

VERIFIED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2015–16

Melbourne — 19 May 2015

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Mr John Eren, Minister for Sport,

Dr Pradeep Philip, Secretary,

Mr Lance Wallace, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services,

Mr Paul Smith, Deputy Secretary, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Social Capital and Ageing, and

Mr Nick Foa, Acting General Manager, Sport and Recreation, Department of Health and Human Services.

The CHAIR — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2015–16 budget estimates. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to welcome the Minister for Sport, the Honourable John Eren, MP; Dr Pradeep Philip, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services; Mr Lance Wallace, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services; Mr Paul Smith, Deputy Secretary, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Social Capital and Ageing; and Mr Nick Foa, Acting General Manager, Sport and Recreation.

All evidence is taken by this committee under the provisions of the parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege. The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but questions must be answered fully, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. You will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for verification as soon as available. Verified transcripts, PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

Departmental officers may approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the witnesses if requested, by leave of myself. However, written communication to witnesses can only be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way.

Members of the media are to observe the following guidelines: cameras must remain focused only on the persons speaking; operators must not pan the public gallery, the committee or witnesses; and filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I now invite the witness to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 5 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the committee.

Mr EREN — Thank you very much, Chair. The government has introduced major reform to create the Department of Health and Human Services to include the sport portfolio. We understand the important role that sport and active recreation plays in enhancing the wellbeing of Victorians, and it is a significant contributor to both physical and mental health. It is a cornerstone in building physical activity and is critical in addressing chronic disease issues such as diabetes and obesity.

The signal that machinery-of-government reform sent to all stakeholders is that there is now a clear mandate for the sport and recreation sector, be it at commonwealth level, state level or community level, to work more closely with health organisations to get people more active and for them to gain the health benefits of physical activity. In delivering sport and recreational opportunities we are also making a contribution to the health of Victorians in a real sense — especially in a preventative sense, in easing the burden of chronic disease.

The Andrews Labor government understands the importance of physical activity, whether it is organised sport or simply going for a walk. Sport plays an important role in the wider community; it brings communities together. Sporting clubs are the hub for social activity. It is good for physical and mental health.

Increasing the level of physical activity of Victorians is the cornerstone of our active communities package announced in the budget. The package includes funding to continue the Premier's Active April. This sees the continuation of an initiative to encourage people to be more physically active that was introduced by the previous Labor government. I am pleased to report that a record number of people participated in the 2015 Premier's Active April program. Over 103 000 Victorians took part and became more active. I would like to thank all of our ambassadors who got on board to make it the most successful year to date.

The package also includes continued funding for the Ride to School program and contains funding to assist sporting clubs to attract new members and develop their current membership base. I have asked Sport and Recreation Victoria to review how we can maximise our support to clubs through our various club support programs with the aim of streamlining administration and getting improved physical activity outcomes.

We understand the importance of investing in community infrastructure so people have better access to take part in sport and active recreation. We will provide \$100 million over four years for community facilities, and \$10 million of this will be specifically targeted to improve women's change rooms and toilet facilities. On top of the \$100 million for community facilities, we will provide \$9.6 million over four years for inner-city netball courts in Melbourne. You will all agree we need to do more to give women opportunities to participate in sport and recreation, and by providing this funding it is going to enable more girls and women to have access to the facilities they desperately require and deserve.

We have also committed \$2 million in 2015–16 to continue the country football and netball program. Unfortunately, sudden cardiac arrest happens in sporting fixtures across all sports. We have therefore committed \$2.7 million to provide defibrillators to sporting clubs and facilities where they are needed the most. As much as possible these defibrillators will have public access, providing an asset not only to clubs but also to their neighbouring communities.

I will talk separately about the importance of major events to Victoria, but significant events are important for spreading the benefits of events across the state, especially to rural and regional Victoria. Currently, 52 of the 98 events that have received funding in the 2014–2018 program will be held in rural and regional Victoria. Exciting examples include the 2018 FIM Junior Motocross World Championship in Horsham, the 2017 World Gliding Championships in Benalla and the 2015 Men's and women's Victorian golf open in Barwon Heads.

These events provide a real boost to the economies of these communities. Having significant events in our regional centres also stimulates investment in improved facilities and creates a real buzz in the area. The bulk of our investment in major infrastructure will be in regional centres: \$70 million for stage 4 of the Simonds Stadium development, increasing the stadium's capacity to 36 000, and it will also include a rehabilitation centre to help people with a disability to return to work. There is \$31.5 million for Eureka Stadium to give Ballarat an opportunity to attract AFL home and away premiership games.

We are also investing \$25 million at Junction Oval to develop the state cricket centre, which will end the problems we had around the use of the MCG around the end of the cricket season and the start of the AFL season. For Moorabbin Oval we are providing \$150 000 to commence the scoping and planning for the return of the St Kilda Football Club to this important sporting asset.

Chair, I would like to conclude by showing a brief video presentation of Simonds Stadium redevelopment. This will only run for a couple of minutes.

Video shown.

Mr EREN — That is how Simonds Stadium is today, if you look at it from the aerial view, from the southern stand. Over the past dozen years successive governments have worked with the City of Greater Geelong and the football club to develop this stadium. Stage 1 was the Hickey Stand; stage 2, the Premiership Stand; stage 3, the Players Stand. The fourth stage, the current stage, will replace the current Brownlow and Jennings stands along the wing to lift the capacity to 36 000. As you would expect, the Geelong Football Club also has a fifth and final stage at the northern end of the ground to follow this stage, but that is obviously down the track.

This fly-through is of the master plan, including both the fourth and fifth stages, starting from the northern end. That concludes the flyover.

The CHAIR — I am tempted to ask a question about whether the minister has any intention of renaming the stadium the 'Cost-a-sseum', but I will refrain from asking such a question. Minister, in the context of the 2015–16 budget and your own portfolio responsibilities, can you inform the committee how this budget acquits Labor's financial statement?

Mr EREN — Thank you, Chairman. The budget makes significant advancements in acquitting Labor's financial statement. In the budget we have committed \$100 million over four years to the community sports infrastructure program, \$9.6 million for inner-city netball courts, \$25 million for the redevelopment of Junction Oval, \$31.5 million towards the Ballarat sports and events precinct, including Eureka Stadium, \$70 million for the stage 4 development of Simonds Stadium, \$2.7 million to provide 1000 defibrillators to community sporting clubs and facilities, \$1.4 million for the Victorian Golf Open and \$600 000 for the Stawell Gift.

