

TRANSCRIPT

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE 2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES BID

Inquiry into the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid

Melbourne – Tuesday 5 December 2023

MEMBERS

David Limbrick – Chair

Joe McCracken – Deputy Chair

Melina Bath

David Davis

Jacinta Ermacora

Michael Galea

Sarah Mansfield

Tom McIntosh

Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell

WITNESS

Lisa Hasker, Chief Executive Officer, Vicsport.

The CHAIR: We will now resume the committee's public hearings for the Inquiry into the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid.

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

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

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

Lisa HASKER: Lisa Hasker, CEO of Vicsport.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. It is great to have you here. We will just briefly introduce the members of the committee today.

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

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Hello. Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Member for Northern Victoria Region.

Joe McCRACKEN: Joe McCracken, Western Victoria, and I note David Davis will be probably coming in that door in 2 seconds. He is Southern Metro.

The CHAIR: David Limbrick, South-Eastern Metro Region.

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

Tom McINTOSH: Tom McIntosh, Eastern Victoria Region.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Jacinta Ermacora, Western Victoria Region.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Sarah Mansfield, Western Victoria Region.

The CHAIR: We welcome you and invite you to make your opening comments. We ask that they be kept to a maximum of around 10 minutes, please. Thank you very much.

Lisa HASKER: I am sure I can be short and sweet. Thank you for the opportunity to present here today. For those of you that do not know the detail of Vicsport, we are the federation of Victorian sport. We are the peak body for Victorian sport, community sport. Our members are mostly state sporting organisations, some national sporting organisations based in Melbourne, and also local councils – 50 of the 75-odd – plus individuals, plus other organisations such as ACHPER and those types of organisations that are involved in sport but are not state sporting organisations. Our day-to-day work is mainly supporting the growth, development, education and capacity of state sporting organisations in Victoria. The focus of our work at the moment is around governance and child safety legislation, and we just came off a whole lot of work around COVID and COVID recovery.

In the Commonwealth Games context, our work was mainly around volunteers and building the volunteer base, using the games as a platform for that, and also legacy, working with the state sporting organisations to make sure that the legacy of the games was prepared for and continued before and after such events.

We keep ourselves busy with a couple of hundred members, and we love the opportunity to do anything we can to support Victorian sport and to make sure that there is the opportunity for more people to be involved in sport how they want to be involved, whatever background they might come from.

In the context of the games, it was a big disappointment, the cancellation, because obviously given my outline of the work we do, it was very important. The big events are a highlight in terms of focus of work and focus of encouraging more participation in both active participation but also volunteering and officiating. That is probably my opening comments.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. That is actually a great segue to what I was going to ask about. One of the things in the business case for the Commonwealth Games was talking about the health benefits of increased participation through people getting excited about it, and the business case stated a very large increase. This seems even more important as, as we have heard from other witnesses, during the COVID period lots of people disengaged from sport. In fact I remember when after lockdowns I went to the pool for the first time with my boys and I was shocked to see so many overweight kids, just because they had not been doing exercise. So my question is: what do you think is the best way going forward, now that the Commonwealth Games is not happening, to try and get that interest and excitement in sport so that people, as well as kids, get more into participation in sport and get that benefit that we might otherwise miss out on that was put forward in the business case?

Lisa HASKER: It will be harder. A big games, a big event – a Commonwealth Games, an AO, a world champs or whatever the sport might be – is a lift. The excitement that is created around the role models, the event, being able to be part of the event, being able to watch the event and being able to attend the event gives that kind of unnatural lift that we do not get day on day. It will still happen, but it will involve a lot of work and involve a lot of the work that we are doing around doing sport a bit differently and getting sports to put forward some different models. The old traditional model after COVID is not as enticing for a lot of people. They want to consume sport; we want them to consume sport for physical benefits but probably even more so for the connection to club and community. That is the really important thing, as well as the physical. We need to present the product a bit differently, be innovative and make sure that we are kind of meeting the customers' needs where they are. You know, a games would create a lift that we do not normally have. We will still work on all of that. It is still a focus for sport, it is still a focus for us and it is still a focus for our colleagues in Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth, but it will just take a little bit longer. We will not get that natural uplift that we do with a big event.

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

Joe McCracken: Thank you for appearing today. Thank you for all the work that you do on behalf of sport in Victoria. It is much appreciated. I just want to start with getting an idea of the time line of your involvement from the start. What meetings, discussions, briefings and exchanges did you have with the government in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games?

