

TRANSCRIPT

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE 2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES BID

Inquiry into the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid

Melbourne – Monday 23 October 2023

MEMBERS

David Limbrick – Chair

Joe McCracken – Deputy Chair

Melina Bath

David Davis

Jacinta Ermacora

Michael Galea

Sarah Mansfield

Tom McIntosh

Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell

WITNESSES

Hayden Collins, Director, and

Jason Hellwig, Chief Executive Officer, Swimming Victoria.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, these comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following this hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, can you please state your name and the organisation that you are appearing on behalf of.

Hayden COLLINS: Hayden Collins, Swimming Victoria.

Jason HELLWIG: Jason Hellwig, Swimming Victoria.

The CHAIR: Pleased to meet you. I will just briefly introduce the committee. I am David Limbrick, the Chair.

Melina BATH: Melina Bath, Eastern Victoria Region. Hello.

David DAVIS: David Davis.

Joe McCracken: Joe McCracken, Western Victoria.

Michael GALEA: Good afternoon. Michael Galea, South-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Tom McINTOSH: Tom McIntosh, Eastern Victoria Region.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Sarah Mansfield, Western Victoria Region.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Jacinta Ermacora, Western Victoria Region.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I welcome you to make some opening comments and ask that they be kept to around 10 minutes, although I think we have got plenty of time today. Thank you. Please provide us with any comments.

Hayden COLLINS: No worries. Thank you for having us. I am Hayden Collins. I am no longer the president of Swimming Victoria, but I am here with the board's approval, so still a board director. We had our AGM last Thursday, so I have taken a step back but am still here and very willing to answer your questions and looking forward to having a chat. I suppose we see our role in this space as to provide our view of what the clarity is around what the potential opportunity is with swimming and water space and what may or could be lost without that kind of opportunity as well. Thank you very much for having us.

Jason HELLWIG: Thanks, Mr Chair and everyone. We appreciate the opportunity. Swimming Victoria, looking through the terms of reference, did not have any engagement in the acquisition of the Commonwealth Games or the development of the details, certainly around infrastructure planning or sport-specific infrastructure or venue planning and preparation.

Just some background from us: we did receive one briefing on the proposal for swimming to be conducted at Armstrong Creek. That was on 30 May this year, and we provided our position on that at that time, which was essentially that we were concerned that based on that plan there was going to be a challenge around legacy for the sport. To put that into some context for you, the aquatics facility register in this state is very much an ageing

suite of assets. Against that we have a sport that is growing quite significantly and a growing population and a growing community need. If I give you some examples around what that data is, our participation as a sport is up 30 per cent since 2017, up to 15,300, of which 6500 are in rural and regional Victoria. But also down at the other end of the spectrum is Learn to Swim, which while great for us – it is a pathway into the sport – most critically is the development of a life skill that people carry with them forever. There are significant waiting lists across the state for access to Learn to Swim. As an example, in western Melbourne there are waiting lists of over 12 months – over 2000 children – to be able to access Learn to Swim in some of those situations, and as a sport it is increasingly difficult to access lane space and those sorts of things.

The value of that, though, from an economic, social and health impact is significant. Again, as some examples and coming back to a regional focus, which is where I think there is still significant legacy opportunity to be harvested, we run two major country championships every year: a long course, typically in an outdoor 50-metre pool – some of you will be familiar with it – but also a country short course championships, which requires an indoor pool. For each of those events we bring more than 1500 people to a regional community and an economic impact significantly in excess of a million dollars every time we do it. You know, our facility challenges are such that – our country short course championships is an example where we really had hoped, and continue to hope, to see some legacy. We are struggling to find a venue now in country Victoria that is able to host that event, because of capacity and size, not just in the water but the surrounding amenity at the venue. To host that many people in a venue is very difficult. We have kind of topped out what we can do in Ballarat, and we are kind of contracted now to Gippsland, but there is discussion now about potentially having to bring that event to Melbourne, which is not an outcome that is great for us as a sport or for supporting the development of the sport in country and regional Victoria.

But to also bring some other more granular data, we do a member insight survey every year: 38 per cent of our members in 2022–23 do not have access to kickstart blocks in their facilities – you know, that is how aged they are – and 29 per cent of our members cannot even practice dive starts in pools anymore.

David DAVIS: What percentage?

Jason HELLWIG: 29 per cent. So there is some great opportunity, but there is also some great challenge. We were very much looking forward to the Commonwealth Games being a sort of catalyst for realising that legacy, and in a regional setting in particular we thought that was a very exciting opportunity, but of course it was not meant to be.

I also note MSAC here in Melbourne is an iconic venue in Australian swimming. It is arguably our best facility in Australia for national and international competition, but it is struggling under the weight of the need for ongoing capital investment as well. So there is some huge growth and some enormous positives that have been delivered. We were looking forward to that from the Comm Games and hope that that can be maintained. That legacy opportunity is real, and I think there is an opportunity here to resolve the tension between an infrastructure challenge and a market growth opportunity, which I think could be positive for everybody.

Thank you for the opportunity to come in today, and we look forward to the conversation.

The CHAIR: Thank you. You mentioned just earlier that – what was it? – 27 per cent of athletes cannot actually practice dive starts. Is it just that pools do not have the diving platforms installed?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. It is a combination of having a block but also having a pool that is deep enough for modern compliance to allow diving to happen.

The CHAIR: Yes. You certainly cannot dive at the one near me.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. It is not uncommon. It is a challenge. There was a significant investment in aquatic facilities and pools. If you go through the state there are a lot of Olympic pools and there are a lot of war pools. You know, after the war and then kind around the 1956 Olympic Games there was some infrastructure built, but it is getting very much towards the end of its life where it is even able to be repaired and updated. There is a serious need for more than refurbishment. Some replacement assets are going to be required right across the state.

The CHAIR: I am interested – so the swimmers, when they heard the news about the Commonwealth Games, of course they would have been excited. What sorts of activities have been happening in this sport to prepare for the games, and what was the reaction from swimmers when they were told that it is not going to happen? How has that all played out for the athletes?

Jason HELLWIG: I think we are the same as every other sport that is on the Commonwealth Games program. You know, when you are in the position to be able to host an event within your home jurisdiction, I think for any athlete in any sport that is not only exciting but it is also a highly motivating opportunity for people, so that was something that we were very much looking forward to. I think it is always disappointing when that does not come to pass.

We have a very robust program of events and activities. We have a home Olympic and Paralympic games coming up in 2032, which I think for Australian swimmers not just Victorian swimmers is very much something that is not on the immediate horizon when you are thinking about the life span of an athlete, but it is certainly there.

