



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND
YOUTH AFFAIRS**

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2009-2010](#))

Members:

**MS A BRESNAN (The Chair)
MR J HANSON (The Deputy Chair)
MS M PORTER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2010

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr S Lilburn (Ph: 6205 0199)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

APPEARANCES

Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority	90
Canberra Institute of Technology	90
Chief Minister's Department	71
Cultural Facilities Corporation	71

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Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 3 pm.

Appearances:

Stanhope, Mr Jon, Chief Minister, Minister for Transport, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Land and Property Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for the Arts and Heritage

Chief Minister's Department

Cappie-Wood, Mr Andrew, Chief Executive

Whitney, Mr David, Director artsACT, Culture and Communications

Cultural Facilities Corporation

Elvin, Ms Harriet, Chief Executive Officer

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister, for appearing at today's hearing. We are looking at arts and heritage. I thank departmental officials for coming along. I draw your attention to the privilege statement which is on the table in front of you, so that you are aware of it. I am sure you all are. Chief Minister, before we go to questions, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Stanhope: No, I have nothing specific to say, Madam Chair, other than to thank you for the invitation to be here. We are all very happy to be of whatever assistance we are able.

THE CHAIR: I might start with a question relating to page 112 of volume 1 of the annual report, on access to venues. I know that a survey has been done and also an arts review has taken place. What were some of the findings of the access surveys that were undertaken for the 12 facilities in the last financial year? One of the issues that came out of the arts review was about barriers to young people in particular accessing venues, and that was around public transport, and also for people who are disadvantaged—so not just young people but people who might be socially disadvantaged. The first question is about what the findings were around the access surveys for the 12 venues that were looked into, and what has been done in terms of actual access issues for people who have been identified in that review.

Mr Stanhope: I will ask Mr Whitney to respond to that.

Mr Whitney: We are talking specifically here about barriers to physical access. So this is about getting facilities to be compliant with the code. So, in its simplest form, it is about wheelchair access to the building and signage for people who are vision impaired. So we are talking here about particular upgrades, for example, at the Gorman House Arts Centre. When it became an arts centre some 25 years ago, the code was quite different. So now we have had to upgrade toilets in that facility as they need to be accessible. We were focusing here on the physical access, not perhaps on your question, which was about access for young people or other particular groups to our arts facilities.

However, if we look at the activities that go on within the centres and the particular projects that are undertaken in specific centres, they are actively engaging with particular parts of the community, and in particular young people. I can cite examples of Canberra Youth Theatre, our quantum leap program in particular, that have a strong focus on young people's access. Belconnen Arts Centre and Tuggeranong Arts Centre have very strong programs for accessing young people as well. Belconnen, as a new facility, is completely compliant in terms of physical access and also has a raft of programs engaging, mainly through dance activity and through the visual arts program, people from across the breadth of the Belconnen community. Does that help?

THE CHAIR: It does. One of the things the review did point out was that access to venues is not just about physical access, as you have talked about—say, wheelchair accessibility, which is—

Mr Stanhope: Adequacy of access.

THE CHAIR: That is right. That is obviously vitally important for people but also—

MS LE COUTEUR: Getting to the venue.

Mr Stanhope: Getting to it.

THE CHAIR: Which does limit people in actually going to or seeking to go and use these facilities as well. Is that something that has been considered or do you actually agree with that finding that that is an issue?

Mr Whitney: It is an issue for all of our facilities. I say all of them because, whilst the purpose-built ones are in locations that are absolutely in the public arena, there are others that are using previous facilities, so they are a little more difficult to physically find. For most of our arts organisations, funding is fairly tight. So in terms of programming the activities they do and then publicising their programs, they are limited in what their reach can be. With reference to the Loxton report and increasing access to arts activity, we are always looking at ways to try and do that.

One of the areas that we are looking at at the moment, for example, with the Kingston foreshore, is co-locating some of our visual arts activities in the one place so that we can make them more accessible. At the moment, people like Megalo print workshop are in the suburbs, some distance away from the centre of the city. PhotoAccess is at Manuka, which is a great centre but you have to make it a particular purpose to get there. If we can co-locate people like Megalo and PhotoAccess, the Craft ACT and maybe the Contemporary Art Space alongside the Canberra Glassworks, you can create that sense of visibility and critical mass. So in response to your question, we are looking at doing that. That is our intention, and then to try and focus that. The Street Theatre, again, is an area where there is obviously a great opportunity for people involved in theatre, and then Belconnen and Tuggeranong as arts centres to try and increase their access as well.

THE CHAIR: Is there a particular time frame or plan for when, looking ahead, that would happen?

Mr Whitney: We have recently appointed a cultural planner to work with us on Kingston. So we have got a time frame of March next year to try and have an overview for there. Obviously, that will give us information which will be subject to government consideration. With the Loxton report, we are still working through the submissions that have come in. We have not been able to summarise that and provide that to government, but we will aim to do that in the next few weeks. That will pick up the Loxton information. With Street Theatre and Tuggeranong, they are subject to preparation of an application for a budget bid, to try and expand those facilities or consolidate those activities.

THE CHAIR: With co-location, is that something on which there has been positive feedback from the organisations that would possibly co-locate there?

Mr Whitney: Correct. Some of the co-location could be physical and some could be in fact virtual. But that idea of being able to work together from a programming perspective and also from a presentation perspective is seen as a positive.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Under “highlights” on page 32, it refers to what I imagine is the Loxton report and review. Could you give me an update on where that is at in its process? Has it been tabled yet? Is it still ongoing? I believe that is due to lead to a review of arts policy in the ACT by about mid next year. Are we on track to meet that?

Mr Stanhope: Mr Whitney just touched on the time frames in relation to that. Yes, we are in a consultation or at least an assessment phase now. Submissions were called for. I understand that 74 submissions were received for that, which are now being assessed. My hope, Mr Hanson, is that I will have an initial report on that within a few weeks. In the context of then developing a government response, that will take some time, but I am anticipating that there would potentially be some budget implications from the report and its implementation if the government were able to find the wherewithal. So I am very keen for the response times to fit with our budget cabinet process in that event. That is a broad-brush outline.

Mr Cappie-Wood: The call for submissions closed on the 29th. There were approximately 70 or 72 that were in at that stage. There are a couple that came in post that. We have decided to accept those as well. They are being actively gone through at the moment. Some of them are quite voluminous. We see that as a very positive engagement sign. You are correct in saying that one of the key recommendations coming out of the Loxton review is for a clear arts policy and cultural policies as a result of that.

We will be making sure that we respond to those recommendations, reflect back on government’s original terms of reference and provide government with not only a summary of the submissions but also be able to respond, hopefully, once the government has considered that, to the people who have written in, who have provided submissions. So we would close that loop. We would anticipate that we would be in front of government early in the new year. It is a fairly complex process,

with over 100 recommendations already in the Loxton review. So it is not just an easy process. It is fair enough to say that the arts community have high expectations coming from this, so it is about trying to make sure that we provide a comprehensive and cohesive approach that government can consider as quickly as possible.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a follow-up question, Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: No. Mine is actually a follow-up on yours but I will wait my turn.

THE CHAIR: I should have checked that so I do apologise.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you for that information, Mr Cappie-Wood. Can you tell me in general terms what is the tenor of the response to the Loxton report?

Mr Cappie-Wood: Yes. Whilst not wanting to frame that in terms of how government might respond, I have to say that there has been a wide variety of responses. Some of them relate to government's role in the arts sphere, which is appropriate as that was one of the questions that Mr Loxton raised in his assessment. The others go to the relative administrative arrangements which will provide better support. They go to key arts organisations and the capacity to form greater coherence in terms of the key arts organisations. They also go to the relevant questions around how and what the priority of funding should be and how they relate to government policy in this regard, so the question of having a clear policy frame is one that is important.

There are recommendations regarding the Cultural Facilities Corporation in there and a variety of responses have come back, including from the corporation itself, which we are taking on board. What I am seeing, if the tenor is right, is that, whilst people might quibble about interpretation, there is an enthusiastic embrace of government looking at the arts area and there is an enthusiastic embrace to say that we can do better, not only with what we have got but what we can position government funding to achieve—greater audience participation, greater audience development, a clear and more coherent policy arrangement and more streamlined administrative arrangements—all of which I think is a fairly sound response.

MRS DUNNE: So at the end of the process what is going to happen to the responses? Will they be made public?

Mr Cappie-Wood: This is quite important because when we asked for comments we were not asking for comments to the extent of saying that we would then make them public, because we wanted to make sure people had the confidentiality to know that they could say the things that needed to be said without the fear of being publicly exposed. So we said to people that we would happily accept confidential submissions, and I think that is quite appropriate, and we said that we would be responding to those people who put in submissions, and we certainly intend to do so.

MRS DUNNE: So the premise was that they were confidential. A number of participants have sent me copies of their responses, but you see that the dissemination of the responses would be the responsibility of the individual submitter rather than for artsACT.

Mr Cappie-Wood: Certainly. I think one of the issues was that when people are looking at the relative means by which either policy or resources might be recalibrated, because that is fundamentally what it is doing, people should have the freedom to say what they wish to say, knowing that they might be making judgement or calls upon other arts communities, approaches et cetera. They need to be free to do so without necessarily saying that they need to be held accountable for their private views. What government needs to think about is how it is responding to those. But they are private views and we hold them as private views.

MS PORTER: I just want to go back to your question around access but from a different slant. I have a couple of questions. One is on page 34 of your annual report, Chief Minister, and it talks about the funding agreement with ANU for the community outreach program, which appears to me to be providing access to young people to arts by going out to young people rather than expecting them to come in. Could we have a little bit more information about that?

