



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION**

(Reference: [Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022](#))

Members:

MR M PETTERSSON (Chair)
MR J DAVIS (Deputy Chair)
MS N LAWDER

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2022

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Secretary to the committee:
Dr A Chynoweth (Ph: 620 75498)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.47 am.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Kelley, Ms Rebecca, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation
Tanton, Mr Graham, Executive Group Manager, Property and Shared Services

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearing of the inquiry by the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion into annual and financial reports 2021-22. In the proceedings today we will examine the annual report of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

Before we begin, on behalf of the committee, I would like to acknowledge that we meet today on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

The first time that witnesses speak, please acknowledge that you have read the privilege statement. Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used these words, "I will take that as a question taken on notice."

In this morning's session, we will hear from the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Ms Berry, and her officials. As we are not accepting opening statements, we will go straight to questions. Minister, I see that you have put out a media release this morning about a new ice sports facility. Can you provide any further information to the committee?

Ms Berry: Yes, it is a very exciting announcement today. I know that the ice sports community will be thrilled to have heard that we are one step closer. I know that this has taken some time and there has been a level of frustration at the gap between our announcement and commitment to build the facility and any work actually progressing on it. I am very pleased to announce that we now have an MOU or a contract announced with the developer of the ice sports facility.

We will have more detail in a couple of weeks time, leading on from the contract signing over the weekend. It is a very exciting step forward not only for Canberra but also particularly for the ice sports community. There is not a lot more detail at the moment, other than that we have signed a contract. We are excited about the opportunities that will come from that, and to be able to let people know that we are progressing the work. In a couple of weeks time, we will have more to say and a little bit more detail for the ice sports community; then we can get on with the work.

THE CHAIR: I know you said there is limited detail at this point. Is there a rough indication of the time lines we are working towards?

Ms Berry: I do not even think we have that.

Ms Kelley: Now that we have entered into the first step of an agreement with the proponent, a lot of the time frame really rests in their court. Once we get to signing the next stage of an agreement, it will be over to them for planning and design, and to work through the planning approval processes. The best we can say at this time is that we hope to see the facility out of the ground in the next couple of years.

MR DAVIS: Could I get a better understanding about what work has happened in the last 12 months to investigate the possibility of co-locating other sports facilities at this site? I know we had a conversation about this at the last estimates and annual report hearings. Will it just be ice skating or have we thought about—

Ms Berry: No, it is more than ice skating.

Ms Kelley: Now that we have got to this level of agreement with the proponent, the planning and design will allow further discussion around those. Certainly, it is an international twin-rink facility, with curling and rock climbing. We will also be looking with the proponent at what other opportunities there are to cover the ice, so that it could be an indoor arena for other events, possibly; but that will all come out as part of the planning and design process.

MR DAVIS: Reading the media release, it will obviously be owned and operated by the private provider. At the risk of sticking my foot in it, private provision of ice-skating rinks has historically created some challenges in Canberra. What protection at this early stage has the government put in place to ensure that the ice-skating community will not find themselves in the future in situations that are perhaps not dissimilar to what they are finding now?

Ms Kelley: The beauty of the process to date is that, certainly, the advocacy for this project started with the Ice Sports Federation, and they have been front and centre all the way along. They have certainly shown a keen interest. Through the course of our agreement, and with the programming that the feasibility work was based on—which allowed for all of the various ice sports to have their programming, along with CBR Brave, to act as a home for their ice hockey league—there will necessarily need to be an ongoing conversation with the Ice Sports Federation because the facility needs to prove to have the viability that it was based on initially. Whilst it will be privately owned and operated, every step will be taken to make sure that it is critically linked with the community, because they deliver the content.

MR DAVIS: In terms of those conversations with the private provider, I know I asked whether there would be additional sports provided. Is the proponent interested or have there been discussions about community spaces, community halls or a two-storey development? There has been some similar co-locating of community halls and sports facilities in other jurisdictions. I know that in my electorate in particular there is only one place you can go, if you want to go somewhere where there are no pokies, to book a community room. Has that been part of the conversations?

Ms Kelley: Not to the extent of community rooms, but we are at that point now. Because we have a commitment to the project from government, we will be able to look at what other opportunities the design might deliver. In short, no; but, yes, the potential is there for that conversation now.

MR DAVIS: Forgive me for getting really particular: there is potential; who will ultimately decide? If it ends up that we come back here in a year's time and the potential was not realised, and there is not a range of things at the facility and it is an ice-skating facility, as great as that would be, who will ultimately make that decision—the private proponent?

Ms Berry: Those are conversations and negotiations that we have with the private provider. The ACT government provides some funding for the project and the land for the project. Of course, the ACT government has an important part and role to play, as well as making sure that the community needs are met. First of all, it is a twin-sheet international ice sports facility; that is the first part. In the preliminary designs or aspirations for that site, I recall that there were community spaces. That is definitely something that we could consider in our negotiations and conversations on the project.

Of course, taking into account that the site is as big as it is, and there is funding provided by the government, there is the ability for the facility to be more than what it has been initially designed for, which is the twin-sheet centre and with a rock-climbing gym; that is the first part of the conversation. Everything else that we want to include as part of that will be part of the negotiations.

It is very early days, and I am sure there will be lots of ideas from various members of the community. At this stage it is very early to confirm whether or not there would be anything other than what we have already announced that the facility would be designed for.

MR DAVIS: You said that the government was chipping in. How much is the government chipping in?

Ms Berry: I do not think we can announce that at this stage.

Ms Kelley: Not at this point.

MR DAVIS: When you account for what the government is chipping in, are you including the gift, if I can use that word, of the land? It sounds like the private provider is not paying for the land.

