

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 (*via videoconference*)

Andrew Dee, Chief Executive Officer, Volleyball Australia; and

Cori Wilder, Chief Executive Officer, Volleyball Victoria.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing today. Before we get started, I will just read out some declarations. 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, those 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 the 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.

Andrew DEE: Andrew Dee, Volleyball Australia.

Cori WILDER: Cori Wilder, Volleyball Victoria.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. I will just briefly introduce the committee as well. I am David Limbrick, South-Eastern Metro Region.

Melina BATH: Melina Bath.

David DAVIS: David Davis.

Joe McCracken: Joe McCracken, Western Victoria.

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

Tom McINTOSH: Tom McIntosh, Eastern Victoria Region.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Sarah Mansfield, Western Victoria.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Jacinta Ermacora, Western Victoria Region.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Northern Victoria Region.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We welcome you to make your opening comments and ask that they be kept to a maximum of around 10 minutes to ensure we have time for questions. Please go ahead.

Andrew DEE: Thank you, David. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today. Just by way of background, I have been CEO here at Volleyball Australia for about six years; prior to that, CEO of Rowing Australia for a dozen or so years; and just to put in context, I also worked with the Australian Sports Commission for over a decade and have worked with pretty much every jurisdiction in the country in bringing international events to Australia over many, many years. I just say that in order to lay the groundwork – that what I say here today is based on experience working with the various jurisdictions around the country.

Our submission or our main point of discussion really is around lost opportunity and some of the difficulties that the Victorian government placed Volleyball Australia in, and by way of background I think I should just take you down a bit of a time line of what transpired in our dealings with Visit Victoria and, more particularly, the Victorian government.

At about the same time as the Commonwealth Games was announced we started working with Visit Victoria to consider a proposal to host the Beach Volleyball World Championships in Victoria. That was well received. It was an exciting time. The Comm Games had just been announced, and there was real opportunity seen or

believed to be seen in bringing the Beach Volleyball World Championships to Victoria in advance of the Commonwealth Games, with a three-year program in advance of that bringing Beach Pro Tour events to build workforce and fan base and to bring to the region of Torquay an international event in advance of the Comm Games. That campaign of events was due to start in 2022 – 2023, 2024, then the world championships in November 2025 and then of course in March the following year, 2026, there was going to be the world championships.

We received a really positive response, and Visit Victoria joined with us in bidding for the world championships in Rome in June last year – a bid that was a competitive bid internationally which we won. We won the bid, and we won the right to host the 2022, 2023 and 2024 Beach Pro Tour events in the lead into that. Part of the consideration for that event or that series of events and the world championships was that the infrastructure for the world championships would have been able to be used by the Commonwealth Games the following year and that in fact the World Championships was about four or five times larger than the Commonwealth Games tournament and so therefore quite easily could cater for the infrastructure and workforce requirements that the games might have.

Moving forward, the first year of that campaign of events was signed off by the sports minister at the time just prior to the election, and we went about hosting that event in November and early December 2022, last year. Years two, three and four of that campaign were not contracted, although there was a good-faith undertaking that they would be. There was a cabinet submission – a detailed cabinet submission, I believe – ready for the incoming government to consider to round that out, and there was no reason to believe that that would not happen. In fact we invested heavily in the first year to build the infrastructure around the event to set up, I guess, for a new campaign of events. So there were a lot of sunk costs up front, and we expected to be able to recover those over the following three years. Now, as it transpired there was a terrible weather event. However, we were aware that Torquay was going to be a difficult location commercially, and the event was not a huge financial success last year because of those two things.

The challenging location was known. That was a point of discussion with the government, but we were told quite emphatically that there was no money for the event in metropolitan Melbourne and that we needed to choose a location somewhere on the Great Ocean Road coastline down even as far as Lorne. And we did actually look at many, many venues along that strip of coast, basically between Geelong and Lorne. We settled on Torquay at Elephant Walk. We put a four-court tournament venue in there, equal to anything in the world. We carted in 2600 cubic metres of sand. We had broadcasts around the world, and we went right in. We were all in on this event, thinking that not only would it be a success last year – from an event point of view it was – but that we would be returning in subsequent years to recover some of those sunk costs and to establish a presence in advance of the Commonwealth Games.

Unfortunately years two, three and four were not subsequently supported by the government. They chose to walk away from the volleyball component there and really left us with no home for the event, having already won the rights to host the championships. Leaving us with nothing really did two things: it was enormously challenging and has been enormously challenging financially to recover from that – and in fact we have not recovered yet – and it was reputationally just devastating both in terms of for the state of Victoria, for Australia and for us internationally. We had to find a new home for the event. Thankfully, South Australia has stepped up and come to the party and has agreed – we signed the contract recently – to host the world championships in 2025 in Adelaide. But that took many, many, many months – all of this year almost – to get that sorted. In fact the announcement was made only last week in Mexico when I was there at the 2023 world championships in Mexico. So I guess all's well that ends well in a way for us, in that we have found a home for the event, but it has been enormously frustrating and enormously damaging reputationally and really has taken an enormous amount of time away from what should have been lead time for the event in the planning and execution of those plans. Chasing a new host has not been easy, and it has put us quite a way behind.

These events have an enormous lead time requirement. There are lots of moving parts. For background, volleyball is the fifth biggest sport in the world by fan base, with 900 million-plus. It is one of the largest, top two or three, in terms of international members; there are 222. That is more than FIFA – that is more than soccer. I am not suggesting soccer is not bigger than us in terms of fan base, but in terms of international global reach it is enormous, and everybody knew around the world that Victoria had withdrawn from the hosting of that event.

That does not even touch on the legacy outcomes that the event would have had for the region and for Victoria more generally. Cori may be able to speak more to that, but with the Commonwealth Games then being cancelled, for volleyball, particularly in Victoria, it has been a double hit to us. A lot of the plans that we had for workforce and fan base development, participation, growth and all those sorts of things have really been torpedoed with those decisions having been made. I might leave it there. I have got many more points to reflect on during questioning, but thank you for your time.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. The loss of the beach volleyball world titles and the loss of the Commonwealth Games – so effectively Victoria has lost two major events. As you say, thankfully Adelaide appears to have – I think that was just announced on the weekend, wasn't it?

Andrew DEE: Correct. I was in Mexico last week where that handover was formally made. So the global announcement was last week, yes.

The CHAIR: So my understanding is that initially there was some agreement, like a [REDACTED] agreement, with the government on the beach volleyball world titles. When the government pulled out of that, was there any compensation there or was it just that it never went ahead?