Lisa HASKER: Our exchanges were mostly quite early on with sport and rec Victoria in the focus of legacy and volunteering. We were lucky enough to work with Minister Spence on a volunteering project and we were then going to concertina that work through with the lift of the Commonwealth Games in getting volunteers involved there. Obviously day on day we work with sport and rec in the delivery of sport across Victoria. For us, we are not the funding arm of sport, like sport and rec, we are the education capacity-building arm of sport, in terms of the peak body. So we were working with them quite early, particularly on legacy and volunteering, to make sure that the state sporting organisations had a voice in those processes and what was going to happen around the OCG so that we were kind of embedded in that process, because ultimately in Victoria, the state sporting organisation are the ones delivering the participation products and working on the ground with those members that join their different sports. So we wanted to make sure that we were embedded in that process from the beginning.

Joe McCracken: Okay. So you met with Ros Spence who was the minister at the time. Did you meet with any other ministers at all with regard to the Comm Games?

Lisa HASKER: No, no. We were about to meet with the minister around volunteering, so Minister Shing. That portfolio has obviously now changed. It has come back to Ros, which is a good connection now, but we were mainly talking to Ros Spence, our minister at the time.

Joe McCracken: Okay. Are you able to just provide us with a list of when you had any meetings with them?

Lisa HASKER: Look, off the top of my head – no, I could not tell you that.

Joe McCRACKEN: I am happy for you to take it on notice, if that is okay.

Lisa HASKER: Yes, I can do that. I meet with Minister Spence often, so does my chair, and we have a round table with the minister, with me and about 13 sports every three or four months. They are on the record. So we are very connected to the minister, informing her. Not that she was directly involved in the Comm Games in terms of a portfolio, but the community sport portfolio was obviously connected in some way. But we work very closely together.

Joe McCRACKEN: Were you invited to the partnership forum hosted by the Victorian government at the MCG?

Lisa HASKER: Yes. The first one, I think, yes.

Joe McCRACKEN: August, I think it might have been.

Lisa HASKER: Oh, good question. There was certainly an initial one that I attended with a lot of different stakeholders at the MCG, yes.

Joe McCRACKEN: Yes, okay. Tell us about it.

Lisa HASKER: It was informative in terms of just initial plans for the games, councils, the involvement and obviously the CEO of the OCG telling us about the setting up of the office and the initial work that he was doing with local councils. So it was very much an information exercise. It was really heartening to hear about the connection with the Indigenous community and how that was going to roll out in regional Victoria around the games venues and other venues. It was basically information gathering for us and then a process where we could think about how we could plug into some of those plans going forward.

Joe McCRACKEN: So probably more information than consultation – would that be fair to say?

Lisa HASKER: At that stage, yes.

Joe McCRACKEN: Yes, okay.

Lisa HASKER: But that was pretty early on, yes.

Joe McCRACKEN: I guess there is another question I would like to ask. I know we have heard from other sporting bodies about how the Commonwealth Games is like a pathway to other different ventures like the Olympics and Paralympics, for example. I know in your submission that you state that:

The tone of the cancellation notice was disappointing – to be told by the Premier that *'it was not a hard decision'* to take the drastic step of cancelling the Games was dismissive of the many athletes, coaches, administrators and volunteers ...

Were you surprised when the Premier announced the cancellation?

Lisa HASKER: Very surprised. I thought the announcement was going to be around potentially bringing some of the venues into metropolitan Melbourne and changing the way it was being delivered. I never thought that the announcement would be around cancelling the games.

Joe McCRACKEN: I mean, were you surprised when he did not apologise to all the different athletes and all the different administrators and coaches and volunteers?

Lisa HASKER: Yes, I was. Personally I was, and as an industry leader I was, because that is 3.9 million people involved in sport and rec in Victoria in the different ways you can be involved, so it is a lot of people. It is a big percentage of our community. There was a lot of lead-up work. There was a lot of excitement. There were a lot of meetings, regional travel, opportunities, forming of task forces.

Joe McCRACKEN: And have you guys been offered an apology at all?

Lisa HASKER: No, but look, you know, I do not think I really expect one.

Joe McCracken: It is a bit lousy.

Melina Bath: You are not holding your breath.