I think it was kind of confusing for particularly young swimmers – you know, the event is there, the event is not there – but nonetheless we have been able to sort of keep that focus going forward. We have got an extraordinarily pretty talented crew coming through in Victorian swimming that is kind of better than we had anticipated when we were coming through COVID. That is how we are right now, so we are very much trying to keep the focus very positive and towards other opportunities that will emerge. But I do not think it is contentious that losing that opportunity to compete at an international event within your own jurisdiction – it is always a very exciting one if you do get that opportunity.

The CHAIR: Understood, thank you. Now, you mentioned the Armstrong Creek development. So you were briefed on that – is that correct?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. It was very late. We had heard kind of around the industry that the plan was to build at Armstrong Creek. We were never kind of involved in those conversations.

The CHAIR: So you were not consulted on it.

Jason HELLWIG: No.

The CHAIR: You were just told it was going to happen.

Jason HELLWIG: We had a briefing on 30 May this year, which was provided by the architects.

The CHAIR: This is for the temporary design.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. So we were very grateful for that opportunity. In that meeting – it was online – we were very quickly able to give some feedback as to where we sort of saw that facility.

The CHAIR: How would you summarise that feedback?

Jason HELLWIG: It was pretty plain that from a sport point of view it did not sort of tick the meaningful legacy box for us, and we were kind of looking forward, I think, to being able to talk further with government and the organising committee about how legacy might be created from the games. I think everyone wants a home event of this nature to have a meaningful legacy, and typically that does come in a bricks-and-mortar fashion. And if it was not going to be that, we were looking forward to the opportunity to talk about alternative ways for that to be created, but we did not get to have those conversations before it was wrapped up.

The CHAIR: And now that the games has been cancelled and I am assuming all of the plans for the infrastructure are sort of changing, I suppose, what are your hopes for what the government will do with regard to this? You know, they still want to have this legacy infrastructure build – what are your hopes?

Jason HELLWIG: Well, I think that is the opportunity, right – and I am sure that there are different viewpoints around the cost of the games – that the bottom line is it was going to be an extraordinarily expensive exercise no matter how you cut it. That logic, that is what it is, but I think there is an opportunity here, for a far smaller bill, to actually have a meaningful legacy.

The CHAIR: Are you talking about permanent swimming facilities with diving blocks and all of that sort of stuff?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, just appropriate – and designed for the future. One of the other challenges we have is the cost of running particularly the older pools is exorbitant. There is an opportunity here, I think, for us to pivot to a kind of really good knowledge base, a bit like what has happened in Gippsland, where the new facility there is constructed on top of an aquifer so the heat exchange from the aquifer actually is saving several hundred thousand dollars a year in heating costs just by smart design and implementation. We would be really keen to see that opportunity grabbed.

It is profoundly disappointing to lose an event. There is confusion around that. There is always that kind of feeling of awkwardness, embarrassment, the head spinning as to what has actually gone on here. The price tag was clearly through the roof, although the concept had something that I think everyone would have liked to have seen work but just in practicality clearly was not going to play out. We would hate to see all of this effort and all of this hope – you know, it goes beyond just the cost piece as well, to your question, Chair, around how this sport was feeling about hosting this thing and then not hosting it. I think that issue of kind of hope and something to feel really vibrant about still exists and we would love to grab it. We would love to see the state grab it. We would love to have a really robust program of events that are able to stay in country Victoria and continue to grow. But we would also like Melbourne to continue to be a place that attracts great championship events at the national and the international level, albeit not necessarily as a Commonwealth Games event. There will be other opportunities.

The CHAIR: Just briefly and finally, have you ever seen anywhere in the world propose to run an event like this using temporary pools? Is that something that has ever been done, because I certainly have never heard of it?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. We did it in Melbourne for a world championships at Rod Laver Arena in 2006. I think the global event business is actually sort of heading more down that direction. For background and context, prior to this role I worked with the Australian Paralympic committee for a long time and did a bunch of games from 2000 through to 2004. That era, when you look at it, the bigger, grander trend towards permanent facilities capped out in Beijing. It really peaked in those games. Arguably it was one of the really difficult legacy pieces for Athens and the Greeks to contend with because they had significant permanent infrastructure that they were not able to maintain and was not relevant to their community needs. Since 2008 the trend has been heading back more towards temporary infrastructure for sports that are not as relevant to the local host and quality infrastructure for those events and activities that are relevant to the local host. If you take the UK, for example, with London, that demonstrates that pretty neatly. But to do that in a regional context, I think, was the unique piece that Victoria had set out to achieve, and that is not something that I had seen before either at an Olympic or Paralympic level or sort of other multisport events of this scale. It was a very ambitious objective, and it would have been great to see it realised in a way that was balanced – you know, affordable and sustainable. But unfortunately it was not able to be done.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr McCracken.

Joe McCracken: Thanks, Jason and Hayden, for your time. I am interested particularly in the Armstrong Creek site as well. I guess when the Comm Games were proposed the pool at Armstrong Creek sort of came about. Knowing that it was going to be ripped out, did you guys support that?

Jason HELLWIG: That was the immediate feedback that I was able to provide on 30 May.

Joe McCracken: Okay. Was that a written piece that you gave in terms of feedback, or was it verbal?

Jason HELLWIG: It was verbal. It was an online meeting of the architects and a range of people from the Victorian government that were involved with the games.

Joe McCracken: Are there any notes from that meeting or anything like that that were taken? Any notes at all would be very helpful for us.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, I will confirm with them as to what the nature of that meeting was. I was joined by my colleagues from Swimming Australia high performance on that. There was no difference of opinion as to our feedback.

Joe McCracken: I can imagine. Was that meeting called by the architects or was it by someone in government?

Jason HELLWIG: It was in government, I think. We had made it known that we were looking for an opportunity to really know what was going on. It is that kind of –

Joe McCracken: So you had to seek out that –

Jason HELLWIG: I think we had let it be known that we were keen to know what was going on and get that clarity.

Joe McCracken: Do you know who actually called that meeting – which department, or which person, rather?

Jason HELLWIG: I do not know. I will have to go back and check my notes on that.

Joe McCracken: If you would not mind, are you happy to take that on notice?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes.

Joe McCracken: Yes. Okay, that is cool. But it was pretty clear that up until that point you really were not involved in much at all?

Jason HELLWIG: No, we had had no formal briefings or involvement of any nature.

Joe McCracken: I just find that staggering, given it is a compulsory part of the games.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. Look, multisport organising committees have myriad stakeholders to deal with. It typically starts at the international level and cascades down to the national level, and we sit below that at the state level. Ordinarily I would not say is not ideal, but nor is it a disaster if things are making sense and it is all working out. We would have expected to come into the equation around conversations around recruiting volunteers. Some of that sort of granular, local delivery – we would be expecting to be pulled into those conversations at that point in time, but we had not. And there was this total, constant buzzing around about venue. Rather than assume what we were hearing, we did make it known that we would like to get some clarity as to what exactly was being proposed.

