

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

2021–22 Budget Estimates

Melbourne—Wednesday, 16 June 2021

MEMBERS

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WITNESSES

Ms Ros Spence, MP, Minister for Community Sport,

Mr Simon Phemister, Secretary,

Mr Peter Betson, Associate Deputy Secretary, Sport, Recreation and Racing, and

Ms Georgina McCann, Executive Director, Community Sport and Recreation, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

The CHAIR: I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and call the committee to order.

We welcome back Minister Spence, this time in her capacity as Minister for Community Sport. We again invite you to make a 5-minute presentation, which will be followed by questions from the committee.

Ms SPENCE: Thank you, Chair. Firstly I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting, including elders past and present, and can I thank you for the opportunity to come before the committee today and report on the work to support the Victorian community sport and recreation sector over the past year.

Visual presentation.

Ms SPENCE: Through the many challenges of the last year also, the spirit of collaboration has been present at all levels of the sector, as has the clear passion and commitment that Victorians have to keeping active and participating in sport and recreation. This commitment has been reflected in recent data from AusPlay, which has found that, through 2020, 83 per cent Victorians were active at least once a week, 580 000 Victorians volunteered in the sport and recreation sector and there were around 10 000 community facilities across our state, which provided an estimated value of more than \$7 billion per year in economic health and social benefits. Participation in organised sport is estimated to provide \$1.4 billion in broader benefits, including an estimated \$130 million in broader health system savings.

While sport and recreation activities have largely been able to return to a state of COVID normal, the pandemic had a massive impact across the sector over the past year. In March 2020 it was estimated that the 12-month revenue loss from lockdowns and restrictions would be \$359 million and that the sector would lose around 16 000 jobs. Of course the greatest impact was on participants, with seasons cancelled or abandoned and facilities required to close to ensure that public health could be protected. These impacts required a significant response from government, and I am proud to say that we delivered that. We have invested heavily in support of the sector to ensure that it was well placed to return as restrictions eased.

We delivered the \$40 million community sport COVID-19 short-term survival package, which has provided thousands of grants to Victoria's sport and recreation associations, leagues and clubs to help them to maintain their financial viability. We provided an additional \$110 million through the 2020–21 budget for a second round of the community sports infrastructure stimulus program, bringing the total investment to \$178 million, supporting shovel-ready community sports infrastructure projects across Victoria, generating economic activity and supporting Victorian jobs and communities. All up, more than \$274 million has been approved to support the delivery of 234 projects in 2020–21.

We delivered the first round of the \$21 million Get Active Kids voucher program, providing more than 10 000 vouchers of up to \$200 to help families with the cost of memberships, uniforms and equipment. The 2020–21 budget also provided \$6 million for an expanded round of the sporting club grants program, and we are continuing to deliver a suite of initiatives through the Change our Game program supported by the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation. In 2021–22 we will continue to build on these significant investments to support the sector to bounce back. \$11.6 million over four years has been provided to continue the work of the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation and expand the Change our Game initiatives to level the playing field for women and girls in sport and recreation. We are providing \$4 million over four years to build inclusive

sport and recreation communities through the support of ReLink Australia's ActiVIC program, which provides important participation opportunities for disadvantaged Victorians.

We are also continuing our investment in local sports infrastructure, with \$55 million allocated to support new and upgraded community sport and recreation infrastructure that meets community needs. Our government remains committed to supporting the sector as it recovers from the impacts of COVID-19. However, we need to ensure that we continue to support more opportunities for people to participate in sport and that they have access to safe, supportive environments to play in, and I am proud to say that the programs we have delivered over the past year and moving forward will do that.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and I invite Ms Richards first.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister. Again, this is such an interesting and exciting area of your portfolio, so I am very pleased to be able to explore it a little bit further. I am going to refer you to budget paper 3, page 71, where there is a table, and page 83, where there is a bit of explanation. Can you please outline for the committee how continued funding for the Office for Women in Sport and Rec will lift female participation in sport? I am particularly interested in reference to the various Change our Game programs.

Ms SPENCE: Thank you, and thank you for your interest in this area. I am delighted to talk to the committee about the importance of continuing to invest in the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation. The funding of \$11.6 million over four years continues the government's commitment to lifting participation in community sport and removing the barriers to entry and sustained involvement in sport not just on the field but right across the sector. So let me start by going through some of the key programs that have run through the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation. This is going to sound like a bit of a shopping list, but it is a list of programs, so there is really no other way to do it.