Lisa Hasker: No, but I think for the disappointment – you know, obviously everyone feels some disappointment, but the main disappointment was around the athletes, particularly the Paralympians. It is the only games where they are integrated into the major event and obviously not as a separate standalone, so that is quite shattering for them as a unique thing in their home state. And that close to the games, that is right in your preparation pathways, so that is a big dent in how we then replan for an elite athlete. So it is really disappointing for them. For the younger athletes, as you alluded to, it is a taste of a smaller games in the lead-up to an Olympics and world champs, depending on the sport, so it is a big disappointment. That would have been a first taste that would have created some opportunities and success for some of the younger athletes.

Joe McCracken: I think my time is up.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr Galea.

Michael Galea: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for joining us, Ms Hasker. In your submission you have recommended that grant programs should be simplified. What exactly would you do to simplify them, and how would you do so in a way that would not impact the rigour of the grant process?

Lisa Hasker: Look, I think that is actually happening. We have had great consultation with sport and rec Victoria and our counterparts in the department around the legacy funding – whatever you want to call the funding that has come out of the Commonwealth Games – so that has been fantastic. And making that easier for sporting bodies to apply, in particular easier for clubs to apply – because as you would understand, there are approximately 12,000 clubs in Victoria all run by volunteers. There is not much time, when you have got a full-time job and a family and you are just trying to run the footy club, to apply for funding, and if it is tricky, that makes it problematic. So we are constantly working with them on simplifying that process and making it easier for club land in particular to lift through a bit of funding for little bits and pieces that can enable them to concentrate on being a healthy and welcoming club and encouraging as many people as we can to join that particular sport.

Michael Galea: Thank you. So those conversations with sport and rec Victoria have been productive so far, would you say?

Lisa Hasker: Very much so, yes.

Michael Galea: Very good to hear. I hope that continues then – get to some good outcomes. In terms of participation now, I know this is obviously something that is very important to Vicsport. Obviously I have seen it in my region alone too, whether it is funding we have just given for the Berwick Churches Soccer Club to expansion, clubs from right across that I deal with – even the Endeavour Hills Judo Club are going from strength to strength as well, not to mention the huge amount of demand for more basketball facilities in my region –

Lisa Hasker: Always.

Michael Galea: which I am sure you are aware of. But this is of course about the regional games and the regional infrastructure build. I do look after a metropolitan area. The major package of regional sports investment as part of that broader regional package that has been announced – obviously the funding itself is very important, but how do you think we can best implement those sporting regional infrastructure packages? There has also been that announcement today of a further part of that, which is great to see. But how do you think that we implement that in a way that best delivers value for community sporting clubs?

Lisa Hasker: Look, I think definitely sport and rec have taken the opportunity to construct this package given the advice from the general sporting community, given that it is great to have facilities. And we want to upgrade facilities, and we want to make them more accessible, and we want new ones in the sports where they are needed – well, every sport would love new facilities – where the demand is highest. But there is also connected with that some participation outcomes and also workforce support, so that is really important. It is not much use building something that is accessible if you are then not talking to the right group that can come

to that facility and then supporting them when they get there. So it is really important that that is happening together, and it is. So out of a bleak cancellation of a Commonwealth Games we have probably had some great outcomes that have come out of that – how we have been moving forward.

Michael GALEA: Would you say, in terms of those more far-flung areas that are not in those five centres, there is an opportunity for those areas, whether it is Bairnsdale, Echuca or Warrnambool, and beyond there too? Would you see some benefits for them through this current regional package?

Lisa HASKER: I think hopefully there are more facilities that are a bit closer that will be better accessed and have more opportunity for access and more room for people to get to. But ultimately, we want more facilities everywhere so people do not have to drive far to be involved. They can fit sport into a busy life and they can choose various different sports and have facilities that are adequate to look after them – so ultimately, more, more, more. But being realistic, if we have got more in bigger centres, hopefully it is not as far to travel.

Michael GALEA: And to that point of maximising it as well, I am sure you and I both agree that more facilities and more infrastructure can only be a good thing. But beyond that sort of capital investment, what is the best way that you see of driving that participation up in line with these new facilities?

Lisa HASKER: Look, I think it is upskilling the workforce in just continuing on being innovative around participation, continuing to meet the customer where they are and understanding what people want after COVID because sport is being consumed a little bit differently. You know, people do not want the same thing anymore. They want things that are a bit different. It is making sure that people understand our inclusive groups so that they can attract different people to different sports and make sure sport is really welcoming and safe, and then making sure that we have got the workforce on the ground, whether it be a volunteer or paid workforce, that can take the influx of people and take different groups and welcome them into their sport. It is really important.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. I believe my time is up.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Davis.