Hayden COLLINS: We also had a lot of uncertainty from our local clubs in and around the four pockets, or four areas, that were defined as the games hotspots – call them that – whether or not they were going to see a new pool or what the plan for swimming was in and around Geelong. That is where our stakeholders were interested in knowing: can we start to plan?

Joe McCracken: I note that Swimming Australia said in their submission to the Senate that there was limited clarity on the lasting infrastructure legacy benefits for swimming from Victoria 2026. Do you guys feel the same way?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, and that was the point we made on 30 May. Building an international standard facility from scratch is an enormously expensive undertaking, and then for that to be substantially decommissioned, for us, was not ticking the legacy box in any meaningful way.

Joe McCracken: Was there any feedback from the organising committee or the departments or anyone else at those meetings as to why Armstrong Creek was chosen?

Jason HELLWIG: The meeting – singular. No, apart from the fact that it was a growth corridor. That is not in dispute.

Joe McCracken: Not because it was close to transport, not because it was cost effective, not because it was –

Jason HELLWIG: We got a briefing on the design of the facility and then what was going to happen to it immediately after the games. It was contained to those two subjects.

Joe McCracken: At the briefing did you get PowerPoints and that sort of thing?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, we had a presentation from the architect.

Joe McCracken: Are you able to provide us with a copy of those?

Jason HELLWIG: No, we did not have a copy provided.

Joe McCracken: Oh, it was on the screen.

Jason HELLWIG: It was on the screen.

Joe McCracken: Right, okay. I know the Parliamentary Secretary for the Commonwealth Games at the time, Darren Cheeseman, said of the pool that:

We're delivering world-class sporting venues in Armstrong Creek and Waurn Ponds that local communities will enjoy for generations.

It is probably not exactly how most people would characterise it.

Jason HELLWIG: Well, the legacy from the venue was to be a smaller pool for sort of learn-to-swim activity, so a short, shallow piece, and then some additional netball and basketball facilities on top of what would have been the main pool.

Joe McCracken: Yes, I guess 'delivering world-class sporting venues that local communities will enjoy for generations' is probably not exactly accurate, would you say?

Jason HELLWIG: Well, it might be for basketball and netball. It is not for swimming.

Joe McCracken: For swimming though is what I am saying.

Jason HELLWIG: And that is where I think the opportunity for some legacy around other venues exists.

Joe McCracken: Yes, okay. Was there any sort of discussion around the weighing up between Armstrong Creek and Kardinia as well?

Jason HELLWIG: No.

Joe McCracken: None at all?

Jason HELLWIG: No. We got a presentation on Armstrong Creek.

Hayden COLLINS: That was it. It was decided. Like, we were the end point of receiving information rather than it being a collaborative discussion around decision-making.

Joe McCracken: I find that pretty staggering too, to be honest, that you did not even get a chance to have an input into that sort of thing.

Jason HELLWIG: Well, as I have said, you know: international, national, state.

Joe McCracken: Would you like to see a competition venue at the Kardinia Aquatic Centre?

Jason HELLWIG: Absolutely. Geelong is a really significant swimming community. We have had great growth there in the sport at all levels – participation through to performance. That region, the Bellarine area, is a very strong one for the sport. So yes, we would. But equally we would like to see quality swimming infrastructure throughout the state, because it delivers great value for the community.

Joe McCracken: Did you have any discussions with council at the time?

Jason HELLWIG: No.

Joe McCracken: No, okay. I am just trying to think of the impact on local swimming clubs as well. Do they need to contribute to the infrastructure works, or is it just sort of a venue hire situation? How does it work for the local swim clubs?

Jason Hellwig: So this is part of our challenge and the opportunity: access to lanes in a market where there is enormous pressure on pools, particularly at the times where people want to use them. As much as we would like to think it is, the reality of using a swimming pool is not 24/7. It is an in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening and on the weekends kind of piece. The way it typically works is pools are managed either by the owner of the venue, typically a council, or they contract it out to one of the various venue management companies.

Joe McCracken: Like a YMCA or something like that.

Jason Hellwig: Yes, there are four or five kind of key agencies. Depending upon the size of the club, they have a contract with the venue to access lanes at certain times of certain days or every day, and those prices then vary depending upon the local situation. But the issue of cost for our sport, as it is for all sports, is a very serious one. Again coming back to my earlier point around ageing infrastructure, ageing infrastructure is also expensive infrastructure.

Joe McCracken: Have the clubs been asked to contribute?

Jason Hellwig: To Armstrong Creek?

Joe McCracken: To the infrastructure or not.

Jason Hellwig: Every club in Victoria pays to access pools.

Hayden Collins: It will vary depending on individual pools.

Joe McCracken: Any capital costs though or just venue for hire sort of thing?

Hayden Collins: It will vary dependent upon individual clubs as well, so the ones that have enough capital to potentially invest – like to Jason's point, the Y or Belgravia, as venue hire or management companies – will contribute. But there are a small number of clubs that own and run their venues, because they have been well established financially. So there is a balance to strike, but typically most clubs will not be providing any capital around infrastructure.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr McCracken.

Joe McCracken: Out of time.

The Chair: Mr Galea. I am sure we will have some more time at the end.

Michael Galea: Thank you, Chair. Thank you both for joining us. Mr Hellwig, just to pick up something that we discussed a little bit recently, earlier you mentioned that I think it was in 2006 that Rod Laver Arena was converted into a temporary pool. Was that for the Commonwealth Games? I think the FINA –

Jason Hellwig: FINA world championships.

Michael Galea: world championships were also at the time, yes. From a technical aspect and everything, was that a successful conversion?

Jason Hellwig: I think the event was successful. Temporary swimming pools are notoriously difficult. But no, that event went well, yes.

Hayden Collins: It would have been pre both our time in and around swimming.

Michael Galea: I certainly recall that being a good event too, though it was some time ago now. You also mentioned the country long course championships, I think, going into Traralgon next year as well. Is that the Gippsland Regional Aquatic Centre where the aquifer is that you have mentioned?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. Again, the opportunity is – we now have our long course and our short course championships in the same region next year. We are really starting to struggle for a venue for short course, because it is a big event that brings a lot of people in wintertime. It is not realistic to do it in an outdoor pool, and we just do not have the assets in place now that we need to deal with an event of that significance in Gippsland. It is an outstanding venue and really cleverly designed.

Michael GALEA: Well, it is interesting to hear about that design. You touched briefly upon the different scales – so the national and international bodies. I wonder if you can outline your relationship with Swimming Australia. Particularly, I know they have had some recent difficulties and I guess Victoria's stance on that and where you see that progressing?

Jason HELLWIG: Despite what you might have seen, we have a very positive relationship with Swimming Australia.

Hayden COLLINS: And the rest of our colleagues across the states and other members of Swimming Australia too.