Andrew DEE: No, there was nothing. The total campaign was in the order of [REDACTED] a year for three years to run a pro beach tour event – global reach, \$300,000 US prize money. It is a big event, right. So that was three years leading into the world champs with about a \$10 million to \$12 million price tag. It was a difficult concept because we were building everything from scratch, and we invested heavily in that knowledge and hardware up-front so that we could then use it in subsequent years. But no, no suggestion of compensation. In fact it took a very long time for that decision to come down, and it put us even more at a disadvantage because of that time frame – and not even a suggestion of compensation, no.

The CHAIR: And the relationship to the Commonwealth Games, if I am understanding correctly, is that infrastructure that would have been used for the world championships could have also been used for the Commonwealth Games. Is that correct? So you would get double usage out of it.

Andrew DEE: Correct. The frustrating part about that was that nobody really seemed to want to engage with us in a conversation about where we could locate that centre court. So that centre court would have had 4000 seats around it and would have to have been built from scratch, and we had no conversations about where that would be best located to suit both parties. We were open to where – we could have gone anywhere, but there was little interest in having that conversation, which was enormously frustrating. I thought that the planets had aligned and that everything just made complete and total sense, but I was gravely mistaken.

The CHAIR: In your opinion, the government was insisting on having a regional location for the beach volleyball championship world titles. Is it your opinion that the reason that they were doing that is because they were intending on using the same infrastructure for the Commonwealth Games?

Andrew DEE: I do not believe so.

The CHAIR: No. So that is a separate –

Andrew DEE: I think that was a convenient truth that, if it had been well enough planned together with the 2026 organising committee, we could have done that, but that was not a detailed part of the discussion. It was part of our proposal that that could happen, but there was no detail around that, and I do not really think it was a motivating factor to their decision in the first instance, no.

The CHAIR: So why was the government pushing for a regional area for it, in your opinion?

Andrew DEE: I do not know.

The CHAIR: You do not know.

Andrew DEE: No. Our first preference was Melbourne Park because of the infrastructure that already exists because of tennis – you know, media centres and all those sorts of things that we would have to build from scratch in a greenfield site. We could have put the courts on pit straight in Albert Park but we were told that that was not going to be supported and that there was a stretch of coastline between, as I said, Geelong and Lorne

that they found interesting. We looked everywhere. We even surveyed the cliffs of Bells Beach there, but we ended up at Torquay, which was a lovely location but a long way from being ideal.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I will pass to Mr McCracken.

Joe McCracken: Thanks very much for appearing. I just want to get a sense of – sort of going back to the start and those initial conversations – did you have many meetings at the start with the Victorian government to set up the involvement with volleyball in the Comm Games?

Andrew DEE: So volleyball in the Commonwealth Games – of course beach volleyball; we are not in the Commonwealth Games for indoor volleyball, just beach volleyball – is a core sport, and so that was part of the program. We had no discussion about that, nor did we have any discussions about where that would be. In fact I have had no communication from the Victorian 2026 organising committee at all about where the Commonwealth Games site would be, despite ringing and even offering to have a meeting about how we could work together to use the infrastructure that we were building for that event for the Commonwealth Games. All of my dealings were through Visit Victoria and the team there in terms of then putting a proposal to government.

Joe McCracken: Sorry, I just want to make it clear: you did not get anything forthcoming to you? You offered to have conversations, meetings, discussions, but nothing happened?

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Joe McCracken: Even though you are a core sport.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Joe McCracken: That is amazing.

Cori Wilder: I will step in and say that I did attend one meeting in Geelong shortly after being appointed CEO of Volleyball Victoria, but at that point in that discussion they had not listed, as Andrew said, where beach volleyball was going to be located. Ours was one of the only sports where they did not have an identified location for the sport. And a majority of the discussion was around legacy in terms of permanent venues that were being built, so noting ours was a temporary venue, there was not a legacy discussion around beach volleyball and how Volleyball Victoria may benefit from any legacy builds.

Joe McCracken: It does not sound like there was any particularly strong partnership that wanted to be bridged with you guys. Can you tell me when that meeting was, Cori, by the way – the one in Geelong you are referring to?

Cori Wilder: Yes. I believe that was in February. It was early this year. It was not long before the announcement of the cancellation of the games.

Joe McCracken: And who was there, apart from you, obviously?

Cori Wilder: No other sports that I had known were there. It was mostly department of housing and local councils, and it was for any of the regional areas as well, so they came down to Geelong. So it was a whole-games discussion, but primarily around the non-sport infrastructure beneficiaries – so workforce, Volunteering Victoria and housing primarily.

Joe McCracken: Okay. I just want to make sure for the record that there were no meetings with any ministers, and at the time it would have been probably Minister Shing and Minister Allan as well. You have had no discussions, no briefings, no contact, no emails, no written – nothing?

Cori Wilder: No. Minister Shing was there, and she spoke to the group, but there was nothing specifically for volleyball.

Joe McCracken: Okay. Was that the only time that you have had contact with Minister Shing in regard to the games?

Cori WILDER: Yes.

Joe McCracken: Okay. And as you say, nothing really came out of that for volleyball at all?

Cori WILDER: No. It was not really a discussion at that point. It was an announcement of, 'We are going to do this for legacy.' And then there would have been subsequent meetings, and then obviously those did not take place as the games were cancelled.

Joe McCracken: Yes. Okay. Thank you for that. If you are able to provide any notes from that meeting as well for the committee to look at and consider, that would be great, as well as the time and the date. Could you provide them, please?

Cori WILDER: I can, yes.

Joe McCracken: Thank you. I just want to get a broader picture of volleyball's contribution to Victoria. Are there any models that you might have had – events, lost revenue, that sort of detail that I am looking for? Have you got anything about that that you can provide us?

Andrew DEE: I can certainly provide you with the financial details for last year's event, and I must say the CEO of the 2026 organising committee – I think it was Jeroen – turned up to that event to have a look at what we were doing and we did discuss at that point the opportunity to work together on the Comm Games site and infrastructure and so forth, but nothing happened subsequent to that. We lost just over \$1 million on that event, and so, as I said, we are still recovering from that. Without the program, you know, the commercial link between those four years to go forward, it is a real disadvantage. It is a lost opportunity.

Joe McCracken: Would you have lost money on that event if it had been in Melbourne, for example?

Andrew DEE: Unlikely. Ticket sales would have been much easier to attract, and commercial partners would have been easier to attract as well. If we had been at Melbourne Park, we certainly would not have had the catastrophic weather event affecting the build like we had as well. We had to spend a couple of hundred thousand dollars mitigating for the weather, because that was during that state of emergency that we were in the build phase for the event last November, and that was also problematic. And in fact the parkland still has not recovered because of the state of the park in terms of the water inundation when we were there. So there are a whole range of issues that the knock-on effect of being regional really had on this event, and then the lost opportunity going forward of not being able to continue and have – you know, the main purpose of being there was to build towards the world champs and Commonwealth Games, so it is just a sad outcome.