David DAVIS: Lisa, thank you for your material, and it is very important that you are here. I just want to ask you on the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, what was the reaction of your state-based organisation, and how did you learn of the cancellation news?

Lisa HASKER: My organisation or all the sports?

David DAVIS: Well, all the sports but your organisation specifically.

Lisa HASKER: Well, I was in another meeting on Zoom and saw the ribbon going across the television saying, 'Games have been cancelled.' I had heard a few rumours in the kind of 10 minutes before that, but then I had a ring from the minister's adviser telling me of the announcement but 10 minutes before it was actually announced. I probably thought that – given I am community sport, not elite sport, and I am not one of the Commonwealth Games sports – I would probably be kind of the last on the list, but I was quite lucky that I was one of the first. And universal shock, basically – when we had a dial-in with the chief of sport and rec it was a bit like when we announced that everything was cancelled because of COVID: no-one said a thing, and no-one asked a question. It was just universal shock. So then we kind of gathered ourselves after that through that day and got some feedback, particularly from the sports that obviously would have been presenting their sport during a games but also from all sports because in a big event like this – you know, I remember back to Melbourne 2006; everyone gets a lift. You know, it is not just the sports that are in the games. They are obviously important. They get a chance to show their wares, particularly the smaller sports – you know, the squash.

David DAVIS: And this does the reverse when it is going in this direction.

Lisa HASKER: Yes. So people were shocked and then they were like, 'Okay.' Once you recover from the shock, you then get back to what core business is and get on with it, but it was a shock.

David DAVIS: You detailed in your submission that the lack of consultation was not consistent with a relationship of mutual respect. Has Vicsport previously had a respectful relationship with the Victorian government and that did not help?

Lisa HASKER: I suppose it depends on what you mean by government. We have a very good relationship with sport and rec Victoria. We work well together; we are close enough to be honest when honesty needs to be there. We worked together on the good, the bad and the ugly, we worked very closely around the COVID period, but I am not sure that any of those bureaucrats got the heads-up before me. You would have to ask them that.

David DAVIS: And what about the national sporting bodies? Did you receive feedback from them?

Lisa HASKER: Yes, a few of them. There are a few that are based in Melbourne that we have close contact with. Some are our members, mostly the ones that are in a kind of one management situation, but they were in the same boat. They were very shocked.

David DAVIS: Shocked. And what do you think it means for the future of the games?

Lisa HASKER: That is a good question. I worry. I think the Commonwealth Games has a very clear and very needed purpose in the kind of hierarchy of sports events worldwide. For athletes that I know that have been to the games, it is a great introduction to the games. For some of them that is it in their career; they do not go to the next level. For some of them it is the start of a great career. But I worry that given the rhetoric around costs and those types of things that we are going to have a problem placing it. I do not want that to be a problem, so we will do whatever we can to support it.

David DAVIS: And the reputation issue for the state, the head of Visit Victoria told this committee that to cancel the games had enhanced Victoria's reputation for running events. Do you think that is right?

Lisa HASKER: To cancel the games had enhanced the reputation.

David DAVIS: That is what he said.

Lisa HASKER: I am not sure I understand that.

David DAVIS: We did not either. And in that context with the reputational issues, do you think both the former Premier and now the current Premier, who was the minister, should apologise?

Lisa HASKER: Look, maybe, personally, human to human, but I do not really pretend to understand the world you guys live in in terms of politics and what that means and how that works. Sport – we are a resilient under-resourced small gang that do a lot of work. Whatever happens we will just fall over the hurdle – that is my old sport – and then just get on and get going, so we are not going to dwell on things.

David DAVIS: But your submission details the cancellation impacting the reputation of Victoria and Australia as an event host. Do you want to just quickly detail that?

Lisa HASKER: That was some of the discussion that came from sports that we liaise with, that they worried about that, because obviously the Commonwealth Games is one event, and it is a big one. But individual sports run a lot of different events and try to bring them into Victoria on an ongoing basis, whether it be worlds, Oceania championships, the nationals or any event that is not just a state-based event. That is really important to showing off Victoria and to having Victorians able to compete at home, so I worry that that could put a dent in that.