Ms Kelley: They will be purchasing the land. It would need to be a sale of the land.

THE CHAIR: Excuse my ignorance; which piece of land has been identified for the site?

Ms Berry: It is land in Greenway, behind the Southern Cross Club and near the Vikings club.

Ms Kelley: The Vikings, next to the accommodation.

Ms Berry: There is a hotel next to it.

THE CHAIR: Johnathan has just pointed to it on the map for me, so I now know. A substantive, Mr Davis?

MR DAVIS: Minister, I am interested in talking about the resolution of the Assembly about a range of sports and recreation policy work. You provided an update in April 2021; it was a motion in late 2020. Can I get an update in particular on the development of a new strategic plan for sports and rec?

Ms Berry: A strategic plan for sport and recreation is currently being developed. A draft is out with the sports community, and it will be announced before the end of the year.

MR DAVIS: What will be the opportunities for the community, in addition to the peak bodies and the sports clubs you are talking to, to contribute to or participate in that plan? Is it your intention to put it out through Your Say?

Ms Berry: It is a very high-level strategic plan. This is the second or third time that it has been out with the sports clubs. It is currently sitting with them; that is my understanding. I imagine that they are providing feedback based on the knowledge of their community and the various expectations. It is a high-level strategy. Included in the additional work that is being done with the sports communities is the work that TCCS are doing on sports fields, on the dryland ovals, as well as our infrastructure plan, which will be announced by the government next year. The first part of that will be the arts, entertainment and sports infrastructure plan, which sport and rec will also feed into, as well as sport and rec and TCCS work around our own facilities.

MR DAVIS: In that strategic plan, how will it address the question of funding? Will that be part of the strategic plan work as well?

Ms Berry: It will be announced as part of the release of a strategic plan later this year, by the end of this year. The other piece of work is the grants review. The response to the grants review has been released by the government.

MR DAVIS: Can you talk to me a little bit more about the work that has been done on the grants review?

Ms Kelley: The grants review has been a 12-month process. We received the report from McLaughlin consultancy. We have taken our time to work through what those recommendations look like. Last week we had a forum for the sector, attended by over 60 organisations, where we had a presentation from the consultant on the findings. We also presented the ACT government response to the grants review, and we gave an overview of the strategic plan, our next move, at the same time.

In terms of the consult, it was not just the peak bodies; it was also all of the annually funded peak bodies. It has gone out fairly widely. We have encouraged them to distribute that to their clubs and associations as well.

Going back to the grants review, we are now looking at a streamlined grants program from 2023, with a greater philosophy around it. It is an investment program as opposed to a grants program. We have eight categories at the moment; that will be streamlined down to four.

We are focusing, firstly, on an industry partnership program, which will look at impact projects as opposed to operational funding for our larger organisations, so that they can look at key projects that will make a difference within their participation areas. We look forward to some of the creative thinking that sports might come up with under that scheme. That can be up to three-year funding, and potentially more funding than they receive now.

Secondly, there will be an organisational support category. That is for those organisations who are probably not yet capable of not being reliant on government funding, so that they do have that level of reliance for their operations. We would look to that being a three to six-year transition, where they are gaining sustainability to then, hopefully, be at that partnership-type level for funding.

We will then have the community sport infrastructure program, which will effectively be the capital works program that we have now, but it will have a broader scope to look at things that are outside—participation in things that might enhance the social experience of that facility.

Last but not least, there is our club enhancement program. That is looking at funding down to where the delivery is on the ground. It might be that clubs apply, or our lower-level sporting organisations, who probably do not have the metrics of the other peak bodies.

With the work we are doing at the moment, before Christmas there will be a categorisation application that sports will have to apply for. That will sit them as either a tier 1 or tier 2 sport organisation or club. That will then determine which programs they can apply for early next year.

We are looking at having the guidelines out by early December, with a view that applications would open in February, with funding coming out in April or thereabouts. We are condensing the time frame this year; and, from the 2024 program onwards, we would turn to an August opening time frame. It is a significant change for the sector, but one that we believe will deliver a much better outcome for the sector, and particularly in that part and space. Talking about the conversations we have had before, Mr Davis, around some vulnerable families, and pockets of participation that need support, the vision within our strategic plan is to get more Canberrans moving through sport and recreation. With those that are not, how are our sports actively making accessibility easier for those potential participants, as well as improving the experience of those that are also there, so that they continue to play throughout their life course?

MR DAVIS: I got my dates wrong: the motion was in April 2021; the government was due to respond by December 2021 and we received an update in April 2022. The second point of the resolution related to a facilities management plan. Could you talk

a bit more about how your office is liaising with TCCS to do that? Is that comprehensive, regarding every bit of community sporting infrastructure owned by TCCS, or is it concentrating that work on particular facilities?

Ms Berry: No, that is the work that is currently being done at the moment. As soon as it is completed, it will be released.

Ms Kelley: We are working closely with TCCS. We do consider ourselves to be one team, as sport and rec. We meet regularly. The suite of planning work that the minister referred to under the infrastructure plan at the moment, and having a community sports specific lens on that, will include ACT government assets managed through TCCS—the pools and other areas, such as Stromlo Forest Park. Importantly, what are the partnered projects within the community? Some organisations have the benefit of owning their own facility; what does that look like? What improvements do they need to make? What are the new developments that government also needs to consider, as our city continues to grow, and demand for facilities continues to grow?

MR DAVIS: Just to clarify, will that facilities management plan include an audit or reflect every single piece of community sport infrastructure that the ACT government owns, whether it is managed by sports and