Joe McCracken: I get the sense from what you are saying that it is a squandered opportunity, but it has been a big sledgehammer taken to volleyball.

Andrew DEE: Correct. It has.

Joe McCracken: That is awful. How many affiliated clubs are associated with volleyball in Victoria? I do not just mean – I am talking about all regional ones as well. Do you know off the top of your head?

Cori WILDER: Yes. We have 46 affiliated associations and clubs. Twenty-two of them are regional, in most of the major centres, and there is also a series of private providers that are affiliated in terms of their coaching accreditation, but their participants are not necessarily members.

Joe McCracken: Are you able to provide a list of those to the committee?

Cori WILDER: Yes, I can.

Joe McCracken: Thank you. And just broadly, what is the impact and the feedback that you are hearing from those clubs?

Cori WILDER: A lot of them are looking to activate more with beach volleyball. It is obviously difficult when you are not on the coastline –

Joe McCracken: I mean particularly about the cancellation of the games.

Cori WILDER: Yes. Obviously opportunities for the players that are currently playing on the Australian beach tour, there are lost opportunities there in the lead-up events as well as being involved in them even from a spectating perspective. There are not a lot of beach volleyball opportunities in Australia generally without things like this. Then in particular with our participation numbers at the youth level – so seeing and being a part of these big events, particularly the global events, from a pathways perspective. In Victoria obviously our weather is not as good as Queensland's, so we do not get to do beach as often throughout the year. On this opportunity for the youth, we have already seen a 26 per cent growth in beach volleyball schools cup teams coming through, and that has continued year on year for the past three years ever since COVID, so the expectation was that that was going to continue to grow. Something like this prevents both a facility opportunity for them to do clinics or camps, being able to use some of the venue space outside of the competition, as well as just the interest and the exposure to that version of the game, whereas in the school setting generally it is only the indoor version. Beach volleyball is wildly popular, in particular at the Olympic level, so having this exposure for them would have been a really great opportunity.

Joe McCracken: Thank you.

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

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair. Thank you both for joining us today. I would like to start with your discussion around the 2025 beach volleyball championships. That is November 2025 – is that right? Did you say that, Mr Dee?

Andrew DEE: Yes, correct.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Was there a funding agreement that had been signed with Visit Victoria or the state government?

Andrew DEE: Not for that year. It was signed for year one of that campaign. When we did the bid – and that was supported financially by the Victorian government as well, through Visit Victoria – the bid was for the world championships and then three years of events leading into the world championships. The first year was a signed contract. We had no reason to believe that years two, three and four would not be signed. In fact all indications were that they would be, but they were not signed alongside that first year. I do not know why there was a separation in years. I believe it was because of the upcoming election and different processes enabling the minister to sign at the time. But no, technically not for the world championships; no.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. So it had been signed and I guess delivered for that first year, but then the following years were not.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Michael GALEA: And do you have any details on the return on investment that this event would have had, or a business case?

Andrew DEE: No. That was all done internally by Visit Victoria and we were not privy to that analysis or the metrics associated with that. We clearly had milestones to meet in terms of number of teams and visitation and those sorts of things, and they did their assessment and said that they had come up with a recommendation to support, but I did not receive the information, no.

Michael GALEA: Sure. Thank you. If you can –

Andrew DEE: That is not unusual, by the way. It is not unusual; each of the jurisdictions, the tourism agencies around the country, do not normally release that information.

Michael GALEA: Yes, I understand. Thank you. And in general terms – and I realise each event would be different then – as the coordinating body for Australia, how much would an event like this cost to put up?

Andrew DEE: The budget for that event was just over \$3 million. So in terms of the world championships, sorry?

Michael GALEA: Yes, the world championships.

Andrew DEE: Okay, the world championships. The budget for that event coming out of the ground from scratch, in terms of everything needing to be built, was around \$25 million.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. And I note that –

Andrew DEE: Sorry to interrupt – at an existing site the core costs come back to about \$13 million to \$15 million. So at a tennis centre, for instance.

Michael GALEA: So \$13 million to \$15 million, say, if it was in Melbourne; \$25 million to do all the supporting infrastructure as well.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Michael GALEA: Yes. Thank you. And I note that whilst that event, as you say, will be in Adelaide, there is to be next month in Geelong Beach Volleyfest. Is that right?

Andrew DEE: Correct. That is right.

Michael GALEA: Are you involved with that as well through Volleyball Australia?

Andrew DEE: Yes. That is our event. So subsequent to the decision to walk away from the world championships and the lead-in events, I had further discussions with Visit Victoria about the implications of that, and they agreed to fund one more year of a beach volleyball festival in the region. We have moved it from Torquay to Geelong, I think partly to help us recover. In good faith I think partly they understood the situation we had been left in, and we are very grateful for that opportunity to host a similar event. It is not the same size and scale by any means, but it is certainly an international beach volleyball presence in Geelong. That will help us to recover and to smooth out the devastating impact of losing the world championships.

Michael GALEA: You said international events, so there will be international competitors at Volleyfest in Geelong too. Is that right?

Andrew DEE: Correct. It is a smaller scale, but yes, that is what we are intending.

Michael GALEA: And what sort of reach does that event have?

Andrew DEE: Similar reach – because of the lower tier, it does not have the global broadcast scale that the other events had. The event from last year and the world championships have a production company come in from overseas, and it is actually beamed via digital satellite straight over to Romania, where it is all produced and sent to the world. This one is a lower level, lower key. We will have domestic broadcast, and it is streamed basically via the international body's Volleyball World TV. It gets streamed around the world, but it is not directly broadcast, if you know what I mean.

Michael GALEA: Yes. Did you say it would be broadcast domestically, or was that through the same platform?

Andrew DEE: No. We have arranged for the finals to be broadcast on SBS, so it will go free to air. We have signed an agreement with SBS and Rainmaker SEN for production and broadcast.

Michael GALEA: Terrific. And are you in a position to disclose how much financial support Visit Victoria – the Victorian government – has provided to Beach Volleyfest for this year?

Andrew DEE: For this year? [REDACTED]

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Just to get a bit of a sense as well, it was interesting to hear you talking about how regular volleyball is not a Commonwealth Games sport but beach volleyball is. In terms of the participation rate amongst Australian volleyballers, where does the distinction lie? Is it predominantly one or the other? Is it roughly both? Are they sort of interrelated, or are they two very distinct sports that you look after?

Andrew DEE: No. They are very much interrelated. The AusPlay data says something like 300,000 people play volleyball in some way or another each year in Australia. In terms of the membership numbers, Cori, you might be able to help me out there a little bit with more of the breakdown, but it is largely interrelated.