The other one I was looking at as far as access was concerned was in the Cultural Facilities Corporation annual report at page 14 where it talks about the Canberra Theatre Centre receiving major improvements to its e-business capabilities. I would imagine that is about bookings and things like that but I was aware also that there had been some developments in actually providing through electronic means better access for people with disabilities at the theatre. I was wondering if you could talk about the e-business plus those other improvements at the theatre.

MRS DUNNE: Are we doing the Cultural Facilities Corporation separately?

Mr Stanhope: I think we might hold the second question until the Cultural Facilities Corporation, if that is convenient.

MS PORTER: Okay. Can we just go to the first question then and I will hold the other one until later?

Mr Stanhope: Sure. Thank you, Ms Porter. Certainly the community outreach program goes from strength to strength, and that continues to be our objective for it. Earlier this year, we entered into a new five-year agreement with the ANU, which has enhanced our capacity to be more strategic. I will ask Mr Whitney to give some detail around the extent of the outreach end of that very successful, pivotal program in relation to arts access and delivery in the territory. Could you give some detail on that, Mr Whitney?

Mr Whitney: Certainly. As the Chief Minister has just said, the agreement we have with the ANU now is for five years and I think so much of that is revolving around the appointment two years ago of Adrian Walter as the head of the School of Music. He is much more engaging with the programs that we are wanting the ANU to deliver. The music in schools program is, I guess, the most seen in terms of the public area. We are crossing over to 32 schools ranging from down south in Gordon and Wanniasa, through to Curtin, Lyneham, Flynn, Amaroo and across to Jervis Bay.

Within that program there are 74 teachers that have direct professional development

opportunities, mainly driven through the work of Dr Susan West from the ANU and her community outreach program. We think there are in excess of 1,500 students engaged in music making in that program, so there is a direct opportunity that we support through there.

Through the Canberra School of Art open access program the teachers and tutors at the School of Art run workshops and classes. There are 865 Canberra people who have taken part in those programs through subsidies and fee payment across 83 different courses, so that is quite an expanded program.

Another area that we have been really focusing on is access to libraries. The ANU's School of Art and School of Music have very impressive libraries. The School of Music in particular has a lot of orchestral scores, so community-based organisations can borrow those. In total, 521 people have accessed the libraries: School of Music, 353 and School of Art, 168. That provides an opportunity, without having to be a fee-paying student of the university, to access those libraries and those resources.

They are the key issues that we think are important. They then also spin into other activities. Within the School of Art there is a strong program of public lectures that are conducted and they have recently undertaken a series of those in public art, one of which was given by the Chief Minister. It is a debate and engagement about public art. There is also engagement with visiting artists as part of this program. Visiting artists to the School of Art in particular are involved in running lectures and programs that the community can access without being fee-paying students at the university.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would like to ask a question about insurance. I am aware from other public hearings with different departments that work has been done to make it easier for community groups to get basically bulk purchase of insurance. When I talk to various arts groups, particularly the very small, community-based ones, they say that they cannot do anything publicly because the insurance costs are prohibitive. Have you looked at providing some sort of group insurance scheme in the same way as has been facilitated for other community groups? I am also aware of some community groups which have effectively started doing that; they have insurance and they sponsor/host things which they have a more limited connection with.

Mr Stanhope: I must say that we try to encourage that across the board, most particularly through Treasury and ACTIA. It is a program where ACTIA have very vigorously sought to meet the needs of differing community organisations across the board in relation to the capacity to provide insurance for groups under an umbrella rather than individually, so I would have hoped certainly that it is a program of activity that is extended to the arts. I do not have any detail of that but perhaps Mr Whitney does.

Mr Whitney: This was an issue that was brought to the ACT Cultural Council and discussed by the council. We undertook some work on their behalf. Principally, there are a couple of umbrella organisations that currently provide public liability insurance. Certainly for anybody involved in dance and dance activity, Ausdance, both national and local, have an insurance umbrella scheme to involve community-based arts organisations in dance, as well as people who are teaching. So that covers most of the dance activity within the territory.

Within the performing arts, a lot of the small amateur-based companies, or indeed individual artists, can engage through a New South Wales umbrella scheme. I think the Association of Community Theatre of New South Wales have an umbrella scheme. You can join that association and become part of that scheme.

For individual visual artists, it is not quite as simple. However, there are host organisations that provide an opportunity for people to run exhibitions and to teach classes. Most of our key arts organisations that are involved in the visual arts provide that as a service for people to become part of their association. Organisations like ANCA, the Watson Arts Centre, through the Canberra Potters Society, and M16 have their own public liability insurance, so artists can join through there to get that cover.

When we did that research the summary was that people who take their art seriously can find options for getting public liability insurance. There are always people who are, if you like, entry level or just starting who find it confronting and very difficult. We do not have a direct conduit to say, “Here, sign this form and we’ll cover you.” We put them in the direction of the arts community to provide that very cover for them.

MS LE COUTEUR: Whom would they approach? When you say you put them in the direction of the arts community, how would they find that?

Mr Whitney: If someone were to approach artsACT and say, “How do I get my insurance?”, we would, through discussion, find out what art form they are involved in and then maybe direct them to the Street Theatre, Ausdance, Contemporary Art Space or M16—an organisation like that. Indeed, both Belconnen and Tuggeranong have opportunities to provide people with connections as well. They do not provide that cover, but through the programs they run they often have connections and can make those connections work.

MS LE COUTEUR: You did not mention musicians in your list or, if you did, I did not pick it up—although I am aware of the CMC.

Mr Whitney: The musicians are another issue. The Canberra Musicians Club—

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, CMC.

Mr Whitney: have their own insurance and they provide a cover for individual artists. I forgot to mention them. My apologies to the CMC. You can join as a member of their association and get public liability insurance to hold your own activity.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: Thank you. I notice that there is reference on page 32 to the interdepartmental committee to remove barriers to contemporary music. Whilst pausing to contemplate the extent to which that is an oxymoron, could somebody tell me what the terms of reference of the committee are, what it hopes to do and who is responsible for the secretariat—things like that?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Mrs Dunne. Mr Whitney?

Mr Whitney: It is artsACT who are the secretariat for that interdepartmental committee. We began this discussion probably about 14 months ago and it seemed to be running in parallel with a committee that was run out of the Assembly looking at not dissimilar areas. The correct terminology I cannot remember, but it is effectively about barriers to live music and community events. The committee has met and provided a report. We are in the process of providing a response through cabinet to that committee and the minister will be able to table that. I cannot remember the date, but it is in December.

MRS DUNNE: That is the response to the Assembly committee inquiry.

Mr Whitney: That is correct. What we were finding across the departments through this interdepartmental committee were many of the same sorts of issues. We will be providing a response to the government in the new year, so we are aiming to get that to be tabled in February next year. The sorts of issues that were being picked up were the noise levels and the duration that noise can be played. There was quite a bit of discussion about the night-time economy. There was also some discussion in there about access to venues, and particularly young people accessing venues.

There is also a cross-over. Often with live music there is one example associated with young people wanting to make music in unlicensed venues and another where live music is occurring in licensed venues. We are looking at some of the issues surrounding what is often confusion between music and the Liquor Act and what that has to control in terms of licensed venues.

MRS DUNNE: Who is on the interdepartmental committee to remove barriers for live music?

Mr Whitney: There are representatives from each of the government departments. I will forget somebody, but there are people from Health, Justice, Community Services and Territory and Municipal Services. There are the noise regulatory people and people from the Chief Minister's Department. Education is covered. We have got everybody.

MRS DUNNE: Planning?

Mr Whitney: Planning, yes, they are on there.

MRS DUNNE: Thanks. Who are the stakeholders for this committee?

Mr Whitney: Principally organisations like the Canberra Musicians Club, the people who want to engage and make music. We have got access to musicians through networks that we have. We are also connected through DHCS with people who are running venues or activities for young people in particular, and we talk to the community associations who have an overview of a lot of the community-based halls that have been available for live music in the past. But, as elements of society have changed, some of those halls are no longer available for live music. Our reach has been going quite strongly out there.

One of the things that we think is very positive is that the consultation, particularly with the musicians, has led to them talking about forming their own peak body, so they will then be a voice amongst themselves rather than individual venue operators or bands not actually being cohesive. They are now forming together to form an association which will become a peak body to respond both to us and to government.

THE CHAIR: Obviously we have had the situation with McGregor Hall being demolished. That was one of the primary venues, particularly for music, in terms of dealing with, as you have mentioned, noise restrictions. Some venues that might have been available now are not. Will the process that you have just outlined look at what is going to be done? Now that this space is not available, what will be done about providing appropriate space for musicians? Dance is also part of it, but music probably has more restrictions in terms of the venues that can be used. What has been done to actually provide some suitable venues for musical groups?

Mr Whitney: We have found that there are many venues where people can make music. McGregor Hall was one of many. Clearly, the group that ended up there was vocal about McGregor Hall closing. On Saturday, for example, at Ainslie Arts Centre, Music for Everyone ran a program called a rock school. There were a whole group of young people who were entry level, learning about how to play music, and this was their performance day out, if you like. That event happened in a government facility, an arts facility, and played through the afternoon and into the early evening. There are other venues that are available. Certainly McGregor Hall was—

THE CHAIR: And accessible as well?

Mr Whitney: They are very accessible. There are a lot of schools that are available as well and there are community centres that have facilities. Whether they are exactly where that group wants to be is the question. There are facilities within the city, within the immediate area of Civic, that certainly could be used. As the university sector has changed, with the changing of university fees and both the ANU bar and UC no longer having the money to regularly present music, it has provided an opportunity so that bands now actually rehearse within those bar spaces and the rehearsal becomes the performance. There are different places where people can go to make music.

I have mentioned those as being licensed venues. We have to find other venues, clearly, that are not licensed. Ainslie Arts Centre is one. The jazz school at the university is another venue that is often used by groups to go in and rehearse. That is a great venue because it has got all the sound insulation and stuff that is important. Groups rehearsing can make as much noise as they like without it penetrating beyond the building. The issue of venues is one that we are looking at.

