

ATP CUP

233. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Tourism:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I refer to the loss of Western Australia's iconic tennis event of more than 30 years, the Hopman Cup.

- (1) Can the minister inform the house what actions he undertook to retain the Hopman Cup in Western Australia?
- (2) Can the minister assure the Western Australian public that he will reinstate a Women's Tennis Association tour event to cover the loss of top-quality women's tennis in Perth?
- (3) Will the minister, Treasurer and Minister for Sport and Recreation assist Tennis West in upgrading courts at the State Tennis Centre, which will be required to support the ATP team event?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) I have actually been pretty open and made prominent comments regarding the progress of the tennis tournament from the day that the ATP Cup was announced. I am pretty certain the member would have seen that in the media; I said it many times.

The major point I made at the time was that the moment the Association of Tennis Professionals announced that it was going to have a world cup, attracting the top-100 male players in the world to that event, at exactly the same time as the Hopman Cup, the world changed. The terrain changed and there was no possibility at all of retaining the Hopman Cup. The reality is that we would not be able to attract anyone above 100 in the world in the men's competition, so that was not going to happen. Tennis Australia made the determination that it needed to be part of that event, because, otherwise, the summer of tennis would have been completely compromised. Several nations around the world were competing for the ATP Cup and they would have taken the top-100 men to those nations had they won and had Tennis Australia not competed for the event. Fortunately, Tennis Australia determined it had to compete, and, fortunately, it was successful. We are retaining a top men's tennis event in the lead-up to the Australian Open, which is essential for maintaining the integrity of tennis in Australia and the Australian Open as the premier event that it is.

The ATP world cup will be the biggest tennis event in the world outside the grand slam tournaments; it will be a significant event. It will be a completely new event from the one on which it was modelled. It will attract significant ATP ranking points, so all the players will want to be part of it. There is significant prize money; I think it is in the order of \$22 million in prize money. It will be the biggest thing outside the grand slams, and we will be part of that. For six days Brisbane and Perth will be hosting that event, and in the last four days the finals will be in Sydney. For six days, Perth will be part of the biggest event outside the grand slams. That is a good thing. I regret that we were unable to have the Hopman Cup. That had nothing to do with the government.

With respect to the WTA event, the Women's Tennis Association had not commenced negotiations with anyone about a world cup-like event until such time as the ATP Cup was announced earlier this year. It is about two years behind in discussions on the whole concept and it has not got anywhere near being able to commit to an event. That aside, we have made it known to Tennis Australia that we would like to retain top-tier women's tennis in Perth at that time of the year in anticipation of a WTA world cup eventually being delivered at some time in the future. We want to retain top-tier women's tennis in some form. We have asked Tennis Australia, via Tourism WA, to provide us with a proposal, and it is doing that. I anticipate that any day now it will do that. We anticipate that it will provide it to us by the end of April. As soon as I know about that, I will then be able to look at the proposal. Tourism WA will assess the proposal. The moment we know something about that, we will tell everyone. We have not been backward in telling everyone in Western Australia that, firstly, we are disappointed that the Hopman Cup ended as a consequence of the announcement of the ATP world cup. We are keen to retain a women's event of some description until such time as a WTA event is delivered, at which time, we will bid for it.