Providing accessible, high-quality community sport and recreation facilities is a vital part of building healthy and active communities for all Victorians. There is currently a high demand for upgrades to community sporting facilities across the state. In response to this community need, the government will contribute up to \$100 million to building and upgrading a range of important community sport and recreation facilities throughout Victoria over the next four years.

This includes \$10 million to develop new and upgraded women's change facilities, \$10 million to upgrade and develop new community cricket facilities, including buildings, grounds and training facilities and fund equipment and support for clubs, and over \$23 million to 29 individual election commitment projects across Victoria. The government's \$10 million investment in cricket builds on the legacy of the 2015 International Cricket Council's World Cup and will help support an increased participation by women, juniors, Aboriginal communities, newly arrived communities and individuals in cricket across Victoria. Funding will also be used to help increase the capacity of clubs by supporting volunteers, coaches and officials.

The government has also committed to growing netball participation across inner Melbourne by developing 64 competition-standard netball courts to service the cities of Melbourne, Moreland, Yarra and Darebin. Netball Victoria has undertaken some detailed research that has led to these municipalities being identified for investment. Chairman, as you can appreciate, netball participation is around 2.3 per cent across Victoria, but is significantly lagging behind across inner Melbourne, where participation in netball is just 0.66 per cent of the population.

During this term, the government will partner with local councils, schools and relevant land managers to deliver this commitment. Developing netball courts across inner Melbourne will capitalise on interest in the game as well as the highly successful Melbourne Vixens, and address a severe shortage of courts, which has led to waiting lists in some competitions. This \$9.6 million initiative will lead to a significant growth in participation for Australia's largest female sport. The government's investment of \$10 million into women's change facilities on top of our \$9.6 million commitment to develop more than 60 netball courts in inner-city Melbourne is by far the biggest specific investment in female sport for many years.

Simonds Stadium is unquestionably Australia's leading regional stadium, providing major economic, social and health benefits to the Geelong region. However, the stadium is only partially completed. Its ongoing improvement is important not only for the Geelong Football Club and the important social and economic role it plays in Geelong, but also in supporting the government's commitment to the provision of livability and economic outcomes for regional Victoria.

It is estimated that \$4 million is injected into the local economy for each Australian Football League game that is played at Simonds Stadium. The Labor government has committed \$70 million to the development of the fourth stage, creating 90 jobs during construction and 320 jobs, ongoing positions, once it is completed. Labor's commitment to upgrade Simonds Stadium includes replacing the Brownlow and Jennings stands with a new 6500-seat stand, taking the venue capacity to approximately 36 000; the development of a new Sunrise Centre focused on rehabilitation and getting people back to work; and new media facilities as well.

The government has not wasted any time getting started on this project. A project manager and a design team led by the international architectural firm Populous has recently been appointed to the project. It is important for us as a government to secure the future of this important venue and lift it up to the same status level afforded to Victoria's other iconic sport and recreation facilities, such as the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Melbourne Park. That is why this government will establish a trust to manage the operations of Simonds Stadium to ensure the long-term viability of the venue to drive the opportunities to attract additional sport and entertainment events.

The government is also committed to developing high-performance cricket in Victoria and has provided \$25 million for an alternative first-class venue for cricket. Not only will the Junction Oval project strengthen Victoria's representation in international cricket but it will also provide pathway opportunities for young cricketers, female cricketers and our talented Indigenous players. By funding the Junction Oval project, the government has also ensured that the Australian Football League will have the opportunity to access the Melbourne Cricket Ground earlier in March, meaning more Victorians can enjoy blockbuster games at the start of the season.

The government has also made a \$2.7 million election commitment to provide 1000 defibrillators to Victorian sporting clubs and facilities to improve the survival rates of people who enter cardiac arrest. My department will work with sport, health and community stakeholders to ensure that the distribution of the new defibrillators also links to improvements in medical emergency planning and CPR skills to save lives and to help reduce the impact of sports injuries. Improving the availability of defibrillators has the potential to save lives, deliver reduced health-related costs and improve quality-of-life outcomes attributed to early defibrillation.

The Eureka Stadium component is in part to facilitate the Victorian government's pledge to bring Western Bulldogs games to Ballarat, and \$5 million will also be provided by the City of Ballarat towards the indoor sports and entertainment centre. It was disappointing to see last week that the commonwealth government rejected Ballarat's bid for \$10 million from the National Stronger Regions Fund. I share the disappointment with the commonwealth decision expressed by Peter Eddy from Ballarat Basketball but commend his commitment to ensure that the \$14 million from the state and council will still see some excellent outcomes for indoor sports in Ballarat.

The Victorian government is also committed to retaining and increasing Victoria's major and significant events calendar and building on our reputation as a great sporting state. We are very proud to be supporting Golf Victoria and the Oates Victorian Open at 13th Beach Golf Links in Barwon Heads. Our funding boost will enable them to increase prize money for both men's and women's tournaments. This additional prize money will be important, as they seek sanctioning by tours such as the Ladies European Tour. The combined effect of higher prize money and sanctioning will attract high-profile golfers to compete each year.

The CHAIR — The minister to conclude his statement.

Mr EREN — Of course the Stawell Gift has been held over Easter each year since 1878, save for the four years during World War II, at Central Park in Stawell. It is considered one of the most famous and prestigious footraces in Australia, and the Stawell Athletic Club estimates that the event generates a regional economic impact of around \$10 million, as well as providing valuable exposure through Channel 7's broadcast for the local community. We have provided some \$600 000 over four years, from 2016 to 2019, to assist with maintaining buildings, Central Park and support for the event.

We have also provided some \$14 million for the active communities package. This will continue important programs such as the Premier's Active April and Ride2School — programs that were introduced by the previous Labor government and are still going very strong.

The active communities package will also allow for a refocusing of the previous sporting uniform grants and elite athlete travel grants programs. Revision to these programs will be undertaken to ensure they have the most effective impact possible in supporting grassroots sport. There are a number of other initiatives. In the interests of time — —

The CHAIR — Thank you. I might ask the minister to wrap up there.

Mr EREN — Sure.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister, for a comprehensive answer to my question.

Mr T. SMITH — Welcome Minister. Minister, I refer you to page 264 of budget paper 3, combat sports licences. How many times since the election have you met with representatives of the cage fighting industry or companies participating in it?

Ms SHING — On a point of order, Chair, I am just wondering how that is actually relevant to page 264 in relation to meetings or contact in relation to the mixed martial arts that Mr Smith has referred to.

Mr MORRIS — On the point of order, Chair, clearly the budget reference that is cited refers to the minister's administration of this area of sport, and the question is seeking information regarding his administration.