Jason HELLWIG: I think things are going to continue to go well.

Michael GALEA: Because obviously we have seen – allegedly – World Aquatics calling them out for all sorts of violations, and they were talking about Australia potentially being suspended. Is that something that is –

Jason HELLWIG: It has all been resolved.

Michael GALEA: It has all been resolved, very good to hear. They had their meeting on Friday, was it? Their special general meeting?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, and it went very well.

Michael GALEA: Excellent. I am very glad to hear that. Not to dwell too much on that, but the other story that we have seen is in relation to the funding of Swimming Australia. We have seen someone who I am sure would like to describe herself as a generous benefactor, but we know that Gina Rinehart has contributed a lot of money to Swimming Australia, which has now ceased. I understand that she is now diverting that all through the Queensland authority – please correct me if I am wrong. Has that had an impact on Swimming Victoria's capability to provide support for athletes?

Jason HELLWIG: That is not something we are involved in and is for others to respond to. Funding is difficult for everybody; there is only so much that can go around. But just for complete transparency – this is in our annual report and financials that were published following our AGM last week – we get very modest funding from Swimming Australia and from government, and that is consistent with sport at the moment. So we generate 90 per cent of our own income, which largely comes from our members, which is why the issue of cost for us is a really critical one. We have to be very lean and efficient with what we do. It is not an easy industry. I think there are some external illusions about sport that are not necessarily backed up by the challenging environment that we operate in internally, particularly in the amateur and Olympic and Paralympic sport domain.

Michael GALEA: Sure. Are there particular trends that have emerged that have made it especially difficult in recent years and decades or so for swimming, or has it always been a difficult story and always been a struggle?

Jason HELLWIG: These things are always a difficult story, it is just the level of them. But I think the funding piece is heading in the opposite direction to where the growth of the sport is going. That is just the way it is, unfortunately. We would like to see that change.

Michael GALEA: Just going back, you mentioned short course. Please forgive my ignorance here – am I right to assume that short course is like the 25 metre –

Jason HELLWIG: Yes.

Michael GALEA: Excellent. We had those world championships in Melbourne last year, in December I believe, and that was done with Victorian government support, I understand?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, that was Swimming Australia and the Victorian government and FINA, which is now called World Aquatics. We did not have a seat at the table in terms of that agreement or partnership.

Michael GALEA: Sure. So that was all through the Victorian government and –

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. Our major piece – we delivered the volunteer program for that event. So we recruited and delivered 330 volunteers to deliver the event – or support the event I should say, not deliver it.

Michael GALEA: I am assuming that was all from swimming clubs across Victoria predominantly?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, and a range of young swimmers and older swimmers from around the state had the opportunity to be part of a world championship and really embraced that. But also some people that were connected to the sport in different ways really embraced those opportunities as well.

Michael GALEA: And did you see much flow-on benefit amongst your volunteers and amongst your clubs from being able to participate in it? Even though it is 25 metres, not the big one that we had in 2007, did you see the benefits flow through? How did that sort of flow through to the community clubs?

Jason HELLWIG: That opportunity to participate and see it, and kind of the enduring piece for us is there is a whole bunch of volunteers that have come into the sport who we are seeking to maintain contact with and keep encouraged to participate and find different ways for them to be involved.

Michael GALEA: Wonderful, thank you. I think that was all I had. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Galea. Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: Thank you both for your presentation. I am just going to recap very quickly a couple of things you have said: you had no role, advice or meetings until 30 May?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes – this year.

David DAVIS: This year, 2023, despite being one of the two sports that must be at the games. I think that is right?

Jason HELLWIG: Swimming Victoria – and we are not Swimming Australia.

David DAVIS: Okay, I am just trying to get this clear. Were you in communication with Swimming Australia on these matters, though?

Jason HELLWIG: They were probably of the same kind of mindset. Their issue was around, they were very focused on preparing a team and how we were going to do that. They probably did not have clarity around venue either, or input around venue.

David DAVIS: Were they provided with briefings or linkages?

Jason HELLWIG: They were in the same briefing that we were in.

David DAVIS: So that was their first briefing as well, to your knowledge?

Jason HELLWIG: To my knowledge, yes.

David DAVIS: Okay. And the modelling that was behind all this, you were not brought in on that either?

Jason HELLWIG: No.

David DAVIS: So for example, when they say there is \$3.6 billion of economic and health benefits nationwide, you do not know where they got that from?

Jason HELLWIG: No, but I mean, there are datasets that transfer. There is a knowledge transfer that happens from games to games. It is a pretty well-established protocol. I am sure – Mr Phillips was in this morning. I am sure he would have had eyeballs on that and been able to see it, but that is not something that we –

David DAVIS: But you were not dragged into that?

Jason HELLWIG: No, not at all.

David DAVIS: And Mr Hellwig, on the idea of home-ground advantage – that is dependent, I think, on having the spread of centres that are accessible with the right quality facilities and so forth, and I think what you were telling us, the two of you earlier, is that those facilities are not there now in Victoria. The quality of facilities is not there. There are long waiting lists to get to learn to swim. There are long waiting lists to get to a centre that has – I am paraphrasing; tell me I am wrong at any point – there are insufficient locations. Is that a fair summary?

Hayden COLLINS: Yes, that is a fair summary. We have got challenges around access to water with facilities that are getting old, is ultimately where it comes back to.

David DAVIS: But there is no legacy outcome that you are aware of now that is going to occur, now that the games have been cancelled? We are left with –

Hayden COLLINS: Nothing specific from a swimming perspective.

David DAVIS: Nothing?

Jason HELLWIG: No, and that is the opportunity that we would like government collectively to embrace.

David DAVIS: I want to go back to that 30 May briefing. You are not sure who set it up. You will find that for us; that is very helpful, and any documents that were provided there. They might have gone up on the screen.

Jason HELLWIG: We did not get – nothing was provided to us. It was a presentation.

David DAVIS: Nothing was emailed or put up in the –

Jason HELLWIG: No.

David DAVIS: Extraordinary. So you had no ability to assess it or make input other than the quick glance across the screen – now you see it, now you do not?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. I mean, they were very thorough in going through it. The architects who provided the presentation –

David DAVIS: But this is not what is going to remain now, is it?

Jason HELLWIG: No, no, and that was, as I keep coming back to, it was a very thorough presentation around the design.

David DAVIS: But it was a temporary facility?

Jason HELLWIG: Part of the design was that at the end of the games, this is what it will be converted to.

David DAVIS: Sort of like the Clark Rubber pool of a thing – it is here; now you see it, now you do not. Is that the kind of mode that we are in?

Jason HELLWIG: I would not characterise it quite so –

David DAVIS: It is too harsh for you.

Jason HELLWIG: It is a bit harsh. The conversation that they did sort of present us was that the shell of the pool itself would be put up as a for-sale item for an LGA somewhere in the country.