Cori WILDER: Yes, it is. We approach it with most athletes that they play both and then they specialise. It is all the same skills – it is different playing surfaces, really. The rules otherwise are the same, so you can interchange as much as you want. In the school settings I mentioned it is almost entirely indoor delivered through School Sport Victoria. Then we do a few schools beach events, but it requires them to come to a designated area in order to have access to nets and courts. It is not often that there are as many stadiums obviously that can do beach volleyball as can do indoor.

Michael GALEA: So is it fair to say, then, whatever the opportunity to play is, there might be a beach volleyball event and someone who is more accustomed to the hardcourt will then play that, or even vice versa if that is the case? Yes, cool. Thank you. I think my time is up. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Galea. Now I go to Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: Thank you both for your evidence today. We are very appreciative. I want to ask you – our terms of reference on the committee in part relate to reputation. The head of Visit Victoria told this committee the decision to cancel the games had enhanced Victoria's reputation for running events. In your conversations with other sporting bodies, is that true or is that correct? Do you think it has actually enhanced our event reputation?

Andrew DEE: No, not in my experience. I meet regularly with CEOs of other sports – of the other Olympic sports. We meet every other Wednesday via videoconference to talk about issues, and I do not think any of my colleagues would agree with that statement either. In fact in the process of finding a new home, there is no doubt that our international body felt uncomfortable about the security of the event remaining with Australia, and it took some convincing for us to be able to rehome the event within the country. There were a few wisecracks about, 'As long as they don't walk away, Andrew.' 'Yes, okay. Thanks very much.'

David DAVIS: It has not made it easier.

Andrew DEE: It certainly has not made it easier, and I expect that Victoria for some time will be a place to avoid if you are wanting to put an event there.

David DAVIS: Thank you. I just want to go back to the [REDACTED] deal to host the 2025 beach volleyball world titles. I just want to run through some things quickly. Did you get a clean, clear explanation as to why the decision was made by government?

Andrew DEE: No. The explanation was that the numbers just did not stack up.

David DAVIS: Who approached you initially to host the world titles? Where did that come from?

Andrew DEE: Look, initially the New South Wales government approached us directly off the back of COVID to bring content to Australia. The idea and the concept was to finish the world championships on the stairs of the opera house. They took an enormous amount of time to say no – that they did not want to do that. I think they were inundated with other opportunities. So that is when I approached Visit Victoria to see if they would be interested, and it all coincidentally happened around that April period last year.

David DAVIS: Okay, so as you have indicated, you worked with Visit Victoria almost exclusively is what I am understanding – is that right?

Andrew DEE: Correct.

David DAVIS: Yes. And you signed an agreement?

Andrew DEE: For year one.

David DAVIS: Yes, for year one. Can you provide a copy of that signed agreement, please?

Andrew DEE: I can.

David DAVIS: Thank you. We know the event was to be held in Torquay. Did you have any early economic benefit figures on what the event would bring to Victoria?

Andrew DEE: No.

David DAVIS: No.

Andrew DEE: Nothing official. I had my own kind of notion of what it might do if we hit our visitation targets, but that was just my working.

David DAVIS: Right. And your president nationally, Craig Carracher –

Andrew DEE: Carracher, yes.

David DAVIS: Carracher – he said:

I don't understand how they can put their hand up, take their hand down, put it up and pull it back down. Is that how you felt as well?

Andrew DEE: Yes, we were left high and dry. Having won a competitive international bid with the support of Event Knowledge Services, which is an Australian-owned company now out of Lausanne that assists jurisdictions to bid for Olympic Games and world championships, having the support of the Australian Olympic Committee – John Coates personally did a video for the presentation – having put our reputations on the line and having won the bid, to then be told, 'Sorry, we're not interested anymore,' was devastating.

David DAVIS: I understand obviously the attempt was to coincide the 2026 games with the infrastructure used in the November championships. That is right, isn't it?

Andrew DEE: That was certainly the opportunity and the intention. Correct.

David DAVIS: On what date was your event cancelled?

Andrew DEE: I went back through my notes. It was at a videoconference conversation I believe on 28 February 2023, so earlier this year.

David DAVIS: February 2023? I am getting the impression the state government was considering the warm-up events were sort of problematic to cancelling the entire games. Is that a fair point?

Andrew DEE: I cannot speak to that. I do not know.

David DAVIS: Did you know whether the decision to cancel was one by the department, the minister or the Premier? Did that filter down to you? Did you get some indication of that?

Andrew DEE: I believe it was at ministerial level.

David DAVIS: Just two weeks after entering into the agreement, government informed Volleyball Australia they were no longer able to support the event. That is correct, isn't it?

Andrew DEE: We held our event in November last year, so the first iteration of the campaign. I wrote to Visit Victoria on 2 December, towards the conclusion of that event, saying that the location and the weather had been unkind. We were concerned about the financial outcome for the event and how important it was that we understood that the subsequent years were going to be supported. We had been waiting for a while, and we needed to know. It was not then until the back end of February that we got notification that they were not going to support the rest of the campaign.

David DAVIS: How were you notified?

Andrew DEE: Just at a teleconference or videoconference.

David DAVIS: We would appreciate the date on that too. That would be helpful. Mr Carracher also said:

We didn't get a satisfactory explanation, we were just bamboozled.

The reason they pulled the plug was never documented to us.

Have you received a satisfactory explanation since?

Andrew DEE: No.

David DAVIS: Really? The event was a qualifier, and you have obviously found a new city. Is there a qualifier city for the Commonwealth Games? Is that Adelaide or somewhere? How is that going to work?

Andrew DEE: No; world championships provide qualification points to the Olympic Games. Commonwealth Games is a smaller event. But they still use the same points allocation from world events at the Commonwealth Games, so it would have been subsequently part of that process. But it is not material really in the context of the Olympic qualification process.

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

Tom McINTOSH: Hi, thanks for your time. I was hoping you could briefly talk me through this sequence. I think it was 2022, 2023, 2024 world championships. Is that right? Can you just talk me through that again?

Andrew DEE: So 2022, 2023, 2024 was a leg of the world beach volleyball tour. It is kind of like the tennis, a grand slam tour around the world. It is kind of like the Australian Open is to the tennis circuit. That was going to be 2022, 2023 and 2024 with lead-in event opportunities, with the world championships being 2025. The world championships, to give you an idea, is 96 teams – 48 men, 48 women. It requires big courts, a stadium of at least 4000 seats – it is a big event. It has US\$1 million prize money on the event. It is a big world event. The last one that I attended last week was in Mexico, just outside of Mexico City, and the one before that was in Rome. This would have been the third or fourth time it had been taken out of Europe in its history. It is a very large and very significant event, and to give you an idea, next year the beach volleyball at the Paris Olympic Games will be virtually underneath the Eiffel Tower. That is how iconic, I guess, an event it is considered to be.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay. So the world tour – how many participants and what does it require, as a contrast to the world championships?

