

STADIUM PAYOUT

Minister told agency to let nib deal stand

EXCLUSIVE

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State Political Editor

Sports Minister Terry Waldron instructed VenuesWest not to try to negotiate a better deal with Nick Tana's Allia Venue Management after the agency and the Department of Sport and Recreation expressed concerns taxpayers' interests were not being protected adequately.

The Barnett Government yesterday failed to explain why it included a termination clause in a heads of agreement deal that let Allia walk away from its management contract of nib Stadium 10 years early, and be paid out \$8 million by taxpayers.

Mr Waldron yesterday failed to address Labor MLA Rita Saffioti's query on why the clause was included.

"We considered Allia to be a good operator," he told Parliament.

Asked by *The West* why the clause was included, Mr Waldron said it was "necessary to get the agreement of all parties so we could progress

the issue" of the \$95 million redevelopment.

Allia had a deal to manage the stadium with the Town of Vincent, which owned Perth Oval, but the Government had announced a redevelopment and had to renegotiate the stadium's governance.

With negotiations over the heads of agreement ongoing in April 2011, VenuesWest chief executive David Etherington revealed in an email, obtained by Labor under Freedom of Information laws, that Mr Waldron had instructed him and Venues-

West chairman Graham Partridge not to try to get a better deal for the State.

"(A)t our meeting with the minister yesterday, Graham Partridge and I were advised by the minister that the decision had been made to continue with (Allia's management) of nib Stadium," Mr Etherington wrote.

"Any consideration of paying (Allia) out would not be for many years, if it even eventuated before their 13-14 years (contract time) are up."

Ms Saffioti said taxpayers had been taken for a ride.