David DAVIS: Right, and not necessarily down to the west?

Jason HELLWIG: Not necessarily in Victoria.

David DAVIS: And the sort of flowthrough, I think. With cycling we heard at the Senate committee of the list of events that they work through. In swimming it is the Pan Pacs, the world championships, through to the Olympics and so forth. These games would have fitted in with that mode.

Jason HELLWIG: The Commonwealth Games is a very established event in the Australian sports landscape. For different sports it has different levels of criticality, so there are some sports for whom it is their major event – you know, the best countries in the world are there. Swimming probably does not have that characteristic, although in some events you do get the best in the world in a particular race, but it is so valuable for the opportunity and the development of new and emerging talent and younger swimmers. You know, that chance to have international competition at any stage is incredibly valuable.

David DAVIS: I want to go to something else, and that is the cancellation. How did you learn about the cancellation?

Jason HELLWIG: I had a text message from a colleague in another sport, and then it was the media piece and then we got an email – you know, a general email. It all happened very quickly in a morning.

David DAVIS: And the feedback from your interstate bodies was what at that point?

Jason HELLWIG: It is more sort of – it was weird.

David DAVIS: A bit surreal.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, very much so. Clearly the issue of cost is real. You know, no-one wants to put a burden on something that is just far too expensive, but this came completely out of the blue.

David DAVIS: Mr Collins might have a view on the athlete's perspective.

Hayden COLLINS: I suppose it is similar to Jase. I feel like you might have told me that it was happening, so maybe a slightly different kind of finding out about it, but I think it goes back to Jason's point earlier around an element of disappointment around that kind of opportunity not being there. I suppose to Jason's point, the Comm Games is a pathway for Australian swimming. It is likely not as important as some of the other sports will see it, but it is still an important piece of the international sporting landscape.

David DAVIS: So have there been meetings between your organisation or your national organisation and the government since the announcement about what will happen? Nothing?

Jason HELLWIG: No, we have been told there is a regional sport fund – \$60 million for infrastructure, a further \$40 million for workforce. That was announced, and we are very much looking forward to those details and working with our members within the sport to look at how we can potentially make an application to access that for the legacy that we are talking about, if not beyond that.

David DAVIS: And do you have a favoured plan? Is there a planning document that points to the deficiencies and how they could be dealt with?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, we have got a clarity around where our growth pieces are and where the critical stress points are for the sport. As a general piece there are probably four to six regional venues around the state that we would like to see focused on.

David DAVIS: It would be helpful for us to see that, to actually have a copy of that if that is possible. That would be very helpful for us to understand. And I just want to talk about reputation too. Do you think it has done damage to the state's reputation, or do you agree with Mr McClements that we are actually going to get more business because of it?

Jason HELLWIG: I am not in a position to comment on how the event industry operates and so on. I think everyone was so surprised that this had happened. It is somewhat unprecedented, so it has given everyone pause for thought around what has gone on and the why and then what the implications are for that.

David DAVIS: Could you have helped if you had been consulted earlier in a small way in your important sporting area?

Jason HELLWIG: I think this is where it gets difficult, as you have got an event here, the concept of which is being carved out and set at an international level, before we kind of would have that. If right at the very beginning there was a kind of ‘The Commonwealth Games needs a host. We have an opportunity. What would you do?’ – and this is not a secret; we have shared this quite broadly – our absolute advice to a blank piece of paper would be to spend some money on MSAC to keep it up to speed and in good shape and then invest in four to six regional facilities that we could really use as training venues for Australia and visiting nations with a view to us then looking to really have a program of country long and short course championships that support the use of those venues at a strong event level and then build that through the districts and the clubs as well. That would have been a really great outcome, and I would like to think that the opportunity to achieve that outcome actually still exists if there is the will to do that, because it would be very meaningful and create a great practical outcome.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Davis. Ms Ermacora.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon. I just want to go back to the context. You were talking about the role of the Commonwealth Games within the suite of events that swimming has nationally and globally. Drilling into that: which countries internationally are Australia’s biggest competitors in swimming at the moment?

Jason HELLWIG: The two biggest countries in swimming globally – very proudly we can say Australia is number one after the last world championships; the US is number two, so us and the US. Great Britain, England, is getting stronger. A bunch of European countries are getting stronger. The Canadians are getting stronger, but Australia is right now the very proud top of the pile after the last long course world champs. But the Americans are right there.

Jacinta ERMACORA: A mighty nation for a minnow like Australia – pardon the swimming pun – to compete with, the USA, and it is terrific that we continually produce such strong swimmers with our smaller population compared to the USA. The USA are not in the Commonwealth Games picture. They are not a member of the Commonwealth Games, so with the Commonwealth Games it sort of leaves out the number one competitor at the moment. Is that what you mean when you were saying that the Commonwealth Games is a valuable experience and important lead-up but not as important as in some other sports?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, spot on. It is not the biggest event for swimming, and that has been the case for a long time, but there are events within the swimming competition where that depth varies up and down depending on who has got what. If you take men’s breaststroking, the best men’s sprint breaststroker in the world is from England. The current number four in the world is from Melbourne – or would have been.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Fantastic. Yes, I can imagine that would vary. With some of the major world swimming events – or they are often called meets, I think, aren’t they?

Jason HELLWIG: Exactly.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Is that right? Yes. Both my children were squad swimmers, and yes, it was very interesting language. What are the major swimming meets that occur then, nationally and internationally?

Jason HELLWIG: The world championships, long course and short course, and the Olympic and Paralympic games. I think that is one of the characteristics of the Commonwealth Games that is unique. It is the one international event that we participate in as a sport that integrates Para swimmers with able-bodied swimmers, so it does offer a very unique strength and a very unique experience for swimmers and spectators alike in that context. But the world championships long and short course and Olympic and Paralympic games – and then there are a series of world cup events and other sort of stuff that floats around underneath that, but world champs and Olympics and Paralympics are the main benchmark events for our sport.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Yes. I have noticed the integration. How does that work, the integration of Paralympics and Comm Games meets? How does that work?

Jason HELLWIG: It is something that has been building for some time, a number of sports on the Commonwealth Games program having events within them that are for Para athletes. So that happens very naturally. It is not a complete program. This is not a combination of the Paralympics and the Olympics swimming programs combined together; it is the identification of a small number of events – albeit there are more events now than there were three Commonwealth Games ago – for inclusion within the sport program. So the Para swimmers are part of the team. The Para swimming events happen as part of the event program. In our sport – we offer it here in Victoria – at our championships now we have a mixed relay for able-bodied and Para swimmers to compete in the same team. So those sorts of events are being developed and used in events like the Commonwealth Games.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Fantastic. I am interested in your views on this – we have heard evidence and some discussion about different financial models for operating major sporting events. Are you familiar with how the World Aquatics finances operate and how those championships run?