MRS DUNNE: Apart from drawing up the government's response to the Assembly committee inquiry, what is the remit of the committee and how long does it expect to operate?

Mr Whitney: To answer the second part of the question first, the committee's work will finish very soon, because we will have provided a report looking at what we see

as the barriers to live music. The remit is to try and identify the barriers and look at how we can either reduce those barriers or mitigate the difficulty that those barriers present. These are the things that each of the people around the table who are dealing with the issues can look at. You talked about planning. It may be the Liquor Act or some issues around sound and the hours that sound can be made. These are all issues that will be identified. We will need to get a response from government if these are directions to take and then we can move forward with some of those recommendations.

MS LE COUTEUR: You were talking about venues. One of the distinctions you made was between licensed and unlicensed, which is obviously a very relevant distinction as far as music in particular is concerned. One of the attractions of McGregor Hall was probably that groups could actually sell liquor there, which obviously has financial—

MRS DUNNE: It has become harder now.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are there other community-level halls available where there is the potential to get a liquor licence for that night and have that stream of income? I think in Corroboree Park Hall you can, but in most of the schools, I assume, that would not be a possibility. What is there available in that level of halls?

Mr Whitney: I do not know the answer to your question. I am making the assumption that in most venues you can apply to get a temporary permit to sell alcohol. Maybe there is a church hall that might have a restriction on that; I am not sure. Schools may or may not; I do not know the answer to your question. There are many venues. But the distinction I was making between licensed and unlicensed was also about the age of the people involved, and a lot of the stuff that we have been dealing with is about young people, and a need for those venues for young people to be seen as unlicensed venues. To answer your question, I do not have a list of venues, and those where you can apply for a permit and those where you cannot. The question you might be asking is—

Mr Stanhope: I am not sure that there is a class of venue that is disqualified. We probably need to check that. I do not know the answer to your question either, but I was never aware that there was actually a class of venue. For instance, it would be possible for you or I to hire a scout hall, I assume, as long as we did not sell alcohol to underage drinkers. I know P&Cs for a school fete will get a liquor licence to sell beer with the barbecue. I know, as past president of a scout group, that on occasions alcohol was consumed in the scout hall. But I am not sure there is a—

MR HANSON: On rare occasions.

Mr Stanhope: On very rare occasions, and not by me, of course. I am not sure that there is actually a class of venue that is disqualified. There would be occasions when it would be inappropriate to have a liquor licence but that would depend on the occasion, not the venue.

MS LE COUTEUR: I may have been under a misapprehension with this question.

MR HANSON: Public art, Chief Minister.

Mr Stanhope: Yes.

MR HANSON: Last time you were here, you said that one day Canberra would find its *David*.

Mr Stanhope: I hope, yes.

MR HANSON: I just wonder if we have found it yet.

Mr Stanhope: It is probably not for me to say. There would be an artist out there that has delivered public art that would think so.

MR HANSON: Perhaps.

Mr Stanhope: But I have just, of course, enjoyed the great privilege of visiting *David*, and it is a hard act to follow.

MR HANSON: Indeed; we missed you dearly!

Mr Stanhope: It is a hard act to follow.

MR HANSON: I am sure you saw some fine artworks in Spain also. How much have we spent this year on public art?

Mr Stanhope: I must say I do not know the numbers.

MR HANSON: While you are looking at that, you might be able to answer my next question. I think the percent for art scheme has now concluded?

Mr Stanhope: Yes, the funding concludes in this financial year.

MR HANSON: So where to from there?

Mr Stanhope: The last of the funding was provided in 2010-11. That has just about been exhausted through commissions and purchases, although I think there are still some funds there. At this stage, we have not provided additional funding in the last two budgets. There was some carry-on funding in an earlier budget. There was no new funding in this year's budget. There is no new funding for public art in this financial year's budget.

I am aware that Loxton has recommended that the scheme be re-initiated. I have not seen any of the submissions. I will be interested in the report that I receive in the next few weeks from the department in relation to a proposed response to the Loxton report. Of course, one of the recommendations in that report is that that scheme be re-initiated, with some suggested changes of focus. Irrespective of that, I have to say that at this stage I have not changed my position of non-funding. But I will await the advice from the department—suggested responses to all recommendations, including that recommendation.

I know from conversations with some of those that made submissions to the Loxton report—most particularly I met just a week ago with the Chairman of the Cultural Council and he urged me in the strongest terms to recommit to the program. I must say I am aware of an interview involving Michael Le Grand in the immediate past, the head of the ANU School of Art, on Genevieve Jacobs's ABC show, in which he urged strongly the importance of the scheme being reconstituted.

MR HANSON: I could probably find you one or two that would urge you strongly not to as well.

Mr Stanhope: Probably not from the arts community.

MR HANSON: Perhaps not.

Mr Stanhope: It is an interesting conversation and debate around community and governmental priorities. I believe it is a priority but I have taken note and paid attention to some community responses that are not supportive. Indeed, 18 months ago, I announced that the scheme would be discontinued, and it has been.

MR HANSON: The first question was how much did we spend?

Mr Cappie-Wood: From memory, \$1.126 million.

Mr Stanhope: We would be happy to confirm that.

Mr Cappie-Wood: Page 113 of the report.

MRS DUNNE: Does that also give us a rundown of individual items that are listed in the annual report, the cost of those?

Mr Stanhope: We would be happy to take that on notice, Mrs Dunne. Those are the ones that are listed there on page 33?

MRS DUNNE: 33 and 34, yes.

Mr Stanhope: We will provide a detailed breakdown, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

MS PORTER: It is just as well that they decided to do *David*, anyway, isn't it, otherwise we wouldn't have *David* now.

Mr Stanhope: I do not know whether you have been to the main square of Florence.

MRS DUNNE: I do not know that *David* classifies as public art in its original intent.

MS PORTER: No. It does cost a considerable amount of money to go and look at it now.

MR HANSON: Publicly or privately funded?

MS PORTER: I do not know. Go back and have a look at the history books.

Mr Stanhope: It was funded by Medici the Magnificent, who at the time I think was the head of the government—

MR HANSON: We might have a new name for you, Chief Minister—Medici the Magnificent!

MS PORTER: I will get on with my question; sorry, Madam Chair.

Mr Stanhope: Probably the head of the government of Italy as it presented in the 1500s.

MS LE COUTEUR: It was only a city-state.

MS PORTER: Anyway, back to my question, which is about—

Mr Stanhope: No, Florence was a little more than a city-state at that stage.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, your question?

MS PORTER: On page 34, Chief Minister, it talks about Strathnairn and the fact that during this period there was the construction of a foundry and repairs to the woolshed. Unfortunately, I was not able to go out on the day that you officiated at the launch or opening.

MRS DUNNE: Recommissioning.

MS PORTER: Recommissioning, yes.

Mr Stanhope: It was actually the annual exhibition at Strathnairn last Saturday.

MS PORTER: I would have loved to have been there but unfortunately I could not.

Mr Stanhope: It was a lovely day.

MS PORTER: I notice there have been a lot of repairs and restoration of different centres. How many arts centres altogether have we actually done something to in the period? There is quite a lot happening.

Mr Stanhope: Over this last year, the period of reporting—Mr Whitney can probably assist in a more detailed way—there has been a program essentially of minor new works or capital works, mainly refurbishment and upgrades. I must say I think these are not significantly large amounts of money that have been expended on Strathnairn, the Watson pottery centre and Manuka, but I think they have a great capacity, through just these small injections of additional funding, most particularly where there is a capacity to provide additional studios, to have a very significant leveraging effect on the capacity of arts and engagement with the arts in the ACT.

If you look at the new M16 there are new facilities. This year at Watson there were some upgrades and this year too we have funded the construction of an additional five studios and an artist-in-residence facility at the Watson Arts Centre. There are currently three studios there so it takes the number of studios there from three to eight. Additionally, and significantly, with an artist-in-residence capacity, the critical mass that that has created, the extra energy and extra activity, really is quite incremental.

Similarly at Strathnairn over this last two years there has been the provision of an additional three studios to date. The woolshed has been refurbished. Though the studios are not yet quite finalised, they are nearly there. Members may be aware of a space occupied in Fyshwick; I do not quite know which land the foundry was on. There is currently one operating bronze foundry in the ACT and that is at the ANU School of Art. There was previously a small foundry working simply out of a garden shed on land in Fyshwick but the land was required for other purposes and sadly the foundry has not operated for five or six years. I think Mr Whitney packed up the shed and took it to store it at Strathnairn. But we have funded, for a modest amount of \$140,000, the construction of a new bronze foundry at Strathnairn. Essentially, the foundry is a great big tin shed, but it will also have a number of studios and it is providing significant additional capacity in relation to bronze but also additional critical mass.

I think it has been a very good program of minor upgrades at some of our arts facilities that provide studio space and I would like to continue to expand that program as funds become available, but it has made and continues to make a significant difference, most particularly in relation to working together within an arts community. It creates a stronger community of artists working together and supporting each other and I must say I think the outcomes are very positive.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: I know you have more questions, Mrs Dunne, but as we are running over time you must be very quick.

MRS DUNNE: I have one every quick question about Strathnairn. I notice that there has been a change in the leasing arrangement. Why was that?

Mr Whitney: The leasing arrangement is that Strathnairn used to be under an ACTPLA lease. As an arts activity, we were receiving funding to upgrade the facilities or keep the facilities running and it made much more sense to transfer the lease arrangement from ACTPLA, which was simply acting as a landlord, across to arts, who would be very much engaged—

Mr Stanhope: Arts are now the landlord.

MRS DUNNE: Simply acting as a landlord.