Firstly, the Change our Game scholarship program assists women to access professional learning and development opportunities to enhance skills in sport and recreation, leadership and management. So this is a really great program that lifts the involvement of women in sports administration, and this is a field that has traditionally been dominated by men. Since 2019, 150 scholarships have been awarded in areas such as postgraduate studies, upskilling and training for club committee work and leadership and development, so that is important.

The activation grants funding program funds one-off community-level events that showcase and celebrate the role of women and girls in sport and active recreation, including participation days and gala nights. Since 2019 we have seen 82 activation grants awarded, with a new round of recipients to be announced shortly, and I am very much looking forward to that. These grants have been awarded in areas such as development of AFL footballers into future coaches and umpires; female basketball coaching development programs; and programs to lift participation, such as Come and Try Netball days.

The Change our Game research grant funding program assists with specific research into women's and girls' participation in sport and active rec, and these grants aim to build capacity and lead to better and more inclusive outcomes for all. They can help to form future policies for the government to consider to help drive further growth in women's involvement at all levels of sport. This program has seen four grants be awarded, and they have looked into areas such as that link between uniforms and female participation in sport, which was a really interesting and important piece of work. I will be announcing more successful recipients of that program later this year.

The Change our Game regional governance program is a tailored program designed to provide governance training for women to take up leadership roles—paid and volunteer—at all levels of sport and rec in regional Victoria.

The Change our Game Australian Institute of Company Directors Foundations of Directorship course program is a program that provides formal training and development opportunities for women who are looking to strengthen their understanding of governance procedures and processes on boards within sport and rec, and it gives women those additional leadership skills in the sports sector.

And then finally, the Change our Game Making the Call program helps to provide opportunities for women in sports broadcasting and media. This program aims to address the under-representation of women in sports

media by providing media training and opportunities for participants to cut their teeth in the industry, and it has achieved some amazing results for women in sports broadcasting. Some of these recipients are utterly inspiring, with women breaking into an industry that has traditionally been dominated by men. So these programs are great examples of why the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation is so important in lifting the participation levels of females in the sporting sector and why the Victorian government continues to fund and back women in community sport.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister, for that evidence. You mentioned the results that have been achieved through the Change Our Game programs, and I think the example you used just at the end there was the Making the Call program. Can you outline some of the case studies where female participation in sport has been advanced?

Ms SPENCE: Thank you, and I would be happy to provide the committee with some examples of successful applicants. I will start where I did leave off with the Making the Call program, because the stories of some of these graduates have been absolutely inspiring. In November last year 21 women took part in the inaugural Change Our Game Making the Call pilot program with an opportunity to learn broadcasting skills and access a team of industry experts including Mel Jones, Kelli Underwood, David Barham and Andy Maher. By the end of the program participants had a better understanding of the skills and resources that were required to work in broadcasting, along with a customised development plan, with some of the participants taking the opportunity to create an audio show reel to assist them with gaining roles in the industry once they had finished. Through participating in the Making the Call program participants reported a 71 per cent increase in their knowledge of the broadcasting environment and the skills that were required to begin their career.

Now, one such graduate in the first round of the program was Brihony Dawson, who in a few short months of finishing the program succeeded in taking on a number of industry roles, including the co-host of the AFLW Grand Final program on Channel 31. She was the co-host of *All in*, an online TV show focused on women's sport, and she was a ground announcer at the AFLW Grand Final in Adelaide. Having met and spoken to Brihony I can say if you could bottle her energy and enthusiasm, we would all be buying some. She is an absolute ripper, and I have got no doubt that she is going to go far in her career should she choose to continue to pursue it, which I am sure she will.

I am also pleased to advise the committee that the second intake of Making the Call undertook a program in May. That is under the stewardship of the incredibly experienced Emma and Lucy Race, who are hosts of the award-winning *Outer Sanctum* and terrific advocates for women in sport and media. Having spoken to both of them, they have great enthusiasm for this program, and I know that they will provide terrific stewardship to bring these Making the Call participants through the program. So that is great. I cannot wait to hear of many more great outcomes and the exciting pathways that are fostered through that program.

One more quick example. Melissa, who worked at Cricket Victoria in 2020, received a Change Our Game scholarship to the value of \$8500. Melissa attended a six-day women leaders Melbourne Business School course that was designed to identify and understand what it means to be an authentic leader and how to lead difficult conversations and navigate the challenges of bringing strategy to life. This course provided Melissa with the opportunity to build confidence as a female leader at Cricket Victoria and in her role as a volunteer with the Melbourne Deaf Cricket Club. Deaf and hard-of-hearing women have difficulty accessing leadership positions and leadership training due to the communication barriers that they face, and this training was vital in empowering Melissa to further share knowledge with other deaf and hard-of-hearing women and girls to build their capacity and share personal skills in their own lives. There are many more examples that I could give you about how these programs bring great benefits. They really are terrific. I mentioned also the research funding with the uniforms research. That is an incredibly interesting piece of research of how the choice of a uniform can determine whether or not girls and women can be inclined to participate in sport.