Andrew DEE: There are three tiers of world tour. There is what they call the Elite 16, which is clearly the top 16 pairs in the world; then there is a Challenge series, a little bit like the old ATP series in tennis; and then a Futures, which is the developing level. They are still international, they are still travelling around all over the world to compete, they just compete for different levels of prize money and benefits. We hosted the Elite 16 and Challenge events last year – so back-to-back weekends. You have got to make it worthwhile for athletes to fly in from other parts of the world, but it is part of a whole calendar of international events that needs to work for the athletes in the way that they would arrange and organise their travel. We did that last year back-to-back in Torquay.

Tom McINTOSH: When was that held?

Andrew DEE: The dates were the last weekend in November to the first weekend – I think it finished on 4 December. It went for the 10 days prior.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay November to December. And you anticipated how many people would attend that? Or hoped?

Andrew DEE: Well, several thousand. The centre court had 1500 seats and a large VIP marquee, court 2 had 500 seats and then there were courts 3 and 4 that were played as outside courts. We had a large stage, and we had an entertainment program – I mean, bands and evening entertainment for families and so on; it was quite extensive. We were looking at several thousand people coming up to watch from overseas and also from around Australia; we marketed heavily around Australia.

Tom McINTOSH: I noted Mr Galea asked you about some costs; I just want to check it was the same event. You talked about \$25 million for a greenfield. Is that for that event, or for the world championships?

Andrew DEE: No, that is for the world championships.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay. So what were the costs for the 2022 leg?

Andrew DEE: The budget was \$3.2 million I believe. We came in a little under budget, but our revenue target – of matching revenue – we were under by a long way. Because of, I think, the regional location, but the weather did not help either to be honest. Not much you can do about that.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes. That is the one the state government contributed to?

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: Correct. And how much was that?

Andrew DEE: The original grant was for [REDACTED], and then there was an additional consideration after the event because of the financial outcome, of [REDACTED]. That was the total of the contribution and we still made very little in terms of ticketing and sponsorship. The total loss was just over \$1 million.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay. So the original government support was [REDACTED], and after the event because of the outcome there was [REDACTED] additional support from the state government.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: When was that contract entered into?

Andrew DEE: I would have to go back and check exactly when it was signed.

Tom McINTOSH: Approximately?

Andrew DEE: Well, it would have been late July.

Tom McINTOSH: Of, 20 –

Andrew DEE: Of last year, 2022.

Tom McINTOSH: 2022, okay. And you are hopeful that the state government will support you in 2023 and 2024?

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay. Had you also had a similar conversation with the coalition, given we had a state election in November 2022?

Andrew DEE: No, I was dealing exclusively with Visit Victoria as the agency.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay. So you were dealing exclusively with Visit Victoria, not the government.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: Your hopes for future contracts – it was not the government you were hoping to have the contracts with, it was Visit Victoria. You were hoping for the relationship there to deliver those for the agency?

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: I am just trying to understand. If there was a new government formed – I have not got your words exactly, but you said you were disappointed with the government. But you were making financial decisions on the relationship with Visit Victoria, not a potential government that would be elected from the outcome of the election in November 2022?

Andrew DEE: Well, my experience around the country is dealing with the agency who do the due diligence around the metrics of what they are looking for from an event. They had proposed that it be supported, and to

me it did not really matter who the government was. The indications from the agency were positive, and I was not fully enough aware of the politics in Victoria to mind which side of government was in power.

Tom McINTOSH: So your frustration is with the agency, not with the political stripe of the day?

Andrew DEE: My frustration is with whoever made the decision to pull the rug out from under us, and I believe that was at government level – ministerial.

Tom McINTOSH: What rug was pulled? You did not have a contract.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: You made financial decisions based on a one-year contract and a state government that was going into an election, which could result in any stripe or party or combination. There was a lot of talk about independents and stuff coming up. You are talking about financial decisions that you feel hard done by, by governments that did not exist at the time.

Andrew DEE: In hindsight, had I known years two, three and four were not going to be supported, we would not have run year one.

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

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. Look, just to go into some of those time lines and figures a bit further, at what point were Volleyball Australia and Volleyball Victoria first brought into discussions around hosting the Commonwealth Games and being a sport in the Comm Games?

Andrew DEE: As a core sport, following the success in the Gold Coast in 2018, we were there from the beginning at CGA Australia level.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay.

Andrew DEE: We were advised once the games had been announced that we would be a core sport, and at CGA level, we were sort of in those initial briefings.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay. You said that the decision to, I guess, host the other volleyball activities that you have been talking about in Torquay or in a regional area was not linked to the games announcement. Was it convenient that the two things aligned, or do you think that there was some plan to link the two things together from the government's perspective?

Andrew DEE: I think there was a plan to link the two. I think the philosophy that the government had come out and spoken to the public about was a regional games. I think there was an obvious synergy then between placing a world championship regionally to build the fan base and workforce in the region that was proposed to be hosting the games. At that point there was only a vague suggestion that beach volleyball would be at Geelong. It had not been confirmed yet where all the sports were going to be. But it seemed that the location that was suggested for the Beach Volleyball World Championships followed the regionalisation philosophy of the government for the Commonwealth Games. But it was not said explicitly, no.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay. And the decision about the games, that decision happened before any partnership around the world championships?

Andrew DEE: Yes.

Sarah MANSFIELD: So, when you hosted the event down in Torquay, you mentioned that you had Mr Weimar come down and see that event. During that time were you able to convey any of the challenges you had faced hosting that event in that particular location? Yes, we did. We had a conversation in the marquee that was at the end of the court – we had a VIP marquee at the end of the court – about some of the challenges of building the infrastructure from scratch, how there would be opportunity to combine that with the Commonwealth Games, that we could move it anywhere though that was more appropriate if that was to be preferred. Again, we were not exactly sure still where the Commonwealth Games site was going to be, but given that it was all going to be temporary infrastructure, we believed that we could be accommodating. And

just how difficult it had been to do little things – well, not really little things – like setting up the required bandwidth for the broadcast to go out to the world. The cost of carting sand – we had 2600 cubic metres of sand brought in to Torquay and that would be a large undertaking. What do you do with that sand afterwards? There were all the logistics that need lead time and so on. So we talked about the challenges of setting up down there and hopefully that the Commonwealth Games site was going to be an accessible site given our challenges with trucks and bobcats and all sorts of things that we had had.

Sarah MANSFIELD: What were some of the other challenges that you faced in hosting that event in Torquay?