Mr Whitney: We are not simply acting as a landlord; we are providing support for their facilities. They are an organisation that we fund for a gallery development officer and help with the administration support person, so there is a relationship that

we have with the tenant.

MRS DUNNE: But they do not administer the lease; the lease is not vested with the Strathnairn organisation?

Mr Stanhope: No, it is with arts.

Mr Whitney: That is correct. They operate under a licence from us.

MRS DUNNE: It reads as though the lease has been taken back from Strathnairn, but that is not the case?

Mr Whitney: That is correct.

Mr Stanhope: It is a transfer from ACTPLA—

MRS DUNNE: It does not read like that in the—

Mr Stanhope: Essentially it is a transfer from ACTPLA to arts of the management responsibility for the lease. I do not want to digress but—

MRS DUNNE: But you will anyway.

Mr Stanhope: I will anyway. It is interesting that we are currently doing some rationalisation of departmental responsibility for lease management. Cuppacumbalong is a good example. ACTPLA manage Cuppacumbalong. I believe ACTPLA operate really as just a strict lease manager and I think some of the issues we have faced at Cuppacumbalong were that ACTPLA were managing a lease. Cuppacumbalong is heritage listed; it was an arts facility. I think there is some rationalising that we need to do of the agencies that manage some of our leases and Cuppacumbalong and Strathnairn are good examples. Why is ACTPLA managing an arts facility? Why is ACTPLA managing a heritage-listed part-week arts facility, as it used to be, at Cuppacumbalong?

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will move on to the Cultural Facilities Corporation and I welcome Ms Elvin. I will quickly draw your attention to the privilege statement so that you are aware of that. Chief Minister, do you want to make any particular statements?

Mr Stanhope: No, thank you.

THE CHAIR: My first question then is in relation to page 17 of your annual report. It talks about the volunteering program particularly in relation to historic places. Can we get more information about the volunteer programs for the Cultural Facilities Corporation are advertised and how they compare to volunteer programs for, say, the ACT National Trust and the New South Wales historic places trust—a little bit more information about how the volunteer program operates.

Ms Elvin: We have a very longstanding and very productive relationship with the National Trust in particular and, as you see, the National Trust volunteers provide the

majority of the volunteer hours at Lanyon—1,368 hours. However, beyond the National Trust volunteer program we have other people who do not come to us through the National Trust and indeed they contributed another 368 hours. That gave us 1,736 hours altogether across the three sites.

I should say that at Mugga Mugga in particular the volunteer program has been particularly important because it allowed us to open Mugga Mugga. It used to be open only once a month; now it is open every weekend, and that is very much on the basis of volunteer support. So we very much recognise the value of our volunteers. That is why we record the number of hours that they give us.

Separately in the report you will see us talk about the advisory committees corporation, the three advisory committees. They are entirely voluntary, even though they include some real heavy hitters, I suppose. In the cultural area; for example, the Director of the National Portrait Gallery is a member of one of our advisory committees, and other people of similar status in the respective fields that those cover. They contribute another 84 hours of their time, so we also record that.

We try to acknowledge and recognise the efforts of all our volunteers. For example, we will be having a Christmas party in a few weeks time at Lanyon to recognise the advisory committees in particular and their other activities and recognise the National Trust volunteers and the other volunteers at historic places.

THE CHAIR: In terms of advertising for volunteers, does it primarily come through the website, or are there other ways you use to attract volunteers to the cultural facilities program?

Ms Elvin: I can give you one example. We recently renewed the membership of all three advisory committees and we did that through an expressions of interest advertisement on the government page in the *Canberra Times*. That brought us a number of members of the community who in some cases had very good skills to offer. So we try to provide those means to include members of the community in our volunteer programs.

THE CHAIR: Do you think the guides having to be across the three properties that you mentioned limits the number of volunteers that will come forward in any way?

Ms Elvin: I think it actually expands it because different people have got different attractions to different sites, different periods of history, and I think that having the program across three sites means that everybody who has an interest can find the appropriate slot and we can look after them, make sure that they are trained, which is a very important part of what we do, and, I suppose, increase their skills and their confidence in what they are doing.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Noting the time, I am happy to put my question on notice.

MS PORTER: I would like to ask the question I asked before, out of order. I notice that the e-business capability has been improved at the Canberra Theatre. It is

mentioned on page 14 and I think it is mentioned again later, on page 18, I think. I want to know how that is going, and also about the other upgrades to access that you have been implementing.

Ms Elvin: Perhaps I can talk about the e-business upgrades first, which is what is specifically mentioned on page 14. Those really cover two areas: new websites and a new ticketing system. There are now two websites that we operate for the Canberra Theatre Centre. One is specifically devoted to the centre itself and the other is devoted to Canberra Ticketing. We actually felt it was quite important to have those two websites because, of course, Canberra Ticketing does ticket things beyond the Canberra Theatre Centre. It tickets everything at the Canberra Theatre Centre but it also tickets things like the International Music Festival, for example.

We were finding that there was some confusion in patrons' minds if they just had a single website that covered the centre and ticketing. For example, they might be looking for a Shakespearean production at the ANU, coming up against a Bell Shakespeare production at the Canberra Theatre Centre. We felt it was best all round to divide those functions into two separate websites.

The new websites, if you have a look at them, are much more attractive. They are easier to navigate and they have more information. We are finding that people are spending more time on them, which is great; that is what we want them to do, and hopefully convert that interest into a ticket purchase.

Also, as you have alluded to, there are spin-off benefits to people who perhaps find it difficult to get in to physically purchase a ticket. We are certainly seeing an increase in our online ticket sales. In 2009-10, there was a 30 per cent increase over the previous financial year in terms of online ticket sales, which I think is an encouraging trend.

Last year also, we introduced a new ticketing system. That, I would say, has had benefits perhaps more for the centre than for patrons, certainly in the short term, in terms of improved marketing, ticket sales and audience development. I would like to think that the benefits for audience development would accrue to patrons over the longer term, so that we are able to recognise what their interests are and to, I suppose, target some marketing to them.

You also asked about the access initiatives. Those, of course, have received a lot of recognition and, indeed, a number of prizes and awards. There is quite a bit of information about them on page 42; I will try and summarise that for you. Some examples of those access services are caption services for people with hearing impairments, whereby on a screen, usually at the right-hand side of the stage, the text of the production comes up. We are also finding that, apart from people with hearing impairments, people for whom English is a second language find that a very useful support for their language skills and their understanding and enjoyment of the production. You can see there that a wide range of productions were provided with caption services.

We also have a service called audio description for vision-impaired patrons. That allows them, through a special receiver, to receive an audio description by a trained

audio describer of what is actually going on visually on stage. Clearly, for someone with a vision impairment, they can hear the action but they cannot see what is happening on the stage. So very skilled and trained operators will describe to them the movement of actors on the stage, changes in set and scenery and use of props and so forth. They are very skilled to do that because they have to pop that information in between the dialogue that is happening. It is something that takes a lot of training, but people who are skilled in it can really enhance the enjoyment of people with vision impairment.

MRS DUNNE: Where are we with the Nolan collection? Has it packed up and gone?

Ms Elvin: The donated works from the Nolan collection are still in Australia; indeed, just across the square at the Canberra Museum and Gallery. Of course, now we have opened the Nolan collection gallery at CMAG, which will be a permanent home for the foundation collection of 24 works. We are finding that people are responding very well to that new space. It looks very good. To be honest, it looks better than the west wing ever looked at the Nolan gallery at Lanyon.

We are also featuring other donated works in temporary exhibitions at CMAG. In just a couple of weeks time, we will be opening an exhibition of selections from the Rimbaud *Illumination* collection in gallery 5 of CMAG. All the loaned works have now been returned to the Nolan estate in the UK.

MRS DUNNE: So all of the loaned works have already gone?

Ms Elvin: Correct, yes.

MRS DUNNE: The Rimbaud are not part of the—

Ms Elvin: The Rimbaud collection was always in two parts. Part of it was owned and part of it was loaned. The owned part of the collection is still here and it is—

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I hadn't realised that; I thought all the Rimbauds would have gone.

Ms Elvin: No.

MRS DUNNE: I want to ask about the Loxton review because of the impact of some of the recommendations of the review on CMAG. I note that the chairman has recently written to me and given me a copy of the Cultural Facilities Corporation's response. For the benefit of committee members who may not have had as much reading of it as I have, could you give an exposition of what the corporation's response to the Loxton committee was.

Ms Elvin: This is a response by the board of the corporation. Perhaps I can summarise the executive summary to that. The board welcomed the Loxton report and participated actively in it and, indeed, acknowledged and welcomed a number of the findings of the report. Public art has already been mentioned. I think the board also focused on the report's emphasis on professional practice in the arts and supporting that, and also community participation in the arts. So the board certainly found a

number of things within the Loxton report which it welcomed.

It is also recognised that the actual process leading to the report was a very extensive consultation process; indeed, it perhaps was the most extensive consultation in relation to the arts in the ACT that had ever happened. So it welcomed both of those aspects.

It did, however, feel that the resulting written document, the report of the review, was disappointing, I suppose particularly in terms of what the report recommended in relation to the corporation itself. Perhaps not surprisingly, it disagreed with and mounted a number of arguments as to why it felt those recommendations should not be implemented. As the Chief Minister has said, the corporation board's response will be taken into consideration, along with the 73 others, in providing advice to the Chief Minister as the arts minister.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time. Is there something that you can put on notice?

MRS DUNNE: There is a lot of stuff that I can put on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. Thank you, Ms Elvin and Mr Cappie-Wood, for appearing before the committee today. We will break now for 15 minutes.

Meeting adjourned from 4 to 4.15 pm.