Ms SHING — Further to the point of order, I fail to see how that is relevant to the budget papers that are the subject of this committee's deliberations.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — On the point of order, Chair, slightly below the 'permits issued' is 'Events facilitated: sport and recreation' and an output measure. I think that is clearly relevant to meeting with — —

The CHAIR — I am sorry, Mr O'Brien. Can you just — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Under 'Sport and recreation, page 264, 'Events facilitated: sport and recreation' is the third measure down. It clearly is related to events facilitation, and meetings with major sporting event providers are clearly relevant to it. I would further add on the point of order, Chair, that a very similar question was asked of the Premier only a week and a half ago. No point of order was taken, and the Premier gladly answered.

Ms SHING — In relation to which question was that, Mr O'Brien?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That was in relation to meetings with Transurban.

The CHAIR — Through the Chair.

Ms SHING — A point of order was raised, as I recall, and the Premier indicated that he was prepared to answer the question.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I have got the transcript here, Ms Shing. No point of order was raised. In fact the Premier's answer at the time started with 'I would have thought that was pretty obvious, as in who I met with'. I think if the Premier was happy to answer and it was not ruled out at the time, there is a precedent in these hearings.

The CHAIR — Ms Ward?

Ms WARD — I have my own point of order, which is not related to Ms Shing's. You might want to resolve this one first and then come to me.

The CHAIR — I am happy for the question to be asked. There is a performance measure in relation to the number of permits issued. I think it is fair that Mr Smith ask a question in terms of what level of stakeholder engagement the minister has had with the industry since he has become a minister. I would, however, caution you, Mr Smith, that although you may wish to refer to it by the title that you used, as I understand it, I think the correct title is mixed martial arts.

Mr T. SMITH — I am happy to rephrase the question with 'mixed martial arts'. Is that okay?

The CHAIR — Thank you, Mr Smith. That would be outstanding. Ms Ward, on your point of order.

Ms WARD — That was my point of order, Chair — that I suspect it would be very difficult for the minister to answer a question regarding cage fighting when it is mixed martial arts.

Mr T. SMITH — I am happy to rephrase on that basis.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, how many times since the election have you met with representatives of the mixed martial arts industry or companies participating in it?

Mr EREN — Thank you for your question. The first question from the opposition is an endorsement of the overall budget for sport. Thank you very much for that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Am I being verballed?

Ms SHING — Raise a point of order if you have got one.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr EREN — That is clearly the opposition's first question. I am glad to answer this because I think it is important for the opposition to understand that when you look at page 264, in terms of output, the outputs really do not change. The outputs will continue to be the same. One thing has changed, and this is one thing that the

opposition do not get. As they call it — and that is not the proper terminology for it; there is no such thing as cage fighting. It is mixed martial arts. Leading up to the election, obviously, there were a lot of consultations that I did with various sporting organisations. One of them included the advisory board that advises the minister — the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board. They were really among the first people that I actually spoke to in relation to their concerns about the combat sports industry overall and the sector itself. Whether we like it or not — it is not everybody's cup of tea, clearly — there are a lot of people who engage in combat sports, whether it be contact sport or combat sport. You can put your head in the sand about these issues or you can tackle them head-on. I decided to do the fair thing and ask the stakeholders who are involved in this sport, and that is exactly what I did.

The first consultation process that I went through in opposition was to speak to that very important board who give advice to the minister, and they indicated to me that mixed martial arts was the fastest growing sport around. There are a lot more events that are happening in relation to mixed martial arts than in any other combat sport. We had to either make it regulated to make it safer or continue on as the previous government did and ignore it — put their head in the sand. We decided to do the former, and that is exactly what I have done. I have consulted widely with the stakeholders in relation to what they would like to see going forward to make the sport safer.

There were a number of recommendations made, Chair, and one of them was about the previous arrangements that the previous government had. Let us make this very clear: mixed martial arts is not an illegal sport and has not been. Even under their government it was a legal sport. All that was not legal was the surrounding environment, which was the boxing ring. What they said to me was that to make that sport safer they would prefer to have the equipment required to make that sport safer, an enclosure or an octagon. Because of the nature of the sport, the discipline of the sport, there is a lot of wrestling and grappling, and in one instance I have personally seen myself — —

Mr MORRIS — On a point of order, Chair, I think the minister has now been answering for several minutes and he has yet to address the substance of the question. The question was not about the sport; the question was about meetings.

Ms SHING — Further to the point of order, the minister was asked — and this was something that you stridently defended in your responses to the point of order that I raised earlier — how many times he had met with representatives in relation to mixed martial arts since the election. He has actually indicated that he has met with people on numerous occasions in consulting widely with the industry —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Before the election.

Ms SHING — and on that basis I fail to see how that is outside the purview of what the question is that you have in fact asked and fought to have answered by the minister in this forum. It is a bet each way, in my view, Mr Morris.

Mr MORRIS — The question related to after the election, not prior to the election.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — On the point of order, and I am happy to be corrected by the minister, I believe his statement was that it was before the election he met with many of those groups.

Mr EREN — I have not finished my answer yet.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — We are simply asking: since the election, how many has he met with?

Ms WARD — So we are going back down the path where we have continual interruptions, Chair, and the minister is unable to finish his question and pre-judgements are made.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — If he answers the question — —

The CHAIR — In answer to Mr Smith's question, the minister is trying to give some background information in terms of the nature of his stakeholder engagement and his dialogue with the industry. The question has been going for some time, but I hasten to add though that there have been numerous points of order — —

Mr T. SMITH — Would it assist the process, Chair, if the minister offered to provide these on notice at the appropriate juncture?

The CHAIR — Hang on, I am ruling on the point of order that is before the Chair. The minister is providing some background and context. I think the minister is talking a bit about the nature of the discussions he has had to date. I encourage the minister to be allowed to continue. You will have the chance of a supplementary question, Mr Smith. I would ask the minister to come back to the question.

Mr EREN — Thank you, Chair. As I was alluding to earlier in my comments about the industry itself, that is what you do as politicians. You go out there and speak to stakeholders and speak to the people who know about the sport. That is exactly what I have done, not only when I was in opposition; clearly when in government you speak to a number of stakeholders, and that is what happens. You cannot talk to people prior to an election and then not talk to people after the election. Clearly the opposition needs to understand that mixed martial arts is a legal sport. It happened under their government. The only circumstance in which it happened under their government was in an unsafe manner. That is all I have done — I have spoken to the stakeholders. They have said that they want their legitimate sport to be safer.