David DAVIS: And Vic's reputation as the sporting capital?

Lisa HASKER: It could dent it. I do not know. I have not got any evidence, but I suspect it is not great.

David DAVIS: It has not helped.

Lisa HASKER: Yes.

David DAVIS: Thanks.

The CHAIR: Ms Ermacora.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Thank you, Chair, and thank you very much for appearing today, Lisa. Vicsport represents, I think you said, 12,000 clubs and associations or thereabouts.

Lisa HASKER: Yes, our direct members are all the state sporting organisations. There are about 120 of those. Underneath them – or members of theirs – are the 12,000 clubs spread across those 120-odd sports.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Yes, that is fantastic. Can you tell me how your organisation has used the support from the Together More Active program?

Lisa HASKER: Yes. We are very lucky to receive funding from government through sport and rec Victoria and Together More Active. Our focus in that funding is around capacity building of all the state sporting organisations, particularly delivering outcomes and support in strategic planning and governance. There is also a particular focus on the child safety legislation and rolling out the new 11 Victorian standards. There is a lot of work to be done there, since there are 10 standards nationally but 11 in Victoria, so just making sure our Victorian counterparts understand the standards, roll them out to their clubs and understand the difference between our standards and national standards that they might be hearing about from a national organisation. And then day to day we are funded to support different sports in different projects that help them lift. It might be strategic planning, it might be revamping a membership model, it might be looking at their competition structure – whatever is needed. So that is our focus through TMA funding.

Jacinta ERMACORA: I think I have seen a little bit of that in my community, Warrnambool – the strategic planning skills and the governance training. It is a very good thing for clubs to do that, and then also the gender inclusion.

Lisa HASKER: Yes, it is a big focus. We work with SRV but also with the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation around the quota – a 40 per cent quota for women on boards of state sporting organisations. We have been involved in that project for about six or seven years. The thing about all these projects is that because club-land personnel change over a lot, you have to keep educating year on year, because the committee will change, so we need to be on top of that all the time.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Can you specifically detail to the committee how you lead, engage and achieve that promotion of female participation in sporting organisations?

Lisa HASKER: Our role is really to educate the sporting community around the government policy, around the 40 per cent quota. Our role is to make sure that sports get to that quota, and I think we are up to about 96 per cent of SSAs that have reached quota. Now our role really is to keep them there and to help sports make sure that their governance is such that they can make sure that people want to stay on boards – that that quota is kept as it should be.

Jacinta ERMACORA: I think they are discovering that once they have that inclusion of women in those leadership roles that they become more successful clubs too.

Lisa HASKER: A lot of clubs think that the quota pertains to them, and we are like ‘Well, not yet – maybe.’ At a state sporting organisation level definitely, but at club land a lot of them are taking that on board as well just naturally, so that is always good. Our next challenge is to make sure that boards are fully inclusive of everyone. So our boards still do not quite represent the communities they govern, but we are getting there.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Fantastic. How does that program, the Together More Active program, contribute to the social, physical, mental and economic wellbeing of the Victorian community broadly?

Lisa HASKER: Look, it does in many ways. A lot of sports have specific projects around inclusion. We have a lot of projects around welcoming, inclusive and safe and healthy clubs, so that focus kind of leeches through everything we do. We are doing cultural awareness training at the moment. We are doing child-safe training. All that stuff is really about making sure the SSAs are getting the information to their clubs that we want everyone to be welcome in sport and that we want to make sure that volunteers are armed with the right tools so they can do that.

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

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. And thank you for your submission and for appearing today. You mentioned before that your organisation did have some involvement in the planning stages prior to the cancellation. Is that correct?

Lisa HASKER: Yes, probably not formally – like we were not called into a meeting. We were called to some information meetings. We more worked with SRV to gather up the state sporting organisations to contribute some ideas around legacy, to basically make sure those ideas were on the table in the Office of the Commonwealth Games and also Jeroen’s organising committee so that when policies came out and things that were about to be launched came out they represented the state sporting organisations’ needs and also embedded an understanding that those were the people that were going to be delivering at grassroots level.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes. Okay. At that stage did you have any concerns about the proposals that were out there – the plans for the games, for example, having lots of different regional cities hosting the games or the facilities that were being proposed?

