

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Australian Sport Commission

Select Committee on Administration of Sports Grants

Inquiry into the administration and award of funding under the Community Sports Infrastructure Grant Program

27 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000602

ANAO audit mentioned at the Board meeting in June 2019

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 22

Senator: Janet Rice

Question:

Senator RICE: Thank you. We understand that Minister Colbeck attended the board meeting in June 2019. At that board meeting, did you mention the ANAO audit to him, either formally or informally?

Mr Wylie: Not to my recollection, no. I don't believe that was discussed. If it was discussed, I believe there would be a record of that in the minutes and there's no such record in the minutes. I will check that, because of the specific question, but I don't believe that was discussed or raised with the minister. I've had seven sports ministers in eight years in this role, so I've had some experience with new sports ministers, and it is convention and practice for a new sports minister to talk to the board. We think that's a good thing. The minister for sport and the Australian Sports Commission have a joint interest in advancing the interests of sport in Australia. It's good for the minister to have a good understanding about the Sports Commission's priorities and objectives and what we're trying to achieve. Likewise, it's good for the Sports Commission board to understand what the minister's priorities might be. We welcome the opportunity to sit down with a new sports minister. It's an ordinary course, and it's something we've done with every sports minister.

Answer:

In June 2019, Minister Colbeck met with the ASC Board during a strategy session the Board held. The ANAO audit was not an item for discussion at this session. This was not a formal ASC Board meeting and as such, no formal minutes were taken.

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PDR Number: IQ20-000604

Community affairs committee

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 27

Senator: Nita Green

Question:

Senator GREEN: I just have one other question and then I am going to hand over the call. Senator Rice might have asked this question, and I apologise for the double-up. Several questions on notice were put to Sport Australia during Senate estimates a few months ago in the community affairs committee, and those questions still haven't been answered. Has Sport Australia prepared responses to those questions? Do you know where they're up to now?

Mr McCann: We'll have to check that and come back before the committee. I was of the belief that they were all either out or tabled, but I can come back to you.

Senator GREEN: So they might still be with the minister, you suspect?

Mr McCann: They may be going through their noting process.

Answer:

All questions on notice put to Sport Australia during Senate Estimates have now been answered.

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PDR Number: IQ20-000608

Round 1 grant project

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 30

Senator: Janet Rice

Question:

Senator RICE: What was the round 1 project Minister McKenzie's office asked to have its notification delayed from December 2018 until February 2019?

Mr Dalton: Who are you asking that question of?

Senator RICE: Of anybody who is able to answer it.

Mr Dalton: Could you repeat the question, sorry?

Senator RICE: Yes. There was a round 1 project that the then Minister McKenzie's office asked to have its notification delayed from December 2018 until February 2019.

Mr Dalton: I'm not sure—go ahead, Luke.

Mr McCann: Sorry, I was just going to say we'll have to take that on notice. I don't have the specific details of that grant. Do you have the name of the grant, because I'm not aware of it?

Senator RICE: All I know is it was in the ANAO report, that the funding for round 1 was announced but there was one project in a coalition electorate where the announcement was asked to be delayed until next year.

Mr McCann: I'll take that on notice.

Answer:

The Round 1 project that the former Minister's office asked for a delayed notification for was:

- Applicant – Glen Eira City Council
- Project Title – EE Gunn Reserve Oval 1 Lighting Upgrade
- Grant Amount – \$213,675

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PDR Number: IQ20-000612

Grant Guidelines recommendations

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 32

Senator: Anthony Chisholm

Question:

CHAIR: Just in regard to the guidelines, Senator McKenzie claims that, because of her intervention in the grants decision-making process, more sports in a larger geographic spread received grants. At any stage did Senator McKenzie or her office recommend guidelines that would have ensured this to be the case as part of the Sports Commission assessment process?

Mr McCann: I'd have to take that specific element on notice. As we discussed earlier, there were conversations with the minister's office about developing grant guidelines, but I couldn't go to the specifics.

Answer:

No.

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PDR Number: IQ20-000615

Lowest score recommendations

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 32

Senator: Janet Rice

Question:

Senator RICE: When did you become aware that the minister had approved over 60 projects that had scores of less than 60? Some were as low as 39. You were talking about the proportion that had scores above 61, but how about the ones that had scores as low as 39?

Mr McCann: We would have become aware, as each round was being confirmed, through the ministerial brief that we received approving the grants.

Senator RICE: And that didn't concern you?

Mr McCann: It's not for me to comment about what concerned us. We went through our process. We involved the minister in the final decision-making process and we received the advice back from the minister.

Senator RICE: Did it go to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee that there were projects being approved with scores as low as 39, in terms of a risk to your governance of this program?

Mr McCann: As the chair and the CEO have mentioned, we raised risks with the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee around the active role the minister was playing in the process. I couldn't specifically tell you whether they raised the level of scores for projects that were being approved, but we did consistently raise concerns throughout the process, starting in that December period through to the round 3 process.

Senator RICE: But you didn't take action?

Mr McCann: The final approver, as outlined in the guidelines, was the minister.

Senator RICE: Yes, but it's your reputation that's at stake. The lowest score recommended by Sport Australia in round 3—and obviously there was considerable concern by that stage about how politicised the process had been and there was a much better paper trail being laid; so we actually had the Sport Australia recommendations that were forwarded, not

what the minister wanted—was 62; wasn't it?

Mr McCann: I'd have to take the lowest score on notice. I don't have that with me.

Answer:

The lowest score of projects recommended by Sport Australia in Round 3 was 61.5