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning,
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation and Minister for Gaming and Racing

Canberra Institute of Technology

Marron, Mr Adrian, Chief Executive

Kowald, Mr Peter, Deputy Chief Executive, Operations

O'Hara, Ms Kaye, Deputy Chief Executive, Academic

Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority

Service, Mr James, Chairman

Guy, Mr Gary, Chief Executive Officer

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, for appearing before the committee today. Today we will be speaking to the Canberra Institute of Technology and the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority. I draw your attention to the privilege statement which is on the table in front of you, just to make sure that you are aware of that and the information that is in there. Before we go to questions, minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Barr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be very brief. It is indeed a pleasure to be here with the team from CIT for their 2009 annual report. I make the observation at the start of hearings for CIT each time that it is a calendar year annual report for 2009, as opposed to many of the other ACT government agencies that have an annual report based on financial years. I am very pleased to look back on the year that was, 2009, and I look forward to the committee's questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Barr. My first question relates to page 11 of the annual report and the funding that is provided to CIT by the ACT government. It states that there has been \$12.2 million in additional funding for CIT through the 2009 budget. It looks like this mainly was for six key areas. Can you outline the progress that has been made in these particular areas which are listed on page 11 of the annual report?

Mr Kowald: As to the first project, the CIT online project, for which CIT received two amounts—\$2.5 million in the first year and \$2 million in the second, a total of \$4.5 million—we are well on the way to the implementation of the components of that project. The major projects have been the implementation of a new online educational software system called Moodle. That is the same educational software that has been implemented at ANU and the University of Canberra. So all three tertiary institutions will have a common e-learn system from 2011.

The other major component is the implementation of the next version of our student information system, which will take place this coming December. The purpose of that is to move to a baseline product which makes future implementations easier and to implement some new features.

Some other report components of CIT online were wireless computing, which we have already implemented on all campuses, and a number of smaller projects, such as a new enterprise search facility that we are currently in the midst of implementing.

We have made significant progress with those projects.

As to the second one—additional contemporary technology and equipment—that is part of a total investment of \$5 million that the government has provided to CIT; four lots of \$1.25 million. The 2009 component of that \$1.25 million was fully expended on new technology.

The third project—new horticultural facilities on our Bruce campus—had a total cost of \$13 million, which is also mentioned later in the annual report. The official opening of that took place in January-February this year. We have now what we believe to be world-class horticultural training facilities on our Bruce campus, which are fully operational.

The electrotechnology building on the Fyshwick campus will be completed in December, with staff moving in the January-February period. The total cost of that project is just under \$10 million. That is a project that is totally on track and will allow state-of-the-art training facilities in the electrotechnology area on our Fyshwick campus.

The scholarship program of \$300,000 has been successfully taken up. It provides a mechanism for our students to be charged lower fees in cases of financial hardship. The other capital upgrades figure is a series of smaller projects which we have implemented across CIT, such as new kitchens, new classrooms and improved technology in some of the classrooms.

I think the important thing—and it is something that we are proud of—is that CIT has achieved 100 per cent in each of those financial years of its capital upgrade expenditure. We believe that we have been the beneficiaries of some major new investment in CIT and it greatly assists our students and the ACT community.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: I have a question regarding foreign students. I am just wondering how many foreign students you have and whether either the impact of the dollar or what we saw with the students in Melbourne, for example, on the reputation of Australia, has had any impact on our student numbers and, if it has, what the implications of that are? Do you need to mitigate any of those issues?

Mr Marron: I am happy to answer that. There is quite a lot in the question. I will just get the numbers checked. I am talking about, I think, 1,492 international students at the moment.

Mr Barr: To be precise!

Mr Marron: When you are past 55, if you can get within 100 you are doing all right.

MR DOSZPOT: I am sorry, was that 1,400?

Mr Marron: It is 1,492. It probably equates to just under 2,000 enrolments because some students do more than one program concurrently. That 1,400 is in terms of

bodies, which was a significant increase on previous years. However, as has been well documented in the press, it is the sort of perfect storm scenario where we have got a high Australian dollar and there have been some very difficult perceptions about Australia in the last while.

With Minister Barr, I went to Shanghai, and I went on to Beijing and other areas in China. China is important to us. We have a fairly diverse draw from 86 countries, but China provides more bodies than any other single country. There are perceptions about Australia, not so much that it is an unsafe place but that it is not welcoming for some reason. That was also my experience before I came to CIT in December last year when I was in India—on the same mission but for a different organisation.

I think that it is a serious set of factors. Over the top of that, the visa changes have made it more difficult. The fact that the United States and Canada have relaxed their visa entry requirements and for the first time, particularly in the United States, are undertaking a widespread and very targeted marketing campaign in countries where we have been operating is not helping.

However, these things do tend to come in waves. There are probably a few misconceptions about Australia. I know that we are doing everything we can, as other institutions and peak bodies are, to dispel the myths that have arisen. For CIT, it is an important element of our business. It is an important revenue source for us. We are factoring a downturn. We have maintained our business in 2010 to a greater degree than many of our competitors, but we are budgeting for a downturn in the 2011 budget.

What that means for us is that we cut our cloth accordingly, but we also look at our international strategy and look to innovate and diversify, and in fact that is what we are doing. We are in the process of completing our international strategy for the next three years. There are opportunities that still exist. Some of those are in countries that we are already in but they are perhaps not our major supplier.

There are opportunities by retargeting the kinds of services that we provide, particularly in regard to English language services. There are emerging opportunities. Austrade are particularly pushing this in areas like China in regard to transnational activity—that is, partnering with institutions in other countries for delivery, primarily in other countries as the first step and then providing a pipeline of students back to the sister organisation, as it were, in Australia. So we are exploring those options.

MR HANSON: In relation to the downturn, can you tell me how significant that downturn is and have you got any idea, if you are cutting your cloth, what sort of programs you might be cutting or whether you will be going to government to seek more funding?

Mr Marron: I do not think we will be cutting programs. It does not really work like that. We are working through it. Nothing is definitive at the moment but I do not perceive that we will be cutting programs. Many of our students fit into existing classes. We are in the process of finalising budgets for next year at the moment. There is a downturn in revenue. It will require careful management—

Ms HUNTER: Are you able to quantify that downturn in revenue?

Mr Marron: We are looking at a couple of million dollars. Is that right, Peter?

Mr Kowald: Yes, that is right.

Mr Marron: This is on \$117 million revenue and of course it is not an impact of a couple of million dollars, there is expenditure that goes along with that. That is the worst-case scenario; I think we are being prudently conservative in the matter. It is very hard to tell with any degree of exactitude because what we have seen is a downturn in applications. But this is the period when people confirm, so we will know a little bit better by the end of the next couple of weeks, before December, before the break. But I do not think that we will be cutting programs. It is the impact on the general budget rather than going to government with a handout saying, "This is our need because of this specific program." I think we are confident that we will manage—manage tightly but within the boundaries that are set for us.

MR HANSON: Thank you very much.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary on that. Just following on from the international students and the numbers you have got, in the SAMP, strategic asset management plan, there is talk about inadequacy of accommodation for students. What is the situation with the increased numbers you have got now?

Mr Marron: The increased numbers have been accommodated in the ACT—obviously, because they are coming—but there is no doubt that if you take the longer view, which I mentioned in answer to a previous question, these are cycles. I am pretty optimistic about the longer-term view for international education for Australia, and particularly for the ACT. One of the future benchmarks of the tertiary sector in the ACT will be as an export industry and bringing people in.

But you are quite right that accommodation is one of the factors that will be at play. We are accommodating our students at the moment. Our own accommodation, which is very limited, is full so they are mostly out in the private sector or in home stay. But we will, if we want to grow that market, need ourselves, as part of the whole ACT community, to expand the amount of viable and affordable accommodation. To that end our number one priority in terms of capital works moving forward is student accommodation, not just for international students but for students from the region.

MR DOSZPOT: You have got \$50,000 set aside for developing student accommodation; is that what you were talking about?

Mr Marron: No. We are talking about a capital project; \$50 million might be the—

MR DOSZPOT: There is a \$50,000 student accommodation project in SMAP on page 42.

Mr Kowald: That would be the design and business case preparation project that is currently underway to put together a case for government consideration.

MR DOSZPOT: Currently the number of rooms you have got available for overseas students is 66?

Mr Marron: Correct.

Mr Kowald: Seventy-seven.

Mr Marron: Seventy-seven—sorry—incorrect.

Mr Kowald: Not many.

MR DOSZPOT: That is obviously my next question. The comments I read were that it was very inadequate for 1,100 students so obviously with the great success that you have had it exacerbates your problem.

Mr Marron: It does with capacity. There is a point: how far can you go? Some of the other things that happen, though, are that there are other developments in the city. Everything is very connected, so if ANU or UC build accommodation units it possibly frees up some other of the private sector accommodation units. But it is a limiting factor. We cannot go much higher without accommodation, our own accommodation.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you have any feel for how many rooms would be adequate? I guess any number would be better, but what is the optimum number of rooms you would be looking at?

Mr Marron: We can do this with a little bit of conviction because we are currently involved in the feasibility study that that \$50,000 is paying for. Our plan at the minimum end is for how many units?

Mr Kowald: The range we were considering at the start of the process was 300 to 400 and we are currently focusing on about 380.

THE CHAIR: Mr Marron, you said there were international students but also regional students. I imagine there are different needs; they are two very different groups in terms of what they will be able to afford and what they are paying additionally. Are you looking at what those different needs might be across the different student groups?

Mr Marron: Yes, we are, and we do that currently. The needs are not that different but there are differences. A lot of the international students that come are supported by collective families to come here, so money is very tight for them too.

MR DOSZPOT: A final one on that: during the estimates there was some discussion about possible private involvement in some of the development. Is there any activity in that regard?