Lisa HASKER: No, I do not think – I mean, I think everyone acknowledged that it was going to be a challenge, but as one of our sports said to Minister Spence, ‘While it’s a challenge, we will make it work.’ It was a challenge in one sense, but it was a positive in the other in terms of having that opportunity in the regions and building facilities there, where we do not normally get those opportunities as much. So, yes, a challenge, but, you know, we just turn it into a positive and get it done.

Sarah MANSFIELD: You have mentioned in your submission that the decision to cancel it had an impact on organisations who are either members of your organisation or associated with sports otherwise in Victoria, who might have brought on staff or invested in other resources as part of the planning process. Can you explain that and maybe give some examples, if you are aware of any?

Lisa HASKER: Yes. Just things like multiple visits out into the regions, accommodation nights, meetings with councils, negotiating over space in facilities – those things all take time and money away from other core business. For instance, we have a CEO and chair forum a couple of times a year where we get everyone together and have a forum on the latest issues and get feedback from our members, and we took it regionally. We even took it regionally after it was no longer a Commonwealth Games town because we had contracts in place and wanted to honour those, but that was an added expense. We could have diverted those funds to something else. So there is a lot of that pre-work that goes on because you need to get everything set in stone at certain time lines in the lead-up to a big event – extra staff on board, those types of things. It is a big outlay in time and money.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes. Okay. You have also identified that legacy is not just about infrastructure. What practical steps do you think need to be taken to increase volunteering and participation, which is what you feel needs to happen alongside infrastructure?

Lisa HASKER: Yes. Look, very much so. We have worked very closely with Minister Spence’s team and SRV on creating an education package around attracting, retaining and rewarding volunteers, because we recognised after COVID that there was a significant drop. And probably we do not even know the exact quantum of the drop, because a lot of people kind of jump in and help now and again; they are not kind of on the books, so to speak. So we are focusing on that and continuing that work to coach clubs on how to get more volunteers involved, to coach them on how to divide up the roles, because – a lot of you are probably involved in sport – when you go to volunteer often it is a whole-day experience in the rain or the 40-degree temperature. We want to coach people on dividing up those roles, but that means you need more people, so trying to get that

A big event creates an opportunity where a lot of people volunteer just for the fun of the event, and we are working very closely with Minister Spence and Volunteering Victoria on translating those people and mechanisms, translating those interested parties over to coming back and working in sport after the games.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Do you feel there are adequate resources now – you know, earmarked as part of the legacy pledge to support that work?

Lisa HASKER: Yes. I think we are doing pretty well in that area, but we can always do better, because it is a big amount of work to get people involved to make sure that we can deliver sport how we want it delivered.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes. Thanks.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Mansfield. We are out of time. Mr McIntosh.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes. Hi. I just wanted to pick up on a few points you have mentioned. First of all, hurdling, you said, was your sport. I was sitting here wondering, and you said it, so anyway.

There was a comment you made that people do not like the same thing anymore – I do not think that was on the volunteering side, that was perhaps on the sports that they get involved in.

Lisa HASKER: I think it is probably in both. I think there are a lot of people that will go through the path of competing a couple of times a week, training each night, competing on the weekend, going to development squads, state team, national team, representing Australia. There will be a whole path of those people. But they are probably in the smallest percentage compared to the masses that will take on a different sport in a different way. We have been working with sports in partnership with VicHealth and sport and rec Victoria around just encouraging sports to present some different products – some come-and-tries, some once-a-weeks, some ‘come and play in your trackies’ and some small-sided kinds of games in different sports – so that people that do not want to consume the sport in the same way or with the same time commitment can still have a go and still participate in a sport and feel comfortable coming along. That will be an even bigger focus I think after COVID. You know, COVID has probably, like some bits of the Comm Games, been a positive in getting people to think differently about what they offer, but that again creates another need for more volunteers to then kind of produce a different product and prepare it and show it off on the weekend.

Tom McINTOSH: I think it is interesting. You know, bowls clubs I go to, for example, those in the last 10, 20 years have been willing to open themselves up for community to come in – lawn bowls, whatever – and get involved. And perhaps we see it a bit from a spectator perspective – Twenty20 as opposed to ODI, which I feel a bit emotional about. It is a tragedy that ODI is not so big anymore – but just those moves in what people have got the time for, I suppose. Yes.

Lisa HASKER: Yes, that is right.

Tom McINTOSH: I was actually having a conversation yesterday in South Gippsland around governance. I think you mentioned your direct members – those 120 sports associations or peaks. Have I got that right?