Jason HELLWIG: I think the standard model for all of these major events is that hosts foot the significant bill both in terms of bricks and mortar but also in the operational landscape.

Jacinta ERMACORA: When you say ‘host’, what do you mean by host?

Jason HELLWIG: The host city – so in the case of a world championship, it will be hosted by city X, and there will be an entity created to deliver the event within city X, and they sign a contract with World Aquatics under which they have clear responsibilities for a whole bunch of things. On a pure cost basis hosting these events is not a small cheque at all.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Which models are the more affordable models to host?

Jason HELLWIG: I think it is going to depend on the sport and it is going to depend on the event. It is an evolving situation as well. So I think you would need to look at individual sport agreements, how they do those, versus multisport agreements and also what scale an event is being delivered at. You know, there are a lot of variabilities in that question that I cannot sort of easily answer just from sitting here. But I think a single-sport event, as an example of something right at the very, very simple end of the scale, is – we host a round of the Para Swimming World Series competition as part of our open long course championships, which we will do again in March next year, which is a very low-cost operation compared to even if we were to host a Para Swimming World Championships event or a Swimming World Championships.

Michael GALEA: Sorry, if you do not mind me jumping in – so for one of the big FINA events then, like what we had in Melbourne in 2007, what is the typical infrastructure requirement for that as compared to one of the smaller meets that you can just accommodate?

Jason HELLWIG: As soon as you get to an international level you are dealing with the need for a significant warm-up pool as well as a main competition pool. So the main competition pool has got to meet all of the requirements – you know, depth and so on and so forth – and then it is the overlay around that, grandstanding, which can be temporary; those things are pretty straightforward. But it is the technical infrastructure that goes into the venue, and typically for swimming it is that need to have at least one other 50-metre pool for the purposes of warm-up and cool down, so it is not a cheap piece of kit.

Michael GALEA: And that still needs to be 50 metres as well.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes.

Michael GALEA: Thanks.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Ermacora. Dr Mansfield.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. Just to confirm that your first involvement in any of the planning or discussions around the Comm Games was in May this year – or had you had previous involvement in the past?

Jason HELLWIG: No, that was our briefing.

Sarah MANSFIELD: That was the very first time on any part of the Comm Games? Okay. And you said that at that point you expressed very clear concerns about the legacy aspects of the Armstrong Creek location. Why? Was it the temporary nature of the structure, or what were the issues around legacy from your perspective?

Jason HELLWIG: Well, the temporary nature of it, and the cost–benefit equation from a swimming point of view – a significant cost to build something for a sport that is then not going to exist.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay. And were there any other concerns about the location?

Jason HELLWIG: It came as a surprise to us around Armstrong Creek, but when we look at the growth corridor that exists there, that is a serious population growth corridor, so I can understand that. Armstrong Creek specifically from our point of view is probably not something that we had on our radar – but we are not facility builders and designers either, right? We are looking at it more from what we currently had and where we would like to see what we currently have upgraded, built to deal with future need.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes.

Hayden COLLINS: Which is that four to five that Jason mentions in terms of the pools. We would not be proposing that we go and build new pools without having done enough of the research and the analysis on town planning et cetera, which is kind of not our remit.

Sarah MANSFIELD: And in that sort of Geelong region, which pool would you have suggested was the one that was focused on, then, as part of that five – if there is one in the Geelong region?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, Kardinia pool is where Geelong swimming primarily works out of, so we would have loved to have seen that.

Sarah MANSFIELD: And what changes would be required to bring that up to the standard that you feel would be beneficial for that more strategic, long-term planning for swimming in Victoria?

Jason HELLWIG: There are probably a couple of things. The other question is whether you include diving with it, because that kind of changes your technical footprint as well. If it was just for swimming, it is a much easier question to answer. The things for us are an adequate 50 and an adequate warm-up piece, but also that space and availability for spectator seating, whether it is on a permanent or a temporary basis. Then the critical one for us is if something could be done on an indoor basis so that we could run significant meets during winter. We need an indoor 25-water that we can run a pretty big event in that is not at MSAC. That would be great, wherever we could get that, to be honest.

Hayden COLLINS: Or in Traralgon, so that we end up with some kind of equity across Victoria, because we are constantly sending people to Gippsland and it does not feel very fair to our members that exist in Mildura. So it is that kind of piece that we are probably interested in in terms of the short-course kind of inside spaces. How do we get a model that allows us to share it across the state, rather than just consistently go to the same region?

Sarah MANSFIELD: And this might seem like a sort of tangential question, but there are a lot of pools that are being built by local governments, but usually with state and federal government funding. Are you ever given the opportunity to provide input to those projects – because I know, having been on local government, we had a few in our region that were developed, but I was not aware of Swimming Victoria being involved.

Jason HELLWIG: No, and I think again, coming back to the legacy opportunity, to create a knowledge bank for the design and build of these assets is a serious opportunity, because (a) it gives us the chance to ensure that things are done sensibly and appropriately, not just for the local community but for the long term, and there is also an innovation piece here. We are aware of the significant costs involved in running a swimming pool, particularly in a cold climate, and we need to just confront that. There are ways to do it, and I

think it would be great for Victoria to build up a specific knowledge base around this type of community asset, design principles that make it really ready and appropriate for the future, and really ready and appropriate for the future across the entire community, and with the appropriate lowest kind of energy footprint and cost possible. That would be an enormously positive legacy to sort of resurrect from a clearly disappointing, arguably bewildering but nonetheless real situation around something that was deemed to ultimately have too big a price tag. So for a significantly tiny bit of that total potential cost, we could do something where Victoria could be a genuine innovator. We have got a developing track record for innovation. Swimming Victoria has led the world on the development of technology in swimming officiating that you are now seeing at world championships. We have done that over the last two years. We had a pipe dream of seeing that in 2032. It is going to be on display next year at the Paris Olympic Games, and that has all come from an investment that we have made of our own – Swimming Victoria – with no other funding to develop that technology, get it set up into the two venues at MSAC, trial it during the world championships last year and give world aquatics access to it. They were so pleased with it that it is now being used at world championships and Olympic Games at a very modest cost. In fact we pick up the cost. But that reputation for innovation and really kind of clever, future-looking activity is something that we would love to see come out of the ashes of this situation. We hope that there is a will from government to grab that opportunity.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes, because I think we often see that swimming pools can become a bit of a political issue, and decisions around their location and design are not necessarily informed by, it sounds like, what might be best for the long-term health of swimming.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. There are always the inevitable different community interests, and I think there is misinformation and misunderstandings. Swimming clubs are not the enemy of aqua aerobics, to put it really simply. These activities can exist very comfortably side by side in a really vibrant, healthy, positive setting where everyone does well. We have an opportunity to create a kind of base plate of knowledge and information that could be really helpful and transformative for aquatics facilities and all of the user groups, including our sport, which would be great.