Ms RICHARDS: Fascinating.

Ms SPENCE: Incredibly fascinating, and we can make great use of research like that.

Ms RICHARDS: You are making my heart sing. Thank you so much.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Richards. Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Minister. You talked about, in your presentation, the impacts on the sector of COVID-19—a \$359 million loss, 16 000 jobs, associations, leagues and clubs at risk, cancellation of seasons and restrictions of activities. All of that, but budget paper 3, page 251, indicates for the sport output a 36 per cent cut, or \$247 million. Why, when the sector is under such stress, would you be cutting \$247 million from government funding?

Ms SPENCE: A large amount of the decrease in funding to the sector is due to a decrease in the infrastructure stimulus funding that was provided last year. The infrastructure stimulus funding has not been continued to the extent that it was provided last year. There is still some infrastructure funding, but that was funding that was provided as part of the COVID infrastructure stimulus funding.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So how much was that?

Ms SPENCE: The reduction amount is around \$88.7 million.

Mr D O'BRIEN: \$88.7 million—that still leaves \$160 million-odd cut from the budget.

Ms SPENCE: And the experience economy of—

I will pass to Mr Betson, rather than reading off his.

Mr BETSON: Thank you, Mr O'Brien. So in terms of the total sport, recreation and racing output—so that comprises three portfolios, the community sport portfolio, the professional sport portfolio—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Can I perhaps cut you off there, because you may be able to answer my next question, which is: how much of the \$497.4 million in this year's budget on that line item is actually for the community sport portfolio?

Mr BETSON: The community sport portfolio will comprise \$153.3 million—

Mr D O'BRIEN: 153.3.

Mr BETSON: also in addition to the \$55 million that is provided in the state budget. Of that, \$45 million will come from the Community Support Fund, so in effect—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Sorry, so that is included in the 153?

Mr BETSON: No, it is not included in that number.

Mr D O'BRIEN: On top of the 153?

Mr BETSON: Yes, on top of the number.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The CSF is how much—45.3?

Mr BETSON: \$45 million.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Sorry, say again?

Mr BETSON: Sorry—\$45 million.

Mr D O'BRIEN: \$45 million. Yes. Okay. And how much was the community sport portfolio in the last financial year, with the most up-to-date figure you have got revised?

Mr BETSON: In the 2020–21 budget, \$411 million.

Mr D O'BRIEN: 411.

Mr BETSON: And, as I have explained, the reductions there are largely due to the stimulus, rounds 1 and 2. That is no longer being continued by virtue of the fact that that was a COVID recovery stimulus investment package. The experience economy package, which was in relation to the \$40 million that the minister referred to, \$36 million of that will not be carried forward by virtue of the fact that that program will be exhausted. And

then local sports grants is the other component, which was a 2019–20 budget item. They are tailing off, those projects, as they continue to be delivered, Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Could I perhaps just get that on notice, the details of the differential between that \$411 million for the portfolio last year and the \$153 million?

Mr BETSON: Certainly.

Mr D O'BRIEN: That would be great, if you could. Minister, can I go on. You also mentioned the Get Active Kids voucher program. You said 10 000 vouchers at \$200 last year, but there was \$10.5 million allocated for that program last year. That is only \$2 million, when I went to school. What has happened to the rest of it?

Ms SPENCE: That program continues to be rolled out. We are rolling out round 2 at the moment. The first round opened on 1 March, and round 2 opened up on 31 May. The second round has been more popular than the first round. We have already so far seen almost 6000 applications be submitted in the first two weeks, so that is about 30 per cent ahead of where we were in the first round. There are an additional two more rounds to go.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. You said 10 000 vouchers. So, as I said, that is \$2 million already spent for last year. Will the full amount of the \$21 million that was allocated to this program continue into 2021–22? So obviously there will need to be a rollover is the question I am asking. Perhaps the Secretary might be able to answer as well, but will that be all rolled over?

Ms SPENCE: Well, that will depend on what the take-up is of the second round.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, okay. The question is: will any of the money be recouped given that for 2021, for the budget year—I understand it only started in March—it has dramatically underspent what was budgeted? So budgeted was \$10.5 million; you have only spent \$2 million.