Lisa HASKER: State sporting organisations – so Baseball Victoria, Bocce Victoria, Basketball Victoria, yes.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes. Great. You are working with them in building their capacity to go out and train those 12,000 clubs that sit underneath there? Is that right?

Lisa HASKER: Yes. Look, we deal through them. Our members, the regional sports assemblies, do more of the work around direct stuff with clubs in the regions, but we rely on the state sporting organisations to kind of pass down information to their clubs. We have contact with a few clubs directly, but mostly we are dealing with the state sporting organisations.

Tom McINTOSH: You have talked about volunteering and volunteer recruitment and whatnot, and this is the same conversation as yesterday. There are two sorts of volunteers: one is just picking up and carrying stuff, turning snags and doing all this sort of stuff; and then there are the others on the governance side – the books, the –

Lisa HASKER: Being on the committee – yes.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes. Particularly on that governance side of things, how are you assisting with that, and what are your observations and comments around that?

Lisa HASKER: Look, I think our assistance is in making sure we have provided all the resources that make it easier for sports to pass down resources that can help people lift in that area. As I said, it is tricky because those committees roll over and change over quite a lot. With more and more compliance, there comes more and more stress about being involved in those committees, particularly on that governance side of things – probably

more so than just jumping in to be a coach. The compliance side of things is creating some stress in that environment.

Tom McINTOSH: Following on from that, how important do you think that compliance is for safety?

Lisa HASKER: It is crucial. You cannot not have child safe standards. But having 11 and rolling them out amongst committees to around 12,000 clubs is a big job. We will just continue to do it and keep doing it. We have been lucky enough to be funded to produce modules and resources that make it easy for people to comply, but we have just got to keep on that roller-coaster to make sure people are up to speed.

Tom McINTOSH: Do you think that in time, as you said with the 11, those practices become sort of embodied within the clubs and it is then less work and just becomes the norm?

Lisa HASKER: That is the whole idea. My guru on child safe on my team would be very upset with me if I did not mention that the standards are one thing but that it is the culture of the club that is important. There is the policies and ticking off the standards when you know what each of the standards are, but it is the culture of the club. If you walk into a club, you should know from what you see, from what you hear, from what you have signed, from what you see on the wall and from committee meetings and all that stuff that this club, in the child safe example, is a child safe club. So if you have got someone that is intending to do something that we would not want them to do, they would not stay there. That is the idea, to have the culture build up.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McIntosh. Ms Bath.

Melina BATH: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for being here today. In your submission, you speak about how you would be supportive of moving the model to a Melbourne model or a part-Melbourne model, and we heard from Peggy O'Neal that they were open to that and exploring that. At any time did the government or a representative of the government come to you and discuss that as an option?

Lisa HASKER: No.

Melina BATH: No – a vacant lot on that one.

Lisa HASKER: That is the short answer, but no. We would have helped in any way we could and got the troops together to discuss that if that was an option, but it was not.

Melina BATH: Thank you. I appreciate that. In your submission you talk about how funding needs to be directed by the sports and the regions themselves. I know that the state government at the moment has a Community Sports Infrastructure Fund – supposedly of \$60 million. We want a recommendation. What is your recommendation in relation to that? We hear there has been collaboration, but when you actually read some of the submissions from sporting organisations, there is thin air about their knowledge of where the Commonwealth Games sports were going to occur and the like. If you were designing a new program, what would that look like?

Lisa HASKER: Well, I think there are probably two separate groups of people with those two separate themes that you are talking about. Certainly with the new funding that has come out, the funding that was left after the Commonwealth Games, there has been an amazing consultation on how that is going to be produced and how that is rolled out, and the ideas that sports have presented to sport and rec Victoria, specifically, have been taken up. That is a separate issue. I think it might be Commonwealth Games money, but it is a separate issue to the decisions around cancelling the Commonwealth Games. The consultation has been good. There has been no rush, and we have got a chance to chat about how we see it best to get that money out to the regions and make sure it has not only bang for buck but sustainability. So that has been really good.

Melina BATH: When there was a Commonwealth Games, there was a time line and a deadline. How will you be assured, or what do you want to see to be assured, that that money will actually come – not just the discussions but a time line to come to fruition for that –

David DAVIS: It will not go into the never-never.