Andrew DEE: Number of volunteers. We did not have nearly enough volunteers to be able to do the sorts of things that we wanted to do. And things like technology, like I said. The broadcast bandwidth was just – we ended up having to work with Telstra NBN to set up the site with temporary digital infrastructure. Those sorts of things. It was very isolated. So volunteers, the number of people coming to watch – there just was not the population to fill the grandstand like we thought we might. We tried to enhance that with other entertainment to be broader and to attract families, but that was problematic. As I said, though, the weather really did not cooperate, and unfortunately at the time it was just freezing cold and wet, so not really conducive to beach volleyball with that Arctic wind coming out of the south.

Sarah MANSFIELD: And what about things like transport and accommodation?

Andrew DEE: Accommodation was okay. We stayed at The Sands, and then there were a number of other accommodation providers – that was adequate. Transport was extremely difficult. Getting from the airport to Geelong and Geelong to Torquay was problematic, and then we were required to have a shuttle bus that was basically on a loop, and having volunteers to actually staff the shuttle service was difficult as well. That was enormously difficult, but accommodation was fine.

Sarah MANSFIELD: I guess as you were going through that, thinking ahead to a much larger event like the world championships or the Commonwealth Games, did you feel that there were changes that needed to be made to that or learnings from that that needed to be applied, given that we were going to be hosting all these sporting events in multiple regional cities?

Andrew DEE: Absolutely. One of the things that struck us was the availability of just things like scaffolding to create grandstands. There were already competing interests, both in Victoria and interstate, for that infrastructure. How expensive it was to be carting it on the back of trucks into that region from other places. Even things like the number of portaloos that we needed to cater for the number of people we had anticipated – it was expensive to bring that in. And then bringing sand, bringing truckloads of sand in was expensive. Everything had a premium added to it because of the regionalised location.

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

Jacinta ERMACORA: Thank you very much, and thank you for coming along today. I do feel for that weather event that you had. I come from a fairly windy part of the world, but that really does sound like extraordinary bad luck really to experience such a dramatic weather event when you are actually setting up.

Andrew DEE: Yes, it was terrible. The rest of the construction in the area was actually suspended for that period of time, but because events have deadlines and they start when they start, we ploughed ahead. Just as an example, after we had laid all the electrical cabling, we then had to go back and re-lay it and lift it up off the ground to stop it from shorting out because of the groundwater that was still lying around, and then we brought in mountains of sand to create paths so that people were not sloshing through the mud.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Yes, that is quite extraordinary. You are representing the peak body for beach volleyball for Australia, and then we have got Victoria here today as well. Presumably you play a strategic role in putting the role of beach volleyball into the context of, say, the sporting visitor economy in Victoria, for instance, or in Australia, for instance. What proportion of the sporting visitor economy would you say beach volleyball is?

Andrew DEE: I do not have any data to compare us to others sports and the total visitor economy. We are a tier 2 sport, we are not cricket and we are not women's football. We have a small but important role to play. I

will give you an example. Our Australian Volleyball Schools Cup, which is an indoor tournament – it used to be in Victoria but is now up in Queensland – pre COVID was the largest secondary school sports event in the Southern Hemisphere. It had some 6000 students from year 7 to year 12 play in that event, and its record was 550-odd teams, pre COVID. We are rebuilding that. But it is a massive sport at that level – huge throughout Asia and huge throughout South America, Europe, and North America. Everyone plays volleyball, so when we get these international events in Australia, you see teams from all over the place come and participate. In terms of visitor numbers, I do not know how we compare.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Okay. I think sometimes we have to look at the return on investment as well, and obviously that has been distorted through different events and so on. Do you have any figures, as a peak body, on that kind of scenario?

Andrew DEE: For this particular event or for the other events? Depending on the demographic and the location, I know through working with other jurisdictions that they have multipliers per bed night. We have certainly done the analysis for our other events. For instance, the school event has a \$10 million-plus economic value. It really is all about sports tourism and brand alignment for us, and that is what, I guess, we propose to the regions that we go to. We run a lot of events throughout Australia on that basis. We run a leg of our beach volleyball tour, our domestic pro tour, in Cobram, and they provide us with support to go there. Similarly, we do the same in Bunbury in WA, Coolangatta, and Mollmook in New South Wales. Regional councils are often very keen to have us come to their region to run an event. Say, at the Mollmook event we would have 140-odd teams in five different divisions – senior athletes – there for four nights spending money and staying in hotels. We had a bushfire recovery event in Mollmook two years ago. We are back there next year. So we are aware of that. It is a little bit different for different jurisdictions and different areas – regional or metro – in terms of the multiplier, but you are aware of how that works.

Jacinta ERMACORA: There is definitely a difference, as you said, between, say, athletics in the Commonwealth Games and beach volleyball or swimming in terms of the size and pool. And even when you contextualise the sporting visitor economy within the broader tourism visitor economy in Victoria, say, and then you contextualise the visitor economy inside the actual Victorian economy, I guess it is fair to say that volleyball is a small but wonderful part of the story of sports visitors.

Andrew DEE: Having said that, in a direct comparison with the Commonwealth Games in Queensland in 2018 on the Gold Coast, beach volleyball had a stadium facility built from scratch at Coolangatta Beach at Elizabeth park. The grandstand was 4000 seats. We had 19 sessions throughout the entirety of the tournament, and every session was sold out. It was, if not the most successful, one of the most successful sports in Queensland and was highly regarded, to the point where John Bertrand, the chair at the time of Australian swimming, was quite envious of the reputation that Coolangatta Beach was receiving amongst all of the participants at the games. So it is enormously popular, you know.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Yes, but I think you gave some figures earlier about no actual permanent legacy for infrastructure –

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Jacinta ERMACORA: and also I think the grandstand that was going to be built was going to have 1500 and a corporate tent as well. That is what was proposed or planned for the Comm Games in Victoria. So does that mean that maybe due to our weather there is less participation in volleyball in Victoria than Queensland?

Andrew DEE: No, not really. The grandstand around the lead-in event court was 1500. I believe – not that I have any figures – that the Commonwealth Games grandstand was intended to be 4000 or more, because it aligned beautifully with the requirements for the world championship grandstand, which is a minimum 4000 seats. So I think the plans for the Commonwealth Games presence for beach volleyball were similar if not more because of the success in 2018 in Queensland.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Ermacora. Ms Bath.

Melina BATH: Thank you, Chair. And thank you very much, Mr Dee, for being here and presenting to us. I just want to go to the \$15 million that was slated for your Commonwealth Games capacity-holding for you to

function to run. Do you know where that money went? Have you ever heard of where it is going to be reprioritised to?

Andrew DEE: No. No idea.

Melina BATH: I am interested in looking at your contract. You have said that you had a signed contract for year one and then an agreement but not signed for years two and three for the event. Was there any payment left over, and did you receive any payment for the breach of that contract?

Andrew DEE: No.

A member: Sorry, Chair – was there a contract?

Andrew DEE: No, there was no contract that –

Melina BATH: For year one.