Ms SPENCE: I understand what you're saying, but it depends on whether or not there is a massively greater take-up in round 2 then there was in round 1. Round 1—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, you have indicated there already is; you have indicated a 30 per cent increase.

Ms SPENCE: Correct, and I would expect that there will at the end also be greater—we do not expect that there will be any loss of money over the life of the program.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Have there been applications rejected, and if so, how many?

Ms SPENCE: Those that have been rejected have been rejected on the basis of them being ineligible.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Could I perhaps ask, Minister, for a breakdown on notice if you could of the—

Ms SPENCE: No, I can give you that information now. The number of unsuccessful applications has been 1744.

Mr D O'BRIEN: And do you have a breakdown by gender and age of the applicants?

Ms SPENCE: I do have that information. In regard to round 1, 45 per cent of the applicants in round 1 were female, 55 per cent of the applicants were male.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I am going to run out of time, Minister, but if you have got it by age bracket and even if you have got it by sport as well, if that is available, would you be happy to provide that on notice?

Ms SPENCE: I can provide you—

Mr D O'BRIEN: You have got 2 seconds to read it, so perhaps if you—

Ms SPENCE: AFL was most popular, followed by swimming and basketball, then soccer, netball, dance and gymnastics.

Mr D O'BRIEN: If you are able to provide that on notice, Minister, that would be great. Could you just say yes for the record?

Ms SPENCE: Yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Mr Hibbins.

Mr HIBBINS: Thanks, Chair. Thank you, Minister and team, for appearing this afternoon. I am interested to know whether you are keeping any data on participation rates following last year's lockdown. I am noticing that there have been some clubs unable to field teams when historically they would be, particularly at the junior level, or footy clubs not being able to field female teams this year. Are you keeping any data in terms of a reduction in participation in sport?

Ms SPENCE: Yes. That is something that I was really interested in, because initially we were very concerned as to what participation would be like and whether or not it would be the same as the interstate experience, where participation did come back fairly strongly and fairly quickly, whether it would be the same here and whether or not participation would come back in the same areas or whether people would continue doing more passive recreation or come to sport.

I meet regularly with a community sport round table with 10 of the peak SSAs—state sporting associations—CEOs, and they provide me with feedback. In some areas there have been no issues with return—participation has been fine—but there have been others where there have been certain age groups only that have not come back. So we have had to dig a bit deeper and find out what the reason for that is. Is that because they were playing multiple sports and they are only now coming back to play one sport or have they dropped off completely?

So Vicsport have undertaken a survey where they have done a little bit more research in that space. What we found is a few things. There has been a bit of a decrease in registered participation, more heavily seen in junior girls, which was a bit of a concern. Equally there is not a very high response rate to the survey as yet, and this is something we are going to have to track over time. But there are certain ages where we are not seeing it as high as we would like it to be. So it is going to have to be tracked over time, it is going to have to be tracked over seasons to see—winter, summer et cetera. So for some sports at some ages there is a gap, but it is about going in deeper and finding out why. And we are hoping to do that also with schools, to talk also through this sporting schools program and have the conversation there as well as to whether or not they are participating in a sport and why or why not.

That is where the Get Active kids vouchers program has also been really important, because what we did in round one was when people applied for a voucher we also asked them some questions, and there was some really interesting feedback in that response. Now, what we found was that 40 per cent of those who applied would not have been able to participate without the voucher. 10 000-plus kids participated; 40 per cent would not have done so without a voucher—that is a lot of kids participating that would not have otherwise done so. Twenty-seven per cent had not participated before—were new to a sport—so whilst we have some return-to-sport or participation issues that we are monitoring and that we will continue to monitor, we are also seeing some benefits through that program where young people would not have otherwise been participating.

So we need to continue to promote those participation access points and make sure that those barriers are being addressed but also work with sport through Vicsport and through the clubs and the SSAs to make sure that where we are seeing ongoing participation issues, if we need to, interventions can be put in place to make sure that where there are participation lags, if we need to do some more work there, that we are addressing that problem going forward, because that would be a worry. If they are doing something else or if they are doing one sport rather than two or three or if they are doing individual rather than team, they are other issues to consider.

Mr HIBBINS: Terrific. Thanks.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Hibbins, and thank you, Minister. That concludes the time we have set aside for consideration of the budget estimates with you today. Thank you and all of your officials for appearing here

before us today. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses will be required within 10 working days of the committee's request. The committee will now take a short break before moving to consideration of the next portfolio. We declare this hearing adjourned, thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.