEY:** Our submission? I will have to check that with VAGO. We answered VAGO's questions more than making a submission. We provided them a series of documents that they requested, but I would have to check that with VAGO.

**Joe McCracken:** Okay.

**Response:**

As indicated in the hearing, I have sought the advice of the Victorian Auditor General's office on the matter of whether the City's submission to the VAGO Performance Engagement *Withdrawal from the Commonwealth Games 2026* can be shared.

VAGO's advice is that City's submission is not able to be shared with the Inquiry.

**3. Joe McCracken, page 31-2**

**Question Asked:**

Yes. We are just interested in your input into that because we will not see that, we will just see the final report, so it would be great if you could provide that. I know that at council meetings councillors were provided with updates on Comm Games and the legacy projects. Is the committee able to get a copy of all the briefs that were provided on the games, including the legacy items as well, that council has given to councillors?

**Andrew COONEY:** There is a publicly available document called *Let the Games Begin*, which was the City of Greater Bendigo's legacy plan.

**Joe McCracken:** I am talking about in briefings and those sorts of things. Are you able to provide anything that might assist the committee in its work?

**Andrew COONEY:** So what sort of information would you be asking for, Mr McCracken?

**Joe McCracken:** Well, looking at any updates on legacy items, projects – those sorts of things.

**Andrew COONEY:** I will have a look. The information we provided to council was largely around the legacy projects, that legacy list that the council developed. The progress of those projects – there are lots of discussions and planning. We did not have a formal design for any of those projects yet or a delivery model, which were some of the announcements that we had been waiting for. I will have a look and see what we have provided to the council. We had not really provided too many formal progress updates around what was happening, but I will see what we have got.

**Response:**

I have attached a copy of the Council report (Item 3A) and the Legacy Plan *Let the Games Begin* (Item 3B) that were approved by Council at the Council meeting on 26 September 2022.

**4. Joe McCracken, page 32**

**Question Asked:**

From the government. You mentioned the regional housing package. Has there been any interaction there with the government about making sure that the site is infill or anything like that?

**Andrew COONEY:** We have written to the government to ask them to continue planning and continue to deliver the housing on that site.

**Joe McCracken:** Can we get a copy of that as well if that is okay?

**Andrew COONEY:** I will follow up.

**Response:**

I have attached a copy of a letter that was sent to the then Deputy Premier on 26 July advocating for the Athlete's village to progress (Item 4)

**5. Melina BATH, page 34**

**Question Asked:**

You may need to take these on notice. My question is: on what date was it signed, who asked the former CEO to sign it and can you please provide a copy of that? I think one of the things that we hear, and we heard it just previously from sporting organisations, is the need for transparency. I am not casting this at you, but this is a government that is asking a council to sign a non-disclosure form. Can you also provide any information about what limitations were placed on information between council and councillors? What limitations were placed between council and the Bendigo community? What did that entail? I guess that is key. What sorts of restrictions were they in terms of processes, infrastructure and all of those things?

**The CHAIR:** Can I clarify, Ms Bath: are you asking Mr Cooney to take that on notice?

**Melina BATH:** Correct.

**Response:**

The City's CEO at the time, Craig Niemann signed a confidentiality undertaking on 9 June 2022. I have attached a copy of this document (Item 5).

**6. Joe McCracken, page 18**

**Question Asked:**

It might be helpful for us. We are there to bat for you at the end of the day, this committee, I feel. Can you provide any scoping discussions or any time lines that you have seen so far? You may need to take that on notice as well.

**Andrew COONEY:** Yes.

**Response:**

I have included a link to the media release that outlines the upgrades

<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/more-homes-well-sports-upgrades-bendigo>

I have consulted with the State Government department that have been leading the development of the scoping documents for the projects. I have included the advice received:

*“The department does not waive the confidential basis on which the functional and technical briefs (FTB) which included the block plans were shared. The department is unable to authorise the release of any information relating to FTB’s for works relating to the Regional Sport Infrastructure Program (RSIP) as it may materially impact tender processes.”*

#### 7. **David DAVIS, page 40**

##### **Question Asked:**

The director. Again, what I need here is a list of the communications and meetings and contacts with the organising committee and state government. We need to understand what has gone on there.

**Andrew COONEY:** You want a list of all of my meetings that I had for 12 months?

**David DAVIS:** Correct. Thank you. That would be good.

**Andrew COONEY:** Is that a reasonable request?

**David DAVIS:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** I will have to defer to the –

**Secretariat:** It is up to you how you answer questions on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it is your prerogative how you answer questions on notice.

##### **Response:**

I have collated a list of the meetings I attended with Jacinta Allan, Member for Bendigo East and then Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery and Jeroen Weimer, CEO of the Organising Committee for the 12 months leading up to the announcement on 18 July 2023 as requested.

I met with the Jacinta Allan, Member for Bendigo East and the Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery on 15/12/22 and 7/7/22.

On 2/10/22 I attended a function that Minister Allan and Jeroen Weimer were present at.

On 18 July, I attended an online briefing following the Victorian Government's decision to withdraw from the Games with a number of local stakeholders.

I met with Jeroen Weimer, CEO of the Organising Committee on 23/8/22, 27/9/22, 2/12/22, 15/3/22, 26/6/23.

On 7/7/23, I attended an online meeting with other Host City CEO's which was attended by Mr Weimer.

**8. David DAVIS, page 40**

**Question Asked:**

Yes. In that list of dates I would like to see the dates that you met with him (Mr Weimar). Did you talk to Jacinta Allan, who was the minister at the time, through that period?

**Andrew COONEY:** I am sure I would have.

**David DAVIS:** I would like the dates of those.

**Response:** see response to question 7

**9. David DAVIS, page 40**

**Question Asked:**

No, no. On the point of order, I am very interested to know exactly what involvement the council had and what the then minister drew out of the council. That then minister was Jacinta Allan, and she is now the Premier. I am actually very interested, Chair, to understand precisely what involvement she had in this process at a local level.

**The CHAIR:** On the point of order, Mr Cooney can answer the question truthfully as he sees fit.

**Response:**

See response to question 7

**10. David DAVIS, page 41**

**Question Asked:**

Just to get an answer on that question of meeting Ms Allan, you did meet Ms Allan on a number of occasions on this matter?

**Andrew COONEY:** We would meet with the Member for Bendigo East in her capacity as the Member for Bendigo East around a number of advocacy

matters.

**David DAVIS:** And you discussed the Commonwealth Games and her involvement as minister?

**Andrew COONEY:** There would be projects that we would have been discussing, I am sure. I am happy to take that on notice.

**Response:**

See response to question 7

11. **Melina BATH, page 42**

**Question Asked:**

Thank you. Following on from that, if it is available, I would really appreciate if you could provide to the committee some sort of council position or strategic plan in relation to your ask of government, whether it is inside what is on offer or into the future in terms of rail and increased transport. That would be helpful. That is a yes? Thank you.

**Response:**

As part of the City's Infrastructure advocacy priorities, the City requested the following:

- Provide passenger train access for the Bendigo Showgrounds and Harcourt, including the construction of new platforms
- Increase frequency of Bendigo-Melbourne, Bendigo-Echuca, Bendigo-Swan Hill rail services
- Restoring duplication of the Bendigo-Kyneton rail line

This can be found on page 9 of the *City of Greater Bendigo investment prospectus* which has been provided (Item 11).