A member: There was no contract.

Melina BATH: There was a signed contract for year one.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

A member: Yes, which was paid an additional payment.

Melina BATH: Yes. Just in speaking about the importance of beach volleyball, we know that Olympic legend Natalie Cook has been quite vocal in her distress and disappointment about the loss not only of this contract but of the Commonwealth Games, and we saw that she said:

It is devastating for all sports for Victoria to drop the ball and not offer any solutions. It is completely un-Australian. And she also said that:

They are clearly untrustworthy and unable to manage their projects.

Is this something you have heard widely from other past successful volleyballers and beach volleyballers?

Andrew DEE: Do you mean in terms of the attitude and the response from Natalie?

Melina BATH: The sentiment, yes.

Andrew DEE: Look, we are all disappointed that the athletes will not be playing at home at a home Commonwealth Games prior to or in the lead-up to the Brisbane 2032 games. It is enormously important for our athletes to play at home. A home games not only brings people to the games, it also brings the teams down here to acclimatise and to test their travel plans, and there is a knock-on effect for visitation that goes well beyond the games themselves and the spectators that come here to watch them. Our athletes are already in preparation for 2032, and our plan to host a world championships and the Commonwealth Games was going to add to their preparation, there is no doubt about that. To not have that opportunity is devastating. Fortunately we have found a new home for the 2025 world championships.

The Commonwealth Games in Queensland brought the attention of the world to Queensland and established Queensland as a host of those games and, for beach volleyball particularly, an amazing tournament. That opportunity is now lost and, I would suggest, not just lost but diminished for some time to come.

Melina BATH: Certainly. Thank you. We know how successful Natalie Cook has been – five Olympic games and associated Comm Games and the like. That participation, performance and pathway – can you just speak a little bit more about the whole engagement and what having a home-based games can do?

Andrew DEE: I was fortunate enough to work with the Australian Institute of Sport on the Olympic athlete program from 1995 to the conclusion of the games and then some time beyond that at the AIS. The amount of interest that a home games develops both in the pathway and participation areas – it has an enormously positive impact on the health budget – is considerable, and then the obligation of the host country and the expectation on

the host country from other countries and international bodies to host events in the lead-up to those games is enormous. Unfortunately it is the sports that take the financial risk on those events despite the economic benefits really being with the jurisdictions that host them. We need to consider that at a corporate level going forward as to how we manage those risks for those organisations that are putting their hand up to host these events, but there is no doubt that a home games increases the interest in activity across all the sports that are on the program. One follows the other quite naturally.

Melina BATH: Thank you. Just finally on the Commonwealth Games, the cancellation and the reaction, how exactly did you learn that the games were cancelled? Did you learn, like the rest of us, through the television in July, or was there some other mechanism?

Andrew DEE: No. I learned through the media. In fact one of my colleagues, one of the CEOs of the other sports, sent a note to us saying, 'I've just heard the games has been cancelled.' And then an hour later it was on the media.

Melina BATH: Okay. So there was no prior comment to you or respect given to you about, 'Guess what?'.

Andrew DEE: No.

Melina BATH: Okay. Thank you. Just talking about the weather events – I come from South Gippsland, and we have beautiful beaches there that are frequently windy and the rest of it – do you feel, in terms of a Melbourne event, that those weather events could be mitigated better?

Andrew DEE: We look at our business model at the moment, what with increasing sea levels, and we are always subject to tides and large swell and so on. We are always trying to find sections of sand on beaches, because I believe that beach volleyball itself should be near or on the beach – we should be able to see the beach. So we looked far and wide for a location that had that money shot over the ocean, and we found that in Torquay, without being down on the beach. We are an outdoor sport. The players play in all weather conditions. That is what we expect to have to do. However, the mitigation really is in bringing the events to established venues like tennis centres. They are a perfect match. In fact the championships in Mexico were held in historic bullrings. It was quite spectacular. It is rather risky for us to be down on the beach.

David Davis: We do not have any of those, though.

Andrew DEE: No, we do not have any bullrings – plenty of tennis centres, though. Can it be mitigated? Sure – the orientation of courts and stuff like that.

Melina BATH: I will go one more, Chair. Thank you. Also, as you were progressing through this whole debacle, were there doubts forming in your mind that Visit Victoria and government departments just did not have the expertise required to drive the successful outcomes of the Commonwealth Games or hold these large events? Did it manifest in your mind as you went along?

Andrew DEE: No, not really in terms of expertise. You know, Victoria is well known for having large events, and we all look at those and have attended those. We thought that the expertise existed, and that was part of our pitch actually to the international body. I do not know where it all went wrong. They just were not engaging at all.

Melina BATH: Last question. I will reframe my question in relation to –

The CHAIR: Sorry, Ms Bath, your time has run out. I will go to Mrs Tyrrell.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Thank you, Chair. I would like to start with one question following on from Mr Davis. Mr Dee and Ms Wilder, you both have extensive experience in your field of volleyball, in sports administration and events, yes?

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: That is good. I would just like to gauge what your reaction is to the evidence we have heard from previous witnesses' statements that cancelling the games has enhanced Victoria's reputation.

Andrew DEE: To me that does not seem logical. I am sorry.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Ms Wilder?

Cori WILDER: And yes, I agree with Andrew. I am not sure where that conclusion comes from.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Okay. So if we want to narrow the scope to Victoria's volleyball reputation, have you got a gauge on that yet?

Cori WILDER: I am not sure about the reputational impact, but I can speak to the participation and pathways impact, and that is where it is significant for us in having opportunities.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: You can elaborate on that if you like; you have got time.

Cori WILDER: Yes. It is really around having both the events Andrew spoke to as lead-in events for our emerging athletes as they are building their athletic careers and what we propose and pitch as volleyball as an emerging sport in Victoria and growing rapidly – it is the fourth most participated in high school sport now. It is around what we can propose to them – that this is an Olympic sport, it is a Commonwealth Games sport and those are going to be hosted in our country. That is our pitch to them and to pick us over basketball or netball – netball in particular, Aussie rules not being a Commonwealth Games or Olympic sport. It is a big driver for us for participation and for emerging athletes from Victoria, which have been wildly successful – many Olympians. That is where the disappointment lies with us.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Sticking with the sport itself, I know that in all other organisations, especially regional, because I am regionally based, volunteers are such a major resource for us. What is the volunteer force in volleyball in Victoria?

Cori WILDER: It is driven primarily by passionate members, and our beach affiliate has about 300 members who were a large source of volunteers for the Torquay event last year and would have been so for the lead-up events and for the Comm Games. I know that was something they looked forward to, and an opportunity to bring regional associations down here to the Melbourne and peninsula areas – it is not just the Geelong area; it would have been from all over the state.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Did you have a volunteer group working towards the Commonwealth Games before they were cancelled? Were they organising and dedicating their time to it?