Hayden COLLINS: Which can influence internationally but also then pick up the learnings that exist internationally in some of those colder climates, because they do exist.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Mansfield. Mr McIntosh.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes. Thanks to you both for being here. You made a comment earlier about 90 per cent of your income coming from your membership. I was wondering if you could just talk us through what that membership looks like – where are they, and what are the demographics? Who are our Victorian swimmers?

Jason HELLWIG: In 2017–18 we had 11,000 members. As of 30 June this year we had 15,300. The sport is growing: 6300 from country and 9000 from metro; 62 clubs in country and regional Victoria and 71 in Melbourne. The really interesting stats, though, are that swimming membership represents 49 countries around the world. Swimming members have cultural and family backgrounds from 49 different countries, and from this year's member insight survey, one-in-four families that are involved in swimming speak a language other than English at home. So it is very much starting to reflect the broader diversity of the whole Victorian community.

A couple of other examples for you – seven or eight years ago less than 20 per cent of our club presidents were women and less than 20 per cent of our club head coaches were women. As it stands today, 46 per cent of our club presidents are women and 44 per cent of club lead coaches are women. It is a really positive change and positive trajectory that the sport is on to connect with and reflect and encourage the broadest possible range of the Victorian community to engage with it.

Tom McINTOSH: One stat I just missed was the clubs that were metro v. regional.

Jason HELLWIG: Sixty-two clubs are in the country, 71 are in Melbourne.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes, wow – great breakdown – and I wanted to ask a follow-up to that. You also mentioned growth in an earlier contribution, and you have actually just picked up on that again. That is massive growth – 35 per cent or something in recent years. Where is that occurring? There is a big number that are in the regions from what you are showing here, but where have you seen that growth in those recent years?

Jason HELLWIG: It is spread pretty well across the board, which is something we are really pleased about. Geelong has been one of the real success stories for us. It has been incredibly strong, the growth down there. Gippsland has historically been a very strong part of swimming. Bendigo, Warrnambool – we have got really good growth and really good people, great coaches and great volunteers in those parts of Victoria doing great work. We had a very successful country long course championships last year in Mildura – the first time the sport had been there for a very long time – and the Sunraysia district, which had been really struggling, has flourished. They took the leap of running this thing, which was a stretch, but it has really kicked on incredibly well.

When we were going through COVID, Hayden, I and the board mapped out a whole range of scenarios. You go through that COVID thing of the existential crisis and then the uncertainty, but we sort of looked at various scenarios at a plus one-, two- and three-year post-COVID landscape, and certainly where we are at is very much at the more optimistic end of where we thought we would be. As a skill-based sport we were really concerned about whether people would come back to it. The embrace of the community back into swimming has been remarkable, something we are incredibly proud of, and they deserve all the credit; the swimmers and their parents and their coaches have been amazing.

Tom McINTOSH: I met one of those women who are one of your leaders down at Sale a few weeks ago. We had the sod turning for a new pool at Sale – the Wellington shire there. That will be a new indoor 25-metre pool. I heard you saying that you have got great assets in eastern Victoria, so I apologise that we are getting another one.

Jason HELLWIG: No, that is okay. We do not begrudge a swimming pool. It is a great thing. It is a very positive challenge to have – that we need more of them. There is a community demand and need for it, and as I said, it is not just about swimming. The Learn to Swim piece is really critical as well. It all kind of feeds in together.

Tom McINTOSH: With those 15,300 members and that annual calendar in Victoria – obviously you have got local meets and then regional meets – what does that annual calendar look like, excluding the events that come into the state?

Jason HELLWIG: So our stuff?

Tom McINTOSH: Yes.

Jason HELLWIG: We run about 17 events per year – various kinds of championships and support meets – and this year we have launched back into running an open water championship again, which will be in Geelong in early December.

Tom McINTOSH: Actually, I just read somewhere the other day – it may not be you guys – that the Lorne Pier to Pub is the biggest open water swim in the world, I think, or the Southern Hemisphere.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. We are really pleased to have an open water championship event back that is also open to the public to support that market and support that community demand.

Tom McINTOSH: My colleague Mr Galea –

Hayden COLLINS: Maybe just one more thing – we will not give you an exact number, but if we are running 17 meets across the rest of the state, there would be at least two or three going on every weekend in all sorts of different locations. We could find a number if you were looking for that, but it would be 200 or 300, if not more, swim meets on every year in Victoria.

Tom McINTOSH: Wow.

Jason HELLWIG: It is a busy program. If you want to swim every weekend, there is something for you to do.

Tom McINTOSH: I need to work on my swimming. My colleague Mr Galea mentioned before the FINA world championships that the government supported in December. There were also the world championship trials that the government also supported in Melbourne in June. I think they were the precursors to the Japanese

championships. What do you think the reasons are for Swimming Australia wanting to hold these events in Victoria? Why do you think that has played out?

Jason HELLWIG: MSAC is a great venue and Melbourne is a great city. I know that we are all very proud of our state. There is a really practical piece to it, which is that having an international venue so proximal to the CBD is an incredible asset and advantage that is not super common. So that is kind of the obvious piece. If Melbourne wants to really nail this thing of the 'sporting capital' stuff, these sorts of opportunities help realise that. I think we have the footprint of a great venue, but it needs some help, and it is going to need some help over the next decade as the pools kind of reach their end of life and need some significant work. But you will travel the world, and you will struggle to find a venue that matches what we are very fortunate to have in Melbourne.

Tom McINTOSH: I really like what you were saying before too about the Traralgon Gippsland regional centre that just opened a couple of years ago – that aquifer, 65 degrees, 650 metres below the earth – but that circular economy where we are getting the best value ongoing out of the investment. And I think what you were saying earlier in your previous contribution about ensuring that we are using standards that are set for the world, and I think given in Melbourne we have got that investment in science, in engineering and all this other stuff going on, I just really want to support what you were picking up on earlier about that design element.

Jason HELLWIG: We have a real opportunity, you know? It takes some real clarity of thinking and a genuineness of support to come together as a combination of agencies – government, sport, the tertiary sector et cetera – but I genuinely hold the view that we could create something incredibly valuable. And talk about a circular economy – we have got to think about how we as an organisation continue to grow and diversify our revenue so that we can invest in the sport in ways that are sustainable, which is not about relying on a sponsor of some sort of fictional nature to come knocking on your door but what is meaningful work related to our core purpose that could make the sport better on all fronts and help us be able to invest in swimmers, coaches, volunteers, technical officials and things like that. That is I think a very obvious example of something that could be incredibly valuable to the whole swimming community and aquatics environment led from the Victorian position.

Tom McINTOSH: You make me feel like getting in the pool. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McIntosh. I believe Mr Davis had one final question.