We claim to be the sporting capital of the world, Chair, and — you know what? — up until 2004 we were the sporting capital of the world. Unfortunately we lost that title, but I will get that back. But we are the sporting capital of the nation, and we should be entitled to make sure that whatever sport that is legal in Victoria is conducted in a safe manner. South Australia has mixed martial arts in a safe environment, New South Wales has mixed martial arts in a safe environment and Queensland has mixed martial arts in a safe environment. This is a legitimate legal sport and a growing sport. For governments to stick their head in the sand and pretend they do not exist is nonsense.

What I have done is made sure that we do not get left behind. In Victoria we are proud of our sports history, we are proud of the events that we have here, and of course I speak to stakeholders in relation to all matters relating to sport, including mixed martial arts. I know some people look down their noses at certain sports and do not like them, but they exist. There are a lot of people who engage in this sport, and I think it is important for governments to engage with all stakeholders relating to sport, particularly when they are the fastest growing sport in the world.

As a government, it would be very unwise for you to disengage with a whole cohort of people. So that is exactly what we have done — speak to stakeholders on a regular basis. There is always consultation that goes on, because you need to refine and reform. You need to make perfect if you can all of the sporting areas that need on occasion a bit of a tune-up. In terms of combat sports we know that the previous government attempted to legislate a fit and proper test, a bit of legislation they introduced in 2013, to fine-tune some aspects of regulation of this very important industry. We supported that. As a government, that is what you do. It is about consultation. There is no question but there is always consultation to be had, whether you are in opposition or in government, because that is how you keep in touch. That is how you keep your finger on the pulse, because if you do not, then that is what happens: you put your head in the sand, as the opposition is doing, pretend the sport does not exist and let it be played out in an environment where it is not safe. You do not want those legitimate people, some of whom do this as a living — it is their workplace, it is how they earn their money; some of them are professional fighters — fighting in circumstances where potentially they could be injured in a really bad way. They could fall out of the ring, in many instances in front of me, as I was saying to you just before the point of order. One of the fighters fell out of the ring, hit his head on the table where the officials, the referees, the timekeepers and the spectators are. On occasions they fall onto people outside of the ring. That is nonsense. We are the sporting capital of the nation. We need to have sport conducted in a safe manner, where the spectators, officials, referees and the participants of the sport are as safe as possible. I know some people will say, 'It is ironic. It is a boxing ring. They fight. How are they concerned about their safety?'

Mr D. O'BRIEN — On a point of order, Chair, we have had quite a bit of context now. The question was not about whether the industry should be going ahead or not. It was very clearly who had the minister met with and when, and I ask you to bring him back to the question.

Ms SHING — On the point of order, Chair, the question was not who have you met with and when. The question, as I recall you asking it, Mr Smith, was: how many times have you met with representatives since the election?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Has the minister answered that question?

Ms SHING — The minister has indicated there is always consultation that goes on.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is not an answer to the question, Ms Shing.

Ms SHING — The minister has also indicated that he is speaking with stakeholders in relation to all matters relating to sport.

Mr T. SMITH — Could I have an opportunity to move to my supplementary because I think this will speed things up?

The CHAIR — Has the minister concluded his answer?

Mr EREN — They are not happy with the answer, but the question, if it is related to the budget, I have answered in terms of the outputs currently in the budget papers. There is no change in terms of the outputs. If they are digging for something else, I am not sure what they are digging for.

The CHAIR — The minister has indicated he has met with the industry on numerous occasions, as you would expect in his capacity as a minister both prior to the election and since the election.

Mr T. SMITH — On a supplementary, Chair, if the minister could provide on notice to the committee how many times and where he met with industry representatives of the mixed martial arts industry, that would be appreciated.

The CHAIR — I will let the minister answer that question for himself. I would, however, caution you, Mr Smith, that there is a long-established practice that ministerial diaries, for example, are not handed over to parliamentary committees or are not FOI-able. Mr Morris has had more practice at this previously than I have, but I do not believe diaries as a form are handed over routinely to PAEC. If the minister wishes to respond to your question, I am happy for the minister to do so.

Mr EREN — I thank opposition members again for endorsing the Andrews Labor government budget in relation to the overall sports package that I have announced. They continue down the path of asking questions in relation to outputs to mixed martial arts and the combat sports.

Mr MORRIS — On a point of order, Chair, clearly asking a question about who and when the minister met with particular individuals does not amount to endorsement of anything.

The CHAIR — If the minister could come back to the supplementary question that was asked by Mr Smith in terms of whether he would be happy to take those items on notice or not.

Mr EREN — I can certainly say to the opposition, and thank you again for that question, that as a minister — I do not know what the previous minister did — I have been meeting with a number of stakeholders in a variety of different sports and organisations, and that is what we do as ministers. As I have indicated before, if you are asking me specifically about the exact times and locations and how many times, that is hard to quantify. It is very much about making sure that you are in dialogue with a wide variety of stakeholders. That is exactly what I am doing as a minister, that is exactly what I did as an opposition spokesperson for sport, and I will continue to do so in relation to making sure that we get this right. We are the sporting capital of the nation, we need to be on top of the issues that come our way and we need to make sport safer in this state.

Ms PENNICUIK — Minister, I am very interested in this area as I have quite a lengthy background in sport, recreation and physical education, and so I am always interested to see what the budget has in store for that area. It is interesting that if you look at page 64, budget paper 3, the subheading under 'Output initiatives — Department of Health and Human Services', is 'Sport and recreation', but your presentation just has you listed as the Minister for Sport. I am interested in the sporting side but also in the recreation side because that is where you really get the majority of public health benefits with people being engaged in physical recreation as much as in sport.

The big-ticket item in the area I am particularly interested in is the Community Sports Infrastructure Fund of \$100 million — \$25 million a year over the four years. It mentions women's change rooms and facilities, which

I think is great because in my experience, and particularly in my discussions with community sporting groups and councils, that is an area where particularly council facilities have missing facilities in terms of women's change rooms. Also, you have got there \$10 million for cricket and \$23 million for 29 other specific projects which are detailed in the budget papers. That all adds up to \$43 million. I am just wondering if you could elaborate on the rest of the \$100 million will be used for and what sort of criteria or priorities you might have for the allocation of those funds?