Melina BATH: and that it is not on the never-never? What will you need to see to give you confidence?

Lisa HASKER: Well, I think it is probably a bit like the infrastructure funding that has come out in the last little while. There is an amount that has been articulated, there is a date when it is due and there is the rollout and then there will be evaluations of how that has worked and how that has been rolled out. I mean, we are pretty happy with that. The process is a lot easier for people to apply, and there is encouragement to make sure that the sporting bodies who apply, or the LGAs, are working with relevant community organisations. If it is a project around more accessible facilities, then there will be an expectation that disability advocacy groups get involved. So I think that has been really solid.

Melina BATH: Thank you. In relation to some of the smaller sports that should have been compensated – I think your report says ‘lost generational opportunity to showcase their sports’ – what sort of compensation do you feel is appropriate?

Lisa HASKER: That is a tricky one.

Melina BATH: I did read your submission, and it has come from your submission.

Lisa HASKER: Yes, obviously. I could give you an example of a sport like squash, whose opportunity for big games is only at the Commonwealth Games, not the Olympics. To showcase that sport, to utilise facilities, to build participation, to get people involved and to highlight the stars there is one chance. Compensation is a hard one, but we probably need to have some extra funding potentially to focus on those sports to try to help them build, because they do fill a niche. All sports attract different people and look after different people in different ways, so it would be nice to see them a bit more supported in the coming years given that they will not have the Comm Games as an opportunity.

Melina BATH: Thank you. Finally, last question from me, you have the floor. You have made some recommendations here, some commentary, and you are keen to see Vicsport as being the lead in a vision for regional sporting funding programs. What is that vision for you?

Lisa HASKER: I think that point has been taken up firmly by government at the moment in terms of the sport and rec team that we deal with. They have certainly included us in every opportunity to have input into how the funding is used and how it goes forward, so that has been fantastic. We are here basically talking on behalf of Vicsport but our members as well just to make sure that something like this does not happen again, because history does repeat itself, and we want to make sure that Victorian sport is a highlight. Melbourne is the sporting event capital of the world. We want that, we want to be that and we cannot have hiccups that will dent that reputation. We want to make sure that we have got as many opportunities as possible to make sure that we are building sport and numbers in organised sport, because then we know that people are attached to a club and community, and that contributes to physical health but also mental health and community connectedness, which is vital.

Melina BATH: Seeing infrastructure on the horizon, seeing a plan and some funding for that and the time line/pipeline –

Lisa HASKER: Helps that path.

Melina BATH: and seeing volunteers still being engaged in that helps that path.

Lisa HASKER: Yes, and we need to keep working hard on that.

Melina BATH: And government does.

Lisa HASKER: Yes.

Melina BATH: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Bath. Mr Davis, do you have a question?

David DAVIS: We were talking about reputational damage before, and we had the strange comments from Visit Victoria. You outlined in your submission that there is significant reputational damage to Victoria as a

destination of choice for peak sporting events and the ongoing impact on attracting lower level events. Ms Bath talked a bit about this, but do you think that is going to make it almost impossible for some of those sports to attract regional games or suchlike?

Lisa HASKER: I hope not, but you have got to worry that it does, because obviously the cancellation has been a big media event. It has continued to be discussed. It is in people's psyches. People are noticing from other states. People are noticing from overseas. That has got to create a dent in a reputation. I am hoping it does not. We have a lot of events here, and we want to attract a lot of events here. As I said, we conduct a lot of events at state level, state champs, but we want to have the nationals here. We want to be in Melbourne for the sports and the nationals.

David DAVIS: And regional things.

Lisa HASKER: Yes, regional things. Take things to the regions. Have our professional teams go to the regions as well. Show off all sports to all communities. You just worry that people might think, 'We won't go there; we might not be supported.' I hope that does not happen, and the sports certainly will be fighting that kind of conversation. But it is a worry in the back of my mind.

David DAVIS: Have you had that kind of feedback from people? Has there been any of that feedback?

Lisa HASKER: I think probably international people that watch our sport from afar, expats, say 'Not a good look.' There is a conversation around that when that comment comes across the phone or across the email. We just need to work hard to make sure that does not happen down the track.

David DAVIS: Thank you.

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

Tom McINTOSH: No, I am okay.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing today and for your testimony and contribution. You will receive a copy of the transcript for review in about a week, and then it will be published on the website. The committee will now adjourn.

Witness withdrew.