Mr Marron: That has been a bit more difficult. The market was tested. It was the aftermath of the GFC and difficult to entice private capital to be a co-investor, and I do not think we are alone in that in the accommodation area at the moment.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Before we go on, Mr Marron, I should acknowledge that this is your first experience before the committee, so welcome.

Mr Marron: It is. Thank you.

MS PORTER: The Department of Education and Training report at page 17 mentions the tertiary task force and there is quite a lot of discussion on that page about that. I was wondering about the progress. It obviously has implications for the CIT so I was wondering if you could talk about that, minister.

Mr Barr: Certainly. That has been an area of considerable work, collaboration and consultation over the course of this year. I am expecting a final report from the task force before the end of the year and a government response I would anticipate in the first quarter of 2011. Clearly there is going to be a changed tertiary landscape nationwide as a response to the Bradley review.

I think we have discussed with this committee before that when deregulation comes in it will really be everyone for themselves. The cap comes off places, so institutions will receive funding based on student demand. So the funding from the commonwealth government in the tertiary sector will go to those institutions able to attract student enrolment, and that clearly has implications for the VET sector as well longer term.

One would anticipate that the next stage in reform will be to have a more student-centred funding model. Of course, different states and territories are pursuing this agenda with different levels of vigour at this point and the truly market-based models appear to work more effectively in larger jurisdictions where there is competition between public providers, where there is more than one, whereas the situation in the ACT is a little different, obviously, in that there is not a public TAFE compared to the CIT based in the ACT. However, there certainly are other competitors based outside of the ACT who will be seeking to enter into this market. So I think the public policy challenges will be to equip the CIT with the right level of institutional autonomy to be able to compete in that changed environment.

So I would anticipate that there will be a need for a legislative change to further enhance the autonomy of the CIT and that that is an inevitable result of the change in the vocational education and training arrangements at a national level. Clearly we want to work with the entire tertiary sector in the ACT to get a shared view of how the institutions can work effectively together in this new environment. Given our relative size compared to some of the other jurisdictions, the strength for us will be in working collaboratively—the strength in numbers within the ACT; hence I think a lot of talk about collaboration between the CIT and UC in relation to a new polytechnic, for example, looking at attracting some commonwealth funding through the various commonwealth programs that are there to encourage innovation in this sector.

It is big-picture change. I do not think it is outside of key stakeholders in the sector today. I do not think the full implications of this are sinking in for a lot of people. I know that those that are engaged in these discussions on a daily or weekly basis are

aware of the enormity of this change, but it is going to come as quite a shock to the higher education system in Australia in 2012 when this change occurs and it will mean that business as usual in the context of state and territory funding arrangements and federal funding arrangements will no longer be the case. It is going to be a very competitive environment.

Our desire is, as I said, for ACT jurisdictions to work together and that they not only look to meet the needs of students within the ACT but have a very strong external export focus, if you like, and that not only be regional and national but also international, obviously, as we have discussed.

So we then confront the supply side constraints that are clearly evident within the ACT. That is why, for example, I have taken decisions that have attracted some criticism around calling in additional student accommodation options, as planning minister, for the ANU. We will continue to have to make those sorts of decisions because we do not just need hundreds of additional places; we will need thousands and we will need them at UC, at ANU, at CIT and for a number of the private training providers as well.

If our long-term goal is that education be a significant economic contributor in the ACT—and I think outside of government services it is our second biggest industry—if we want to continue to grow that, we will have to make decisions around expanding our capacity on the supply side, and accommodation, as you guys have already identified, is clearly an element of that, but also there will need to be structural reform. New institutions, new partnerships, innovation, use of technology—it is a dynamic environment. I do not know whether Adrian wants to add anything further.

Mr Marron: It is an apposite question because we had a meeting of the tertiary task force—I think it was the penultimate meeting—this morning. There is a draft that is being redrafted as we speak, because there was a fair amount of comment and input this morning. But it is certainly a different world that is arriving. 2012 will be a watershed year, I feel, in tertiary education, as the caps come off, and there is national regulation.

In our world of vocational education and training, national regulation will present challenge but also opportunity. It will nationalise the activity, which has been largely but not exclusively state-based activity. There are some very large public providers in other states that would be quite willing and eager to come to the ACT and put up a bit of competition. So what would be good for us is to have governance arrangements and so forth in a comparable state to those likely competitors, as well as the private providers. And there are new entrants in the private sector, too, who are also perhaps more sophisticated and getting more sophisticated. You have got Kaplan setting up in Australia. They are a very large organisation from the United States. Navitas is turning over more than \$400 million. These are now very sizeable private providers in the business of vocational education and training. So the world is changing. The tertiary task force is a step to help the ACT and its institutions organise to take the best possible opportunity in that world.

MR DOSZPOT: I would like to ask a follow-up question to a question I asked back in December last year about the CIT teachers code of professional standards that I

understand has been on the drawing board and has been the subject of negotiation between the CIT and the Australian Education Union for quite a number of years.

The department of education has already produced a similar document in 2006. I have noticed that there is an interim policy for ethical and professional practice of teachers at the CIT, as shown on the Australian Education Union website. But it appears that this is only a draft interim policy and I have not found any finalised version of any such document on the CIT's website. I was told by Ms Cover on 4 December last year that the CIT framework for ethical and professional practice was going to be launched at an all-staff professional development day on 28 January this year. But if the document in question remains in draft form and has not yet been formally launched, when will this be launched? When will this teachers code of professional practice be formally launched?

Mr Kowald: The code of practice was launched at Developing Us in January this year, as Dr Adrian or I foreshadowed; I cannot recall who answered the original question. So there is a final version of the CIT document. It has been circulated to all staff and professional development also took place in association with its release. So it is a live and final document within CIT.

MR DOSZPOT: When was that launched?

Mr Kowald: In January, when Developing Us took place, which was 27 January. It was circulated to all staff. We produced one document for both teaching and general staff and it is finalised and in place.

MR DOSZPOT: What we were told was that Developing Us was an all-staff development day but there was a separate attempt at an interim policy for ethical and professional practice that would be launched. That is what I am referring to.

Mr Kowald: The final CIT document on professional practice was launched on Developing Us. They are the same document. I am happy to provide you with a copy.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. The question I have is: why is it still on the union website for consultation purposes?

Mr Kowald: That is not our document; that is their document.

Mr Barr: Raise that with the AEU.

Mr Kowald: Yes, ask them.

Mr Barr: Their website is out of date, obviously.

Mr Kowald: It is their document.

MR DOSZPOT: But was this document available for teachers to actually be consulted on, to respond back to you on?

Mr Kowald: Yes, it was.

MR DOSZPOT: Where was that?

Mr Kowald: There was consultation with the Australian Education Union during the course of 2009, in preparing the CIT document. The Australian Education Union—I think this was advised at the previous committee hearing—has the position that a document that relates only to teaching staff is the one that they are happy to deal with. We did not agree with that. CIT's position is that, with regard to professional standards, we have the same requirements for both teaching and general staff. For example, all public servants, all CIT staff, have the same code of ethics from the Public Sector Management Act, and that is the key set of principles from which we have put together our document. We tried to reach a successful outcome with the Australian Education Union. They would not agree to our combined approach, so CIT produced a combined document, released it, and that is the CIT document.

MR DOSZPOT: What opportunity were non-union staff given to negotiate this?

Mr Kowald: There was consultation within CIT with managers in the development of our document but I cannot recall the actual detail of what meetings took place.

MR DOSZPOT: That was with management; what about teaching staff?

Mr Kowald: I think there was consultation with teaching staff in its development but I cannot recall the details.

THE CHAIR: Is it possible to get some information on that for the committee?

Mr Kowald: Yes.

MS HUNTER: CIT has some great partnerships that have been developed. One of those is around the connection to colleges and schools around vocational education and training, which I do commend you on.

I notice on page 36 of your annual report it talks about student support measures. The second point there is around the development of a new model of support for students with a disability. It particularly talks about a growing number of students presenting with autism spectrum disorder. How is the development of that work going? Obviously, minister, it has become quite an issue for parents around post-school options and transitions. CIT obviously can play a very important role here. What is happening there? Is there a coordination point at the CIT end that can be coordinating back to the Department of Education and Training or to the schools where students are, to ensure they know what is available and how that transition can occur.

Mr Barr: We will go to the detail of the actual CIT program, but I thank you for bringing that to the committee's attention. Yes, it was a budget initiative, so it is an area that we identified in 2009 as needing some additional resources, particularly looking at post-school options. In fact, recognition and funding for this is important. Obviously, that is one thing. Making a program then work is the task that CIT has been set. Who would like to comment on that?

Ms O'Hara: The additional budget money has allowed additional people to access the services at CIT. The new model is around case management, enhancing what we have done over a large number of years. At enrolment, students are invited to identify as having a disability and that can be as needing extra help, even if they do not classify as having a disability. That is picked up very quickly. Disability officers contact students and interview them. They have a case management approach to provide whatever additional support is needed. It can be a signer, extra counselling sessions or study support. People come with such a range of learning support needs.

That equity area has formal links with the ACT education department through relationships, through careers advice services and through our student services hub. There is a lot of communication. It is particularly targeted at schools like Canberra college and Woden special school, where there are cohorts of students who need special information or specific information. There is a lot of targeted promotion and information sharing that occurs on an ongoing basis. There is a network of people who provide disability support that CIT disability people are part of. I think that the information sharing is reasonably strong.

We are also about to review the whole range of our student services support in response to growing needs across the spectrum, including young people who do not readily fit into the world of education. I think we are continually reviewing what are the best responses to individual needs as they come. Within our equity area we have experts who can provide support to people with disability and mental health issues. There are people with migrant backgrounds who need some help just navigating through or help with English language and study provision. Someone with personal, professional or study needs and might need counselling.

