

**DHW Ludus Infrastructure (Dale Wood) Opening Statement
Parliamentary Inquiry Victorian 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid
5 December 2023**

-PREPARED FOR THE INQUIRY APPEARANCE BUT NOT READ-

Thank you for inviting me [Dale Wood] to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Victorian 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid. It is understood that we are here today to answer questions regarding the business case prepared for the Commonwealth Games.

As indicated during introductions, my name is Dale Wood and I am representing DHW Ludus Infrastructure – an alliance established in January 2018 to leverage our owners’ combined 45 years’ experience in sport, entertainment and cultural venues and facilities. For context, DHW Ludus is a small business comprising two persons. We have a proud track record across Commonwealth, State and Local Government; sporting organisations; cultural institutions, professional sporting clubs and the private sector regarding the planning, development and review of such facilities.

As it relates to the business case prepared for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, I think it is worth noting some facts about our role:

- DHW Ludus was engaged by the Department, via a sub-contractor relationship with EY to provide an assessment of facilities nominated by the State Government to host the sports program (again nominated by the State Government), for the 2026 Commonwealth Games. The specific wording of our engagement was to:

- *Prepare a report in relation to the audit of sporting venues related to a major sporting event in Victoria. In preparing this report, we require DHW Ludus Infrastructure to advise us principally as to an audit of the infrastructure and venue options, optimised for the requirements of the event.*
- This piece of work was referred to as the Facilities Assessment and has been released publicly along with the Business Case itself and other related documents.
- The work on the Facilities Assessment commenced on approximately 10 December 2021.
- The focus of the Facilities Assessment was to undertake a desktop review of each sporting venue identified by the State Government as a host of a specific sport for the proposed 2026 Commonwealth Games.
- In essence, DHW Ludus' role involved providing comment on whether the nominated facility or site could reasonably host the relevant sport as part of the proposed 2026 Commonwealth Games.
- The role also involved considering potential necessary capital or permanent works (referred to from herein as Capital Works) to the facilities and sites in order to stage the relevant sporting programs for the Commonwealth Games. This was considered against probable opportunities for use of temporary overlay. By nature of the scope of work and its limitations that I'll summarise shortly, this was a very initial, high-level exercise. Supporting that we estimated the potential costs of such Capital Works using an order of magnitude approach. The cost estimate for any Capital Works was based on potential needs being married with historical projects of a similar nature whether that be in

Victoria or some other part of the country. The approach to costing again reflected the scope of work and its limitations.

- DHW Ludus' reporting on each nominated venue or site and sporting program comprised the following:
 - A statement as to the facility's or site's fit for the nominated sporting program;
 - Training venue opportunities where relevant;
 - A rating of the facility's or site's compliance for the staging of the relevant Commonwealth Games' sporting program at the time of writing;
 - A summary of major infrastructure issues, potential remedies and method of addressing (whether it be by permanent works or temporary overlay); and
 - A brief description of potential Capital Works at the facility / site
 - An order of magnitude estimate of Capital Works costs.
- Given the limitations imposed on DHW Ludus, the work to assess the facilities was desktop in nature. Key reference tools utilised by DHW Ludus included:
 - Online mapping platforms to understand the facilities' and sites' composition, surrounds and size;
 - Commonwealth Games Federation documentation regarding competition and training venue requirements;
 - International Sporting Federation guidelines for competition venues for events of the scale of the Commonwealth Games;
 - Documentation on certain facilities that the Department possessed (such as architectural plans); and

- Publicly available sources such as facility, sporting organisation and news websites.
- The work, by direction of the Department:
 - Was undertaken in a condensed timeframe to meet reporting deadlines;
 - Did not include any consultations, including with venue owners / managers or sports or formal, exhaustive site visits and inspections;
 - Did not include technical support by way of engineering assessments, planning advice, technical design and capital costing by a qualified quantity surveyor;
 - Did not include community or high performance demand assessments over and above facility requirements identified for the Commonwealth Games and relevant international sporting competition; and
 - Did not include an estimate of the operational cost required for temporary infrastructure to support capital works at the facilities and sites.
- Following is a brief summary of the findings of the Facilities Assessment:
 - It stood to reason that none of the facilities in their form at the time of the work in late 2021 and early 2022, were considered ready at that point in time for Commonwealth Games competition across field of play, spectator, media and participant requirements;
 - However in general, for those venues in the list presented within the Facilities Assessment Report at the time of submission to EY and the Department, with the delivery of the necessary temporary

overlay and with select Capital Works, it was assumed that facilities and sites would be compliant;

- During the procedures undertaken, it was noted that some facilities or sites would not be suitable for the sporting program tagged to them at the time. For instance, Gymnastics was originally selected to be staged at the Ballarat Sports Events Centre. There were also examples where DHW Ludus was requested to assess a sporting program at an alternate site during the conduct of the Facilities Assessment. One such example of this was Squash which was originally to be located in Shepparton, and was then relocated to Bendigo;
- There were also instances where sports and venues were added by the Government to the program during the conduct of the Facilities Assessment. These included:
 - Weightlifting / Powerlifting
 - 3x3 Basketball
 - BMX Freestyle
 - Mountain Bike Cross Country;
- The Facilities Assessment specifically identifies where facilities or sites were changed over the time taken to undertake the Facilities Assessment to its delivery to EY and the Department on 20 January 2022. This can be found on pages 18, 19 and 20; and
- DHW Ludus estimated an order of magnitude Capital Works cost for sporting venues of \$650m. At the time of release by the State in July 2023 (as part of the Commonwealth Games Budget), the updated capital budget for competition venues was \$650m. This number also fits within the Department's Business Case Capital

Works cost range for the sporting competition infrastructure as prepared by EY.

For the record, DHW Ludus was not engaged to write the Department's Business Case, nor did we directly participate in its development. The Facilities Assessment was appended to the Business Case.

As has been noted, the Facilities Assessment was released publicly by the State Government (via the Department) in September 2023. It includes specific reference to the scope of work we delivered (as agreed with EY and the Department) and the limitations of that work.

We hope the Committee has availed itself to the contents of the Facilities Assessment, comprising over 270 pages. I welcome any questions the Committee may have in relation to our specific piece of work.

Thank you.