Melina BATH: Can I have some questions?

The CHAIR: And also Ms Bath, certainly.

Melina BATH: Thanks, Chair, and thank you very much, gentlemen, for being part of a health-giving and life-saving sport. Not only does it have that sporting aspect to it, but it also has lifesaving, as we know we are surrounded by water in Australia, and we have many dams and rivers. You mentioned learn-to-swim programs and the huge waitlist. Has the decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games disadvantaged Victorian children in terms of swimming because of that massive waitlist that we see?

Jason HELLWIG: I do not think that relates to that. I mean, there is a pool here at Armstrong Creek that is not going to exist in any sort.

Melina BATH: So you cannot teach kids. Has there been – is there a disadvantage for our young people now in terms of swimming and learning to swim, now that the Comm Games is not here? Can you see any ramifications for that?

Jason HELLWIG: No. I think if we can get a legacy out of this that actually supports the development and ongoing maintenance of appropriate facilities around the state, then yes, but if that does not happen, then the waitlists are going to get longer and the challenges are going to become greater. So it is a decision that is still within our grasp if it can be made.

Melina BATH: Sure, and you mentioned that there is a \$60 million regional support fund?

Jason HELLWIG: \$100 million – 60 for facilities, 40 for workforce.

Melina BATH: Right, but if we are looking at facilities building – now, the GRAC cost somewhere like \$50 million itself, and you have got a long list. I am assuming you could provide us with a list of facilities that you would like to see. You have mentioned MSAC, but are there others? Could you give us, I guess, a profile on your top 10 or top 20 that need to be improved in Victoria?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, we could.

Melina BATH: That would be good. And in country Victoria, with our hat on in terms of this, you would not mind doing that?

Jason HELLWIG: That would be great.

Melina BATH: And even if you have the quantum, and these are ballpark, but if you have any background modelling on the quantum of costs for each one of those.

Jason HELLWIG: We will not have that. We are not sufficiently kind of –

Melina BATH: Sure – resourced, yes.

Jason HELLWIG: resourced to do that, but we can certainly give you a hit list of venues.

Melina BATH: That would be great, and it may well come to over that \$20 million, but that is fine and reasonable. You also mentioned the 60 regional clubs, which are fantastic, and we have some fantastic ones in Eastern Victoria Region and indeed many familiar to me. Would you be able to provide a list of those to us? I think we have talked about it, but would you mind providing that list?

Jason HELLWIG: Very happy to.

Melina BATH: Thank you. That sounds tremendous. Part of your conversation has been very positive. The opportunity for government to embrace legacy – the bottom line is if government does not, there is a risk that you are not going to have any of these facilities upgraded.

Jason HELLWIG: Yes.

Melina BATH: There is, yes. So what is your message to us here? We are making recommendations to government.

Jason HELLWIG: Let us not waste the opportunity to have a real legacy that will be a fraction of what the total cost would have otherwise been to deliver the event. We can get an outcome from this that can be enormously positive for our community, not just for today but well into the future. If we are really committed, we can do something around this innovation and knowledge piece that I think can continue to build our reputation for being truly innovative and world-leading in our knowledge bank around swimming. We are one of the few sports that has that opportunity because we sit at the top of the pile globally in this sport. We are not just a rank-and-file player in the swimming world. Australia sits at the top of the tree. I would love us to really continue to be seen as the kind of intelligence factory for the sport.

Melina BATH: Mr Hellwig, you mentioned about legacy in depth today. There is a twin legacy, though. There is legacy of the pool, because if you look at the Traralgon pool, it is an Australian standard pool, but the venue actually cannot hold a state championship. The venue is not big enough. It can hold 400 seats, but you get literally 1500 to 2000 people there. Can you speak to that?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes, I think that is part of the challenge. It is one thing to have a swimming pool that is either 50 metres or 25 metres long – that is great. If we are bringing 3000 people to MSAC, MSAC can somewhat cater for it, but in a regional setting if we are bringing 1500 people to town, they want to watch the swimming. It is very difficult. We were just in Wangaratta in August for our country short course championships, and it was challenging.

Hayden COLLINS: It was tight.

Jason HELLWIG: It was tight, right.

Melina BATH: So how many could you fit in there?

Jason HELLWIG: I think there were more people in there than could fit in there.

Melina BATH: Right, yes – than legally.

Hayden COLLINS: Comfortably.

Melina BATH: Thank you. Going back: 30 May, first discussion. This year, 18 July, gobsmacked, no go for the Comm Games. Again, were there any conversations in between times?

Jason HELLWIG: No.

Melina BATH: None?

Jason HELLWIG: None.

Melina BATH: None whatsoever. Thank you. Lastly, in terms of the technical officials, behind every meet there are always many, and one of them works for me – a very dear person who is certainly embedded in the sport. What is the danger that if we do not have these fantastic meets – for example, the Comm Games – we are not training our technical officials by the Olympic Games?

Jason HELLWIG: Yes. Look, everyone needs to be developed. The highlight is and should be the athletes; that is the whole purpose. But the enabling of the athlete, the experience, is through technical officials, volunteers, a whole workforce that goes into creating that circumstance and that opportunity. Australia will need to provide significant numbers of technical officials for a home Olympic and Paralympic games. Hopefully by then the technology we have developed here in Victoria will see most of those officials perhaps not necessarily on the pool deck but still doing their job in back of house. The whole ecosystem of people that goes into delivering these events is enormous, and I am grateful that you acknowledge that, because it is kind of what we spend a big chunk of our time doing.

Melina BATH: Training the trainers, training the officials.

Jason HELLWIG: Well, giving them the reason to participate in the first place and that sense of opportunity and access and enjoyment.

Hayden COLLINS: Establishing what the pathway should be and how they get there.

Melina BATH: Thanks, Chair.

Jason HELLWIG: That is kind of why community sport operates.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Bath. Dr Mansfield, I believe you have another question.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. You mentioned earlier that temporary swimming pools are notoriously difficult. Are you able to briefly explain why? And also, is that something that is well enough known across sporting bodies? For example, would Commonwealth Games Australia be aware of that or would other entities that were involved in putting the games on?

Jason HELLWIG: Look, they are becoming more commonplace at the same time, right. There are companies who specialise in this sort of technology. It is like drop-in pitches, if we want to make it relatable to something. Cricket drop-in pitches used to have a terrible rap, but in more recent times they seem to be the norm now and seem to work quite well. In short, temporary swimming pools have a reputation for leaking. You know, that is just the way it is.

The CHAIR: If there are no further questions, I would like to thank you very much for appearing today. It has been very useful. You will receive a copy of the transcript for review in about a week, and it will be published on the website. The committee will now adjourn for the day. Thank you very much.

Jason HELLWIG: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, members.

Committee adjourned.