Mr EREN — Sure. You have alluded to the \$100 million, which is fantastic because it gives them surety in terms of the budget going forward. The estimates obviously are \$25 million per annum. One of the biggest issues that I came across through my consultation with sporting clubs particularly was that we did not really cater for 51 per cent of the population, which is women. Everywhere we went there were a lot of programs to increase participation, but there was no real way of dealing with it once that participation rate went up, how in terms of infrastructure you accommodated 51 per cent of the population. That was not counted into the costs of the previous government. That is why I think it is very important that we went to the election with a commitment of \$10 million for female change rooms to make sure that we accommodate them. I know, for example, in my own electorate where soccer is really big, particularly amongst women, there were no change rooms for them, and women had to change in their car, which is not good. That is why we allocated a large chunk of money, and we hope to spend that money wisely. That is on a dollar-for-dollar basis, so the councils, the relevant local government, need to make application and support it dollar for dollar. That would then take the \$100 000 that we would make available, the maximum amount, to \$200 000; and then obviously if there was some in-kind and other support given, that would then make it a considerable amount of money to improve the infrastructure for females participating in sport.

So we have made commitments leading up to the election; yes, you are right. There is some \$23 million allocated to 29 individual election commitments that we made to projects right across Victoria, and of course we will be spending \$25 million annually towards infrastructure for sport. So apart from the commitments that we have made, there are obviously other considerations that need to be made in relation to our budgets. I want to make it very clear: we are making a massive investment.

The \$9.6 million is on top of the \$100 million for the 64 netball courts around the city of Melbourne and surrounds. We are looking very much forward to spending that money. In previous budgets, when you think about the sport budget, there was no surety going forward. It was on a year-by-year basis, depending on what funding you would get from what bucket of money, what programs would cease to exist and what would not, and what would continue. We have actually taken this seriously. I am really proud to be part of a government that said, 'Hang on, sport is a very important component of our lifestyle. We're the most livable city. We're the sporting capital. We need to make sure that we invest in the grassroots level'.

We are very much looking forward to spending that \$100 million over the four years on those clubs that really require it. It does need a level of support, and I am really disappointed, and can I just give a quick example of the Simonds Stadium. We provided the full amount, \$70 million, for that stadium. We were hoping the federal government would chip in so that we would have more money to spend on the broader community. But the federal government, unfortunately, have been cutting back on some of the funding. So we are looking very much at local government. We are looking at other stakeholders to be very involved in all of that. If it was dollar for dollar on the money that we are investing, that would automatically become \$200 million. So what we are looking for is other stakeholders to put skin in the game, and particularly the federal government. What I am looking for is investment by and interest from local government to invest dollar for dollar and other stakeholders to actually put some money into our \$100 million so that we can spend it on our local sporting clubs.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you for your answer, Minister. There is quite a lot to unpack in there. Also, I was probably looking for a little bit more. For example, out of that \$100 million, 10 is to support and develop cricket: does that mean that goes for supporting and developing cricket for four years? So I was looking for a bit more information on the criteria and priorities ongoing. For example, as I said, there is still 57 unaccounted for in these figures, and how would that be spent?

But anyway, my supplementary is: there are a lot of areas around Victoria where councils and areas are struggling to cope with demand for increasing numbers of sporting clubs and facilities for the growing number of teams and sports, and I am just wondering if the department has done any proactive analysis with regard to

where increased demand for sporting facilities and grounds is outstripping what is actually there and what plans it may have, or if it is part of this.

Mr EREN — Thank you for your supplementary question. We are always wanting to improve our sporting accessibility and sporting facilities right across the state. Of course that would mean that we need to be engaged with all of our communities, and sport is just as important to communities in rural and regional Victoria as it is to people living in the metropolitan area. You know, sometimes you think it is cliché, but it really is the social glue that brings the communities together and keeps them together. I think sport plays an important role in making sure that our society is cohesive, healthy and fit, not only physically but mentally. That is why we have worked systematically.

I have actually travelled the state a fair bit leading up to the election and since then, and one consistent theme is that there are sporting clubs around regional and rural areas that really do need the attention; there is no question of that. I was just up in Horsham, for example, not so long ago and I visited some of the local sporting clubs out there, and I made a great announcement in relation to the junior motocross world events that will happen in 2018. I did travel to a number of sporting organisations down there, and they do need help. I was out at Warrnambool the day before, and I announced a number of initiatives and grants to different sporting clubs around there.

Some of the sporting clubs that I actually visited were really at their end in terms of the environment and the construction. It really was depressing to see the condition that it was in in some of the sporting clubs that I made the announcements at. They are so happy.

And do not forget, too, that these people are volunteers. They volunteer, and they really do go out of their way to make sure that they have a healthy environment socially through their sporting club. I want to ensure that that money is spent wisely and it is spent in a way where it is needed. I am not saying that there are sports clubs and organisations out there that do not need it, but I know that there are really needy clubs. Let me tell you, in the last four years there really has not been a concentration on some of these clubs that have been struggling.

So what I want to do is ensure that the money we are allocating is dedicated to those sporting clubs that really need it so that we can enhance our sporting abilities, not only for our younger population but for our older population as well, who are increasingly coming back to physical activity, which is so important for an ageing population like we have. We need to accommodate our ageing population who want to be more active. We need to accommodate the older population as well. We will be looking very carefully at the needs and at the consultation processes that I will continue to do with all of my sporting organisations, and I will listen to them in relation to what requirements they have to make their lives a lot easier in terms of trying to get the day-to-day operations of the club going, because there is unfortunately — —

The CHAIR — The minister to conclude his answer.

Mr EREN — Unfortunately there are a lot of clubs that are struggling to survive at the moment, and it is a real challenge, and I am ready to take those challenges on.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Good afternoon, Minister. I thank you for your presentation. The budget commitments that I see for sport are I think are excellent. You would expect me to say that, but I think they cover the ambit of significant events, as you were saying, and major infrastructure regional and metro opportunities. I think they are very good. I also agree with the implication that, by omission, the other members of the committee endorse the budget package, because the most they have come up with is a question about meetings and diaries.

With that preamble, I want to specifically ask you about the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board. Specifically, budget paper 3, page 264 makes reference to the combat sports licences. I just want to get a sense and understanding of what the review that you are undertaking into the board will yield and what the background to that is.

Mr EREN — Thank you very much for your question; thank you so much. Again, I have reiterated on a number of occasions the importance of making sure that we have sport in this state which you can not only participate in in a safe manner but also be proud of and be accepting of, basically. In relation to some of the criticisms that the opposition has made in relation to combat sports, the community are telling me that they feel

really offended, particularly the people who participate in mixed martial arts, that their sport has been dragged through the mud. It is a legitimate sport, they are disciplined athletes and they train very hard to be the best at their sport that they can be.