MS HUNTER: Ms O'Hara, you talked about the dialogue and connection between the CIT and some of the schools and you mentioned a few there. Does that involve actually going out and speaking with groups of parents and being very clear? You mentioned that when people turn up they can tick a box.

Ms O'Hara: At the end, yes.

MS HUNTER: But, of course, that is not necessarily going to catch everyone or let people know that this can be an option for their child.

Ms O'Hara: It happens in a couple of ways. One is through our careers advisers who are working with schools around the whole gamut of CIT policy, places, programs and opportunities. At the beginning of last year we added an extra staff member. A lot of their time is spent with schools and a lot of it is quite individual as well. It happens through our careers advice service, but it also happens through our equity officers.

MS HUNTER: Do your officers find it easy to make that connection with the schools? There is obviously turnover in schools, like there is any workplace. I know there have been some questions raised that there was a coordination point at the Department of Education and Training that is going back out into schools. There is some concern that that corporate knowledge and that central point will be lost. I am wondering how do your careers advisers or whoever it is carrying out this task find that connection to schools and develop that ongoing relationship?

Ms O'Hara: They actually work with the schools really well. The schools have got their careers advisers, their VET coordinators and their moving forward staff and all of those are very networked. At the school level it is working well. I will have to check, but I also understand there is a disability network that people are part of, including people from DHCS, and that network is continually communicating about different services and different pick-up points. But I will check that.

THE CHAIR: Obviously, there has been a discussion about post-school options, as the minister mentioned. Has there been any in terms of CIT beyond what you are doing about providing assistance to people through case management and general courses? Are there particular targeted programs that might be suitable for people with a disability or people with autism, looking at the post-school options issue? Perhaps if there were some appropriate targeted programs, CIT could play a bigger role in that whole area.

Ms O'Hara: That does come up, for instance, in our learning options. We have a learning options program which is specifically for people with an intellectual disability. It has people of all ages in it. Occasionally those who are still at school are doing this as a transition, but mostly it is people who have left school. We have targeted programs where they are needed. We have learning options. We also have learning options based around horticulture. Again, that is for people with intellectual disability. Those programs have evolved from the networking and from the information that comes to us that says, "This is a need."

MS HUNTER: Ms O'Hara, do you know whether parents are represented on that network?

Ms O'Hara: I do not know.

MS HUNTER: Is it possible to find out who is involved in that network?

Ms O'Hara: Sure.

MS HUNTER: That would be great.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a couple of follow-on supplementary questions to both Ms Hunter's and Ms Bresnan's questions, Ms O'Hara, I presume to you. Is there curriculum support development for special needs requirements that these post-school options will necessitate?

Ms O'Hara: I am sorry, I do not understand what you would mean by curriculum—

MR DOSZPOT: How many young people do you have at the moment within the CIT framework that require post-school options who have special needs requirements? That is my first question.

Ms O'Hara: I do not know the number. Special needs could mean people who have some behavioural issues related to—

MR DOSZPOT: It could go across a whole range of topics, I agree; yes.

Ms O’Hara: ESL backgrounds, yes, and some—

MR DOSZPOT: You have touched on the ESL part of it. I am talking about health-related special needs.

Ms O’Hara: We can get those statistics. I do not know them.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

Ms O’Hara: Also, deciding what we call “young”, under—

Mr Marron: Let’s just find out how many people, regardless, who have—

MR DOSZPOT: If we are talking about post-school options, I am talking about people who have come through the school system and now cannot stay in the school system any longer. We have had year 13 and 14, which was available, which is not really available—

Mr Barr: Year 13 is still available. Year 14 is not.

MR DOSZPOT: But there are limited options. That is what I am trying to get at. I would like to know the numbers we currently have. Secondly, what are your expectations of what those numbers are likely to be within some of the developments that have occurred within standard education? Thirdly, what sort of expertise do our current teachers within the CIT system have, and do we have any plans to upgrade their qualifications to cope with the influx, if you like, of further people with special needs coming into the CIT system?

Ms O’Hara: We will take all those on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MS PORTER: I wanted to go to the Toyota partnership. It is obviously significant in terms of the automotive area. I just comment that the sustainability skills hub looks very interesting. Obviously it is doing great things in the area of water and electricity and those kinds of things. Let us talk about the Toyota partnership because we do not have time to talk about all those things.

Mr Barr: Obviously the Toyota partnership is an important one in an emerging area of technology in relation to motor vehicles. It is a pretty important skill to have. I see there are a few Prius drivers around the table here. I imagine that if you popped the bonnet and tried to work out how it all works, you would not have an idea. So it is very important that we have—

MR HANSON: That is why you are better off with a Territory, isn’t it?

Mr Barr: I will not be distracted by Mr Hanson’s interjections. That is clearly why it is important to engage in partnerships with companies, particularly in areas of new

technology, most particularly at Fyshwick in those training areas. We note the change in dynamics in terms of what was once required to service a vehicle and what is now required. It is considerably different. Without those sorts of direct industry partnerships, it would be very difficult for an organisation like the CIT to be able to purchase the sort of equipment that would be necessary to train staff to work in that environment. Clearly, the more of these sorts of partnerships, the better.

There is an obvious advantage for industry in that they want to have a ready supply of people who are qualified to work on their products. That is probably why Toyota are involved. I think it is just a further demonstration of the importance of industry partnerships in the VET sector. We strive as a sector, I think, to get more industry involvement to try and sell the benefits of training.

There was a good industry forum that preceded the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment in Sydney on Friday. We tend to have an industry forum and the ministerial council and then in the evening the Australian training awards. That was Friday of last week. The industry forum certainly did go into some detail, obviously at a national level, around how enhanced industry partnerships can help the VET sector. This is but one example of a direction that I think we will continue to pursue very strongly.

Mr Marron: I think these are very important. The ability to remain current is very important to us and it is a very important contribution to keeping skills acquisition at the highest level. We will continue to look for more and more diverse industry relationships. There is a mutual benefit. It is not just a gift; there is a payback that comes to the enterprises. But we are very grateful and value, as we know Toyota does, this particular relationship. The sustainable skills hub will be opening in a few weeks time, and that will be a fantastic event.

MS HUNTER: We are running out of time, so I will be putting some questions on notice around sustainability. It is pleasing to see the diploma of sustainability being worked on. I think it does set you aside from other markets, particularly when we are moving into a new area of tertiary education.

MR DOSZPOT: Likewise, I have a few questions on CIT's core teaching strategy with ICT, which I will likely put on notice as well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Doszpot; they will come through the committee. Thank you, minister, and officials from CIT.

We will now turn to the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority. Welcome, Mr Service and Mr Guy. I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is in front of you. I am sure you are familiar with that. Minister, before we go to questions, do you want to make a statement?

Mr Barr: No.

THE CHAIR: On page 8 it talks about some of the authority's expenditure, and that relates to the objectives that you have as an authority. The authority's expenditure increased by about \$340,000 compared to the last financial year. Some of this appears

to be being spent on an increased professional development program. But there seems also to be a drop—perhaps you can explain this—in expenditure in areas such as promotion and marketing, research and development and access and equity programs. Could you outline what the \$340,000 increase has been spent on, given that there appears to have been a drop in some of those other programs?

Mr Service: We had two changes and increases between 2009 and 2010. Firstly, we had, surprisingly, a significant increase in our income. I think when I appeared before your committee last year we said that 2008-09 had been a good year; we were not quite sure how 2009-10 would pan out. But I think that was as a result of some continuing stimulus in the economy, clearly an ongoing demand for housing and multi-unit residential, and some continuing commercial development. I am not quite sure whether that commercial development will continue in the coming couple of years.

In terms of fall-offs, the reality of what we do is that we can only fund where we have demand. For instance, in access and equity, if training places are not sought for the same number of young Indigenous Australians or where there is not the same demand or the board takes a view that we should perhaps spend less on promotion and marketing and more on apprenticeships, we make some changes to those budgetary amounts. In fact, the board made the decision to reduce slightly its promotion and marketing budget in 2010 because we thought \$100,000 was probably the maximum for what we wanted to do.

Mr Guy can talk about the specific demand areas where we have seen an increase in expenditure, but from our point of view any increase in expenditure, provided we have the income, is a good thing because it means we are funding more training places.

Mr Guy: The achievements we made were in the entry level, where we were up by about \$350,000 in funding of training. We went from \$724,000 up to a bit over \$1 million. That was because we had more apprentices in the industry. We funded group training companies to a better extent than we had in the past. We look at our funding each year and, where we have some money available, we will put it into entry-level training, as much as we possibly can.

Existing worker training was up by about \$150,000. So when you put those up, it rounds it out at about \$500,000 and you can pick out then why the access and equity one came down, plus promotion and marketing came down. We believe we are in the situation now, as James pointed out, where \$100,000 was enough for promotion and marketing because it mostly goes to organisations to promote awards and things like that. So we started to reduce the amount of funding we were giving to those people.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned access and equity. There is quite a deal of variability in terms of the amount that is spent on that across the different years. If you are reducing marketing and promotion and also access and equity, does it have an impact? You said it is based on demand, but does that then impact on whether people would actively seek those placements because there is a pull-back on it? While you mention demand, it might actually be the promotion that impacts on it.

Mr Service: Let me answer that in two parts. In terms of promotion and marketing, it is not so much about marketing the authority; what we have done since inception is look for opportunities to, I suppose, provide some reward and some opportunity for awards, particularly for young people. So we do some stuff for the HIA for their young apprentices, we do some stuff for the MBA group training company, we do some stuff for the Property Council for their young property professionals, and we do the Australian Property Institute's young property professional. So the direct marketing of the authority is not so much a reduction in us selling the programs, if you like; it is about whether we actually fund awards and other benefits or events.