Cori WILDER: Not yet. That discussion had not been had yet. Part of our 2023–26 strategy that we were working on as Volleyball Victoria was with the mindset that ending in 2026 with the Comm Games, what opportunities that would have led for workforce for us as well in emerging associations. Obviously that strategy is still there, but the opportunities for volunteering will have to come from elsewhere.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Okay. Did you find that any of your volunteers were disheartened by the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games?

Cori WILDER: There was a general sense of disappointment across our membership. Specifically volunteers I could not say, but the general sentiment was disappointment, yes.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: So to say that if some were disheartened and they might not volunteer their time in the future to future events because of the cancellation of the games – is that still yet to be determined over time?

Cori WILDER: I do not believe the cancellation will mitigate their desire to volunteer at all, but it has not been spoken about specifically.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Okay. All right, thank you very much. I am done.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mrs Tyrrell. I note, Mr Dee, during your introductory remarks you stated that you had some other things that you would like to put on the record. Is there anything else that you feel the committee should be aware of or take into its considerations as part of this inquiry?

Andrew DEE: Look, we have spoken about financial risk, reputational damage, lost opportunity, and I spoke briefly about the risks that sporting organisations like ours take in actually bringing these events to Australia and trying to engage with jurisdictions to support them. I guess what I would say is that the need to know is essential. The lead time for these events to be put on is significant and there is a lot of work to be done, so these events can often be compromised when decision-making takes too long in a vacuum. The member of the committee that raised the issue of me expecting support from a government for an event that did not exist – yes, that is technically true, but in reality we had been given undertakings that these events would be supported, because we went and made undertakings ourselves. You cannot not. If you do not make those undertakings, you cannot get the event, because the lead times do not enable you to have the luxury of waiting until all the i's are dotted, t's are crossed. There is a good-faith element in bringing these events to the country.

International bodies, this is what they do. Volleyball World has a joint venture partnership with CVC Capital. CVC Capital are the ones that back the F1 Grand Prix. These guys do this for a living. They are not out there just hoping to find a location for their event; they play for keeps. And so the undertaking on sports to be able to do that needs the support of government, and it needs the consistency and the security of that support in order to be able to deliver. On this occasion it fell over. The reputational damage is significant. Other jurisdictions in the country will be preferred over Victoria for some time to come both internally within Australia and also by international bodies overseas. I think that is just a fact that will play out over time. Then as people start to forget and trust is rebuilt, those sentiments may change. But for the short term at least, short to medium term, that is the reality that we will have to face. I have been questioned, as I said, along those lines internationally as recently as last week.

The CHAIR: So if I am hearing you correctly, Mr Dee, that sounds like a change in the way that you view risk and the risk of interacting with government. Is that sort of –

David DAVIS: The Victorian government.

The CHAIR: Well, the Victorian government. Is that something where you have had to change your considerations internally?

Andrew DEE: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: Yes, okay. I believe Mr Davis and Mr McIntosh have a question.

David DAVIS: Mine was very much following up on that, and specifically with setting up future contracts with the Victorian government. Will you approach this differently? Will you seek greater assurance? How will that operate? What will you do with that? No doubt you want to bring events here, but there is obviously a hesitation.

Andrew DEE: Without going into detail, the contractual arrangements with awarding the event to another jurisdiction already have elements within them that are a reflection of the current circumstances, or the circumstances in Victoria. So it has already played out.

David DAVIS: Adelaide.

Andrew DEE: Yes. So we certainly would approach it differently. We would certainly want undertakings and assurances. We would certainly want sanctions and penalties for breach of contract. It appears that the Commonwealth Games had a watertight contract for Victoria, and there has been a payment made on the back end of that as compensation. We did not have any of that. We would certainly undertake to be more rigorous in our – never in our wildest dreams would you have thought that the Commonwealth Games would be cancelled after signing a contract, and I must say that having had the minister's signature on year one of this campaign, we were not entertaining the thought –

David DAVIS: That was Minister Allan?

Andrew DEE: Minister Pakula.

David DAVIS: Minister Pakula, right.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr McIntosh.

Tom McINTOSH: I think that just highlights the point I made earlier: that you had a signed contract on year one, and given the years of experience that you outlined at the start of this session, I do not know many people who would operate in any business capacity without a contract to make financial decisions. You have outlined that there was a loss made on 2022 that the government supported in full and additionally. As you said, you have got the whole country to choose from. It sounds like these are very logistic-heavy events and high costs. I had a look at your media release from four months ago for Adelaide. It talks about 1000 cubic metres, which works out to be 353 tonnes, of sand needing to be trucked into the centre of Adelaide, which is a huge cost, and is a huge emission output, I would imagine. So you must have other avenues of finance. I had a look on the media release. It talked about Hancock Prospecting. So that is Hancock Prospecting as in Gina Rinehart, I imagine.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: As an organisation that is dealing with vast sums of money, vast volunteers, the economic management you are taking for your operation – so apart from the government grants that you endeavour to obtain to support your events, you also have commercial sponsorship; I think it was Scape and Hancock Prospecting. What sort of percentage of your revenue or what size do those sponsorships look like?

Andrew DEE: In broad terms, without disclosing commercial-in-confidence information, the commercial side is about a third federal government support, where we are looking at support from the federal government, and then the state support. The more we can be successful in our ticket campaign and in our commercial side, of course, the more successful the event will be. Things like legacy programs take money as well to implement, so that will be phased in as revenue grows. So the support for the event comes from various sources, commercial and non-commercial.

Tom McINTOSH: And at the end of the day you and your organisation take responsibility for running the event and the event's success.

Andrew DEE: Correct.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay, thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McIntosh. We have got a very small amount of time. I think Mr Davis has one short question.

David DAVIS: Yes, and I note the list of sponsors on your website; I count 19 of them. There is not a single one that is a Victorian government linked one that I can see. Is that accurate? There is Queensland, there is New South Wales, there is the Australian government. I could go on. I make 19 – I could be wrong by one or two – but not a single Victorian entity.

Andrew DEE: That would be correct.

David DAVIS: I just wanted to follow back to these issues about rebuilding trust and so forth. So there was no minister other than Martin Pakula who engaged with you, as I understand it. In terms of signatures and so forth, he was the one that mainly engaged with you, was he?

Andrew DEE: As I said, most of my dealings were through the agency, but I believe it was Minister Pakula, yes.

David DAVIS: So nothing from Jacinta Allan or Harriet Shing?

Andrew DEE: No, not to my knowledge.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Davis. I believe we are out of time. Thank you so much for appearing today. You will receive a copy of the transcript for review in about a week. Thank you again, and the committee will take a break for lunch and return at 1 pm.

Witnesses withdrew.