Recently I released the *Review of Regulation of Professional Boxing and Combat Sports in Victoria*, back on 30 April this year. The review was undertaken by Peter Harmsworth, AO, and it recommends new governance arrangements and reforms to overhaul the existing regulatory structure. As I have indicated, I want to make sure that we enhance the regulations when it comes to not only making the fit and proper test more stringent but also making sure that the sport is safer. To that end, the review was clear that the current regulatory and governance structures set out in the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act and the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Regulation is unsustainable and suffers from fundamental weakness. Mr Harmsworth described it to me as ‘the 1970s model for the 21st century’.

A key recommendation of the review is the establishment of a professional combat sports authority. The functions of the authority, in the words of the review, would be to establish the future directions of the regulatory regime for the industry; establish standards, rules, codes of conduct and operational guidelines necessary to achieve the objects of the act; oversee the development of regulatory systems and procedures pursuant to good regulatory practice; control the licensing of industry participants and the registration of contestants; and monitor the overall efficacy and performance of the regulatory regime.

That is what it is all about. It is to make sure that all sport is conducted in the best way that it can be. The authority would work with the operational support of the Department of Health and Human Services. The review recommends that the department would be responsible for the following functions: providing clerical, administrative and research support to the authority under the control of the designated officer in charge, or the CEO; control and oversight of the financial affairs of the authority, specifically providing advice to the authority on applications for licences, registrations and promotion permits; the appointment of judges, referees and timekeepers for the promotions; establishing standards and rules for the proper conduct of professional contests; and the appointment of departmental officers to positions of combat sports inspectors, who would be responsible for supervising and monitoring compliance at weigh-ins and promotions and reporting back to the authority on the conduct of the promotions.

I should say at this point that Mr Harmsworth found, and I concur with him, that the government has been well served by the members of the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board, especially given their specific operational responsibilities for personally supervising both weigh-ins and individual promotions, and that it is the model of regulation which is fundamentally outdated and flawed.

The review also found that the requirement of the board is to be not only responsible for setting the rules and licensing industry participants but also responsible for compliance monitoring, determining alleged breaches, deciding any penalties for breaches and managing any established internal conflicts of interest. These are all very important. I said that I would strengthen our combat sports area and industry according to some of the recommendations that have been made, and of course we as a government are looking at those recommendations very seriously. We are serious about making sport as professional as can be, as monitored as can be and regulated in a safe manner to make sure that not only is there public confidence in the combat sports area but also there is internal confidence as well. That is why the requirement of the board members to undertake basic operational roles, the sorts of roles performed by stewards and inspectors in other regulated industries, means that the board members have to have —

The CHAIR — The minister to conclude his answer.

Mr EREN — detailed knowledge of the regulated industry. Thank you for your question.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, I refer to budget paper 3, page 64, the output initiatives for sport and recreation and the Community Sports Infrastructure Fund. I particularly refer to this because you invited it through your comment about in the last four years there not being much there for them. I highlight, then, that in the last four years there was \$80 million for the community facility funding program, \$10 million for the country football and netball program, \$12.8 million for the Shooting Sports Facilities program and \$35 million for the Strategic Sporting Infrastructure program. Given the Community Sports Infrastructure Fund is

\$100 million, do you acknowledge that your contribution is actually \$38 million less than the previous government's?

Mr EREN — Thank you for your question. As you can appreciate, leading up to the last elections we took a number of policy positions forward, and I can tell you that we will commit \$100 million to community sport. That is locked in — \$25 million a year, every year, for the next four years. The only thing that has changed is the machinery of government, if I can call it that. Clearly we have the mandate, and we want to make government and the processes as efficient as possible. That is why I think it is important to understand that my portfolios — for example, veterans comes under DPC; my community sport comes under health, which is appropriate; and then I have the other part of my sport, which is the events part of it. So that falls within the purview of the economic development silo, if I can call it that. So when you think about all of those events that I have mentioned — in relation to some of the wonderful events that we have in regional Victoria and rural areas, that part of sport, which is not a reduction in terms of the budget — what it is actually, because it falls within —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Compared to your fund it is.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr EREN — No. That is exactly as stated in the budget papers. The initial estimated cost for sport and recreation output in 2014–15 was \$88.1 million, and the estimated output cost for sport and recreation 2015–16 is \$76.4 million, which appears to be a reduction of \$11.7 million, or 13.2 per cent — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I think it is.

Mr EREN — Do you want me to answer?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry.

The CHAIR — Order! The minister, to continue.

Mr EREN — There is, however, no real reduction in what we have announced. The main reason for the difference is the machinery of government, as I have indicated before, which involves a transfer of around \$16 million to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources for major sporting events funding and the staff. So it is still the same amount of money; it is just that we have got different departments. It is the machinery of government.

We understand the importance of sport, and that is why we have invested and why we have made a very strong commitment. It is not flimsy, floppy, you know, 'Are we going to get this money or not?', like in previous budgets. If you look at your own budgets — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That money was there, Minister.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr EREN — You will find that there was no surety going forward in terms of sport budgets. You did not know what programs would exist, and it was a year-by-year proposition. What we have done, because of the importance of sport to our state, is we have locked it in for the next four years, so we have got 25, 25, 25, 25. In terms of the distribution of those amounts, they are still within the purview of sports except that the sporting events side of it falls under the economic development department, as community sport falls under the health, and obviously combined they add up to the same amount of money. Does that answer your question?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It does, thank you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It is a \$38 million cut.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien, you are not to — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The question referred to a number of programs, but I will focus on one — what was a \$10 million country football and netball program. In your presentation you referred to \$2 million for country football and netball. Could you tell us what page and the line item where this is in the budget?

Mr EREN — Thank you for your supplementary question. Can I just say what a wonderful program that is — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It is an exceptional program, Minister.

Mr EREN — Labor actually set that program up, and that is why it is such a wonderful program, and we are funding it yet again. It is Labor that started this program; it is Labor that is continuing on with this program. We have allocated the money that is required, so all of our football clubs and netball clubs yet again love us, because we started this program. Thank you very much for asking this question, because it is such an important question.

The country football and netball program that we have I can just outline to you. We collectively, if you look at it from the investments — apart from the investments that we make, the Victorian government obviously has a strong partnership, and the program partners with the AFL, the AFL in regional Victoria as well and Netball Victoria, which has contributed some \$3 million collectively to the program, which adds value to our investment. Applications for the latest round of the country football and netball program closed on 30 January 2015. I am in the process of announcing successful projects, and all the applicants will be notified very shortly. It is very pleasing when you can actually let clubs know that they have been successful in this wonderful program. We started this program; we will nurture it. We will look after it, and that is why we are allocating some money. I am pleased to advise that the Andrews Labor government will continue to support this wonderful program by investing an additional \$2 million in the 2015–16 budget, and that will obviously be providing —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So just one year, Minister?