The access and equity thing has had no lesser amount of money applied to it in terms of its availability and people's awareness of it. The big difference is that in 2009 we also funded the DVD and the development of a program for women in trades. That 40-odd thousand dollars disappeared because we did not spend it again in 2010. So the answer to your question is that there is no lesser promotion of the programs available that the fund provides by some reduction in the promotion and marketing thing because that is directed mostly at our stakeholders. It is a level of support for stakeholders, for those that pay the levy.

THE CHAIR: Is it still a priority for you? It is listed as one of your priorities around making sure that you are getting people, whether it is women or people from an Indigenous background. That is still a priority?

Mr Service: Yes, it continues to be a substantial priority. It also continues to be one of the most difficult things that we do. If I look at the breadth of the program, it is not that our stakeholders are not interested; it is not that at an organisational level we are not promoting it. It is a demand-driven thing, at the end of the day. I also said to you last year that one of the challenges we still face is that there are things that go on on building sites particularly that are not necessarily attractive to women. There are other areas where it has become more attractive. Certainly, there is a better opportunity for administration, for quality assurance and those sorts of things. That is where we have been targeting a lot.

The other thing about the access issue is disability. Again, we talked last year about the fact that there is a fairly fine balance there about how much you can actually do to get people with moderate or substantial disabilities onto building sites. I think at the moment we are doing about as much as we can. It is a matter of whether we can increase demand and introduce other people. The second part is also about how we continue to develop the introductory program for the schools.

MR HANSON: The numbers of apprenticeships in the ACT: how are we going with the skill shortage and supply and demand? Are we seeing some blockages in the system in terms of people not coming through or are we seeing some surges in some areas and not in others?

Mr Service: Let me answer the broad question first and then Gary can perhaps talk about the individual issues. There is no doubt that there are still a range of skill shortages, Mr Hanson. There is no quick fix to that, because, again, it is a demand driven issue. There is always going to be some disparity between where people leave school and where they look to apprenticeships, where they look to university, where

they look to postgraduate courses. Some of them say, “Where’s the best money? Where can I become more successful more quickly?” We still have that trade-off between the great opportunities that building and construction trades provide as opposed to some other sector opportunities which people see as perhaps being more financially rewarding.

We still have shortages in carpentry, in bricklaying, in plastering and in tiling—to name four. Gary can give you the breakdown figures. We have seen some general increases in apprenticeships, but wages are still an issue. That is not something that the territory can deal with at a local level and it is not something, to some extent, that the industry can deal with on its own.

Mr Guy: I cannot give you the exact figures, but, yes, the carpentry trades, the electrical trades and the plumbing area are going ahead very well. The numbers are there. But for the bricklaying and the plastering, the floor and wall tiling and, in an indoor sense, the painting and decorating, the numbers are not going into them as much as they should. We will be looking at a case at our board meeting in December where we will provide skills funding, or skills shortage funding, to employers who wish to take on apprentices in skills areas. I would say those particular four trades will be some of the ones we will look at, plus the civil operations area, which is also down.

MR HANSON: Comparative to last year, are we seeing a positive trend generally or a negative trend, or it is a bit patchy?

Mr Guy: No, the trend is moving forward; it is starting to move forward. People are realising that it is a very good career in the construction industry now. Before the financial benefits were not all that good and now the financial benefits are extremely good, and they can move around anywhere in Australia, in a sense.

Mr Service: Particularly in the early stages of their working life there is still a gap in terms of wages. Most courses are three and four years. There has been some attempt in other states to try and reduce some of those courses by a year or so. There has been a broad lack of support for that on the employer side. It impacts on the very issue the government has been dealing with a lot lately, which is the quality of construction, particularly in residential. So finishing trades and the length of those trades is quite important to improve or even maintain the quality. Shortening apprenticeships just to get the wage levels up is not a—

MR HANSON: Are we consistent with New South Wales?

Mr Service: I think we are broadly, yes.

MR HANSON: Across most trades, because I imagine that would be a bit of an issue if they reduce their training time. You might have a bit of an exodus.

Mr Service: In fact, we are better off than New South Wales because they have no scheme in New South Wales at all.

MR HANSON: So are we seeing people coming from New South Wales to take up those—

Mr Service: Certainly we get some through but, again, we only do that through registered training organisations in the ACT. The investment in that training to some extent is still done here. We naturally lose some of those people back to New South Wales and other places. Most New South Wales staff tend to come from Queanbeyan. I think we all regard Queanbeyan simply as an adjunct to the ACT anyway. We get the same benefit out of it.

MR HANSON: Don't tell them that!

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: Thank you. I wanted to go to page 23, minister, where it talks about consultation and community engagement. It mentions that consultation has been going on with the registered training organisations and the group training organisations that you have just talked about. With regard to this consultation, generally is it about specific areas, like the skills shortage, for instance, that you have been talking about now, or is it about the tertiary and training reforms that are coming up? What are the issues particularly that you have been talking to the organisations about?

Mr Service: Our concentration relates to training. We are not a policy authority; we are really a service response authority. Our industry consultation is done through registered training organisations. It is led by the Construction Industry Training Council and the utilities council. They in effect draw in these groups in businesses and they tell us where their skills shortages are. We rely on them to tell us where the skills shortages are and where we can best apply incentives, where we can best redirect funds, how we can better make the opportunities in building and construction known to those groups.

Our consultation is led by third parties, if that makes sense. The authority's position has always been that it relies on and utilises the information that it gets from outside, rather than creating its own views. It might hold some views internally but it does not impose those views on the industry about where those funds should go. It makes decisions based on the consultation and it makes decisions within the ambit of our legislation.

THE CHAIR: And that informs the training plan that you have mentioned on page 7?

Mr Service: Correct. That is exactly how the training plan is developed. We endorse that at the board level, and then it comes to the minister for concurrence and then tabling in the Assembly.

MR HANSON: You touched upon some aspects of what I am about to ask you, but can you give us some indication of what are the overall major challenges facing the authority?

Mr Service: We are quite lucky in some senses. We are a fairly simple beast. Having been chairman of many authorities for successive governments, some are more complicated than others. The authority is in, I think, a very fortunate position. Its legislation creates that fortuitous position in that it has quite limited capacity to do

things, which is good. It means it focuses solely on actually delivering the benefits from the levy it collects. Our only challenge, really, is the challenge of people finding more ways for us to spend money. I say that publicly.

I am the only chairman of any authority who has been able to say, “I’ve got four million to spend next year. Tell me how I can spend it.” Our preference will always be not to have any money left. We run a reserve account to protect the authority’s funding in difficult years but, other than that, our goal is to spend all of the levy we collect. Really, our only challenge is: how do we find enough ways to spend it in both good and bad years?

That would be the view my board colleagues and I, and I am sure the chief executive, would support—that is, how do we make sure we spend the maximum amount that we can every year to train more people and to improve people’s skills as well? We talk about training a lot. It is training in two senses, leaving aside the individual groups. It is about training new entrants and it is also about looking for opportunities to retrain people because industry has changed. Technology changes, businesses change and equipment and plant change. You have got to keep reskilling people.

MR HANSON: Talking about reskilling and the access and equity area, you talked about the options for females. What about Indigenous entrants into the arena? Is that increasing or decreasing?

Mr Service: No, it is not increasing. It is an industry-wide challenge. It is probably a community-wide challenge, although there are other people much more able than me to talk about that. Just in building and construction, it has always been a challenge. It has not necessarily been seen as a particularly attractive industry for Indigenous Australians. I do not have any view about why that is, but it has not had a great retention success rate. We have seen a little bit of improvement. The authority has been going now for nearly 12 years and we have seen a little bit of improvement. When we first started there were very, very few. There are still few but not as few. I am sure I have said to you before that there is no quick solution to that particular issue. The opportunities are there. It is about individuals wanting to take them and stay with them.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any engagement with groups like Billabong who are fairly diversified in what they do but also try and target young people who might be interested in taking it up?

Mr Service: If I could take that on notice? I am not sure whether the ITC or the utilities board actually do those things. I will certainly take that question on notice and let you know whether they have done that. If they have not, if there is some value in that we will certainly add that to our consultation process.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Well, now I know it is all so simple.

Mr Service: When you can only do two things under your legislation it focuses your mind every time. I think it has been the great hallmark of the authority that it

consistently focuses on those two things and does nothing else.

MS PORTER: There is something I wanted to draw our attention to and also ask you some questions about. It appears that you have spent money on the ongoing development of a bachelor of building and construction management degree course at the University of Canberra. Could you talk to us about that?

Mr Service: Yes, we have. About five years ago, if my memory serves me correctly, the University of Canberra ceased to run, I think basically for financial—

MS PORTER: It is page 15, for members.

Mr Service: It ceased to run a bachelor of building course. I can speak about this course because I know a number of people have completed that course. It is a very expensive course to run. The University of Canberra in its own right simply did not have the funds available. We joined with the Hindmarsh group, the MBA and the ACT government and entered into an initial three-year funding arrangement with UC to run the course. It has now put through—Gary, can you remind me?

Mr Guy: 40,000 a year over five years.

Mr Service: How many people has it put through?

Mr Guy: 28 last year and I think there are 48 enrolments this year.

Mr Service: We have good communications with UC. Professor Parker, I think, is committed to the thing. There have been some resourcing changes at UC which I think have refocused the course. It is a very important part of turning out professionals. We are good at turning out apprentices and we are good at reskilling people, but at the next sort of management level there is some intuitive leadership needed. We had lost that in not having that course because it deals with project management, engineering, cost planning and so on.

This is a very good step to rebuilding the industry in those areas where we did not have a lot coming through. The initial agreement I said was for three years. Gary said it is five years. I have no doubt that, going forward, providing that all the partners are there, it will continue for many years to come. It has been very successful.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. As there are no further questions, I thank the minister, Mr Guy and Mr Service for appearing before the committee today.

The committee adjourned at 5.21 pm.