Mr EREN — accessible, high-quality community sport and recreation facilities. It is a vital part of building healthy and active communities for all Victorians. I appreciate that you appreciate that program, because it is a great program, and we are committed yet again — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It is; I am asking you where it is in the budget papers, Minister.

Mr EREN — Sure, and I am categorically saying to you that we have allocated the \$2 million for — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I understand that; where?

Mr EREN — It is in the budget.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I have got the budget; I have got every one of the budget papers here, Minister — —

Mr EREN — It is in the budget.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I would like to see where it is.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! I think the minister has answered the question.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — The minister has advised it is in the budget.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Thank you, Minister, and thank you for your presentation. I do not think my question is going to have quite the level of humour or the level of controversy that we have had so far. I would like to ask a question about — it is on budget paper 3, page 74 — the active communities package. Particularly following on from the conversations that this committee had this morning regarding disadvantage — we spoke about disability, ageing and mental health — I would like to look at the section on support for sporting organisations to increase participation for people with a disability. Quite simply I would just like to ask if you

can provide a brief overview of what these grants will look like — for example, what criteria will be used and what types of activities the grants will fund.

Mr EREN — Thank you very much for your question. It is a passion of mine to make sure nobody is left behind in relation to sport, and that is why we want to concentrate very much on making sure that those programs that we have had in the past not only serve communities well but actually improve them in some way, shape or form.

If you are talking about the Access for All Abilities, under the active communities package that we have announced some \$14.1 million will be to contribute towards significant physical, mental and social benefits in relation to some of the programs we have. We have streamlined them to make sure that some of the red tape is taken out of some of the processes. They fall within the purview of the active communities package. Under that package there will be the Ride to School, which encourages more Victorian schoolchildren to use active travel. There will be Premier's Active April, which encourages Victorians to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day in April. Sporting club grants would be able to access that money as well. Also there will be high-performance athletes, along with a number of other initiatives.

Access for All Abilities is a tremendous program that we need to really concentrate on, so I am really glad you have asked this question. Some of the funding within this purview includes 28 state sporting associations, 17 disability sports and community organisations, and 9 regional sports assemblies. Access for All Abilities Play is a first point of call service to connect people with a disability to local clubs for sport and recreation opportunities for the disabled.

This budget increases funding from the previous year for the Access for All Abilities program by \$1 million over four, so we are actually increasing the funding for this very important program. I am really proud of that because I think it is important for governments to acknowledge particularly people with disability, who deserve to be active and participate in all of those things that everyday Victorians participate in. That is why we see that as such an important issue and are allocating \$1 million additionally over four.

The \$3.35 million will be allocated per year over the next four years. This is made up of \$3.1 million from sport and recreation's base funding and an additional \$250 000 per year provided in the 2015–16 budget. The \$3.1 million was allocated in 2014–15. Basically, if you look at the previous government, \$3.1 million was allocated, and we are increasing it from \$3.1 to \$3.35.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Thank you, Minister, for your answer. I certainly share your sentiment that nobody should be left behind. Very simply, I wonder what proportion of this package of around 3.5 million a year will be allocated to the Access for All Abilities program.

Mr EREN — In answering that question, the Access for All Abilities — —

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — I will go to page 74, regarding the support for sporting organisations to increase participation for people with a disability. I am wondering what proportion of the funding in the active communities package is allocated to that particular budget item.

Mr EREN — 3.35.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — 3.35 for the whole package?

Mr EREN — It is allocated over the next four years. This is made up of 3.35 over four years. That is an increase in funding.

Ms WARD — Minister, I am keen to talk to you about women in sport. I am glad to see, for example, that we are putting some money into golf, because I suspect we will all be excited to see Minjee Lee come and compete in Victoria. I think she will be an excellent drawcard. As someone who is a keen sport participant — and I have girls who play sport — I am glad that we are funding money for club change rooms for women and girls, because this is incredibly important, especially in communities like mine in the outer suburbs, where you have very high participation of kids in sport. As you rightly point out, you have girls and women getting changed in their cars, behind towels and all sorts of things, which just is not satisfactory. It is something that has driven me nuts for a very long time. I refer to budget paper 3, page 64. Can you expand as much as you can on

the budget initiatives in the sport and recreation portfolio that contribute to getting more women into sport and increasing their participation levels?

Mr EREN — Thank you very much for your question. This government is committed to delivering enhanced opportunities for women — I have mentioned this before — to get involved in all aspects of sport and recreation, including playing, coaching and leadership roles. It is about participating not just in the actual sport but also in the capacity of leadership, coaching and other aspects of it as well. There was a real inadequacy in terms of providing the opportunity for that to happen, so the government's policy platform aims to ensure that women have equal opportunities and are supported in their life pursuits, and that includes ensuring that sport is inclusive and accessible for all. The Andrews Labor government investment of \$10 million into female change facilities and our \$9.6 million commitment to develop 64 netball courts in inner Melbourne are by far the biggest investment that governments have made into female sport for many, many years.

The creation of opportunities for women to participate in sport and recreation goes beyond building infrastructure, even though this is a critical need that requires a targeted investment. There are cultural, behavioural and attitudinal barriers to women's participation in sport and recreation that need to be broken down, and it is only through collaboration with the sector and the broader community that we can achieve the change required. I am committed to enhancing accessibility, choice and pathways for women and girls to participate in sport and active recreation and to increasing the representation of women in governance and leadership roles as well. I am pretty proud to say that in the time that I have been the minister I have invited two extra board members onto the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board who are both female and are part of the industry as well.

It is important to get that mix right, and that is why as a government we have committed to having equal representation on all of our boards going forward — 50 per cent of boards will be female. It is about the provision of facilities that support an environment that makes women feel safe and welcome. Sport and recreation funding provided by my department supports initiatives and projects within the sector that focus on increasing the number of females on boards in decision-making roles, increasing the number of opportunities for female participation in coaching and officiating, promotion of good practice and positive role models, creation of networking and professional development opportunities, and enhancing leadership opportunities for women in sports.

We have seen examples of where our partnerships with the sector have delivered great results. The AFL Victoria's Youth Girls Academy program for under 18s engaged over 200 girls and delivered not only participation in coaching opportunities but also training on drug and alcohol education, managing healthy relationships and nutrition. Canoeing Victoria's Rivers Rambles paddling network has recorded a 13 per cent increase in accredited female flat-water guides and a 75 per cent increase in accredited female flat-water guides within Canoeing Victoria clubs. Motorcycling Victoria has delivered women's coaching courses and track days to attract more females, resulting in over 190 women participating in motorcycling and a further 18 women accredited as coaches. Cycling Victoria's female recreation riding program, Breeze Rides, has trained female mentors, resulting in over 1700 women participating in this initiative since April 2012. Gymnastics Victoria has a leadership program for engaging women at all levels of gymnastics, from frontline delivery staff to senior management, governance and boards. Touch Football Victoria's secondary touch football league provides opportunities for females to participate in social grassroots touch football in western Melbourne.

This is just the start of what can be achieved to facilitate change. I have established an inquiry into women and girls in sport and active recreation to consult with the sector and provide me with advice regarding how we can do even better in the future. The inquiry will be undertaken by an advisory panel. So we are doing a lot in this space, and I am clearly concentrating on — as I have indicated before — 51 per cent of the population. We are doing all we can to ensure that women do not miss out in sport.

Ms WARD — Thank you, Minister. I forgot to mention that since you visited the Research Junior Football Club, the girls have gone out and played their first game.

Mr EREN — Excellent.

Ms WARD — You should come along and check it out. And Dr Philip, I think it is time we gave you a PAEC frequent flyer card!

Mr MORRIS — Minister, can we return to the Community Infrastructure Fund in budget paper 3, page 64, and that output. In November last year, when *Labor's Financial Statement* was released, funds were redirected or reprioritised — some \$18 million of the \$35 million Strategic Sporting Infrastructure Program. As all of that program had in fact already been allocated to projects around the state, how will those projects now be funded?

Mr EREN — Thank you very much for your question. I have highlighted already that we are really keen on advancing sport in this state. I have indicated that the budget that was provided previously for sport was ambiguous at best and unsure at worst, which is not good for sport. If we are the sporting capital of the nation, we need to secure our funding. That is what we went to the election with. We made election commitments leading up to the election of the \$100 million plus the \$9.6 million for 64 additional netball courts. We are committing \$25 million every year in the budget. That is what we have done.

We understand the importance of sport. As I have indicated to you before, when you look at the surety going forward, every year, year on year for the next four years, you do not have to worry about it. You do not have to worry about what bucket of money or what program it is going to be paid out of. All we have done is made the portfolio of sport more secure going forward. The \$100 million will obviously go a long way in making sure that sport does not miss out. I have gone over some of the reasoning why, with the different departments and with the machinery of government. The fact remains, Mr Morris: \$100 million going to sports — \$25 million every year is dedicated to sport, which you could not say under your government was a surety.

What we have done as a government is, going forward, we have locked in for the next four years so that there is no ambiguity and there is no problem in relation to what programs will be cut or 'Are we going to get the funding this year?'. We know what we wanted to do in sport. We want to advance it. We want to make sport front and centre because we understand that for every dollar that you invest in sport you save some \$3 to \$4 in the health budget. We understand that, and that is why we are making rock-solid commitments of \$25 million per year for the next four years — a total of \$100 million — towards investment into this very important sector, which is our sport sector.

Mr MORRIS — The substantive question was about the Community Infrastructure Fund and moneys that had been reallocated to it that in fact had already been allocated to projects around the state — the amount of \$18 million. Out of the \$100 million fund, can you confirm that you have already allocated 10 million for female changing facilities, 10 million for cricket facilities, \$23 million for 29 projects under election commitments and 18 million for the reprioritised Strategic Sporting Infrastructure Program, subject to the first question — a total of \$61 million, in fact leaving only \$39 million in this fund for the next three and a half years?

Mr EREN — As I have indicated to you, Mr Morris, and I will say it again: we are investing \$100 million into sport, unlike the previous government, which did not secure a locked-in — —

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Mr EREN — No, hang on. Unlike the previous government, there was no surety going forward. What we have gone, prior to the last election, to the public with, to the communities with, is a solid, secure package going forward — \$100 million, \$25 million per annum. So some of the commitments that we have made prior to the election, they will be totally honoured. We do not break our promises when we make promises, Mr Morris, I can assure you of that. What we are promising is \$100 million surety going forward.

We can talk about the Strategic Sporting Infrastructure Program if you like. I know I can talk for the next 10 minutes on that, but you are not going to be satisfied with the answer that I give, clearly, because you do not like positive news when it comes to sport. Just for your information again — —

Mr MORRIS — On a point of order, Chair, apart from the fact that I dispute what the minister is saying, what I like or do not like is totally immaterial to the question.

Ms SHING — On the point of order, Chair, Mr Morris appears to have opened the door in relation to his arguments around the \$100 million and the minister is simply explaining what that \$100 million will be spent on. As the minister has indicated, Mr Morris may not like the answers that he is giving, but he is entitled to give them once Mr Morris opened the door and asked the question.

Mr MORRIS — It was not about whether I liked the answer. It was about whether I liked other matters.

The CHAIR — I am conscious of the time. If the minister could conclude his answer without attributing any views or characterisations of members of the committee, that would be desirable.

Mr EREN — Sure. I go back to my point. We are very proud of our policy: \$100 million over four years, \$25 million per annum, locked in in the forward estimates. That is what it is all about, and that is what the previous government could not do. We have locked that in. We are going to make sure that the programs that we have been having that are so successful — —

We want to enhance those programs, we want to make sure that people have accessibility to the funds, and we want to make sure that there are other stakeholders involved with those funds as well. We will continue with our program, as we have done all along in terms of the commitments that we made leading up to the election, and we will honour every one of those commitments. Every promise that we made, we will honour those commitments. We will make sure that sport not only survives in this state but thrives. We are the sporting capital of the nation; we want to continue it to be that way. We want to concentrate on making our community healthier, more active and, obviously for many different reasons, Mr Morris — that is, mainly because we are the most livable city in the world and we want to continue that trend. We want to make sure that our population lives as long as they can a healthy life, and sport contributes tremendously towards achieving that. We have committed \$100 million — I will say it again, \$100 million — surety in the forward estimates, \$25 million per annum.

The CHAIR — I would like to thank the Minister for Sport for his attendance today, the Honourable John Eren, as well as Dr Philip, Mr Lance Wallace, Mr Paul Smith and Mr Nick Foa from the Department of Health and Human Services. We will now move on straightaway to the tourism and major events portfolio.

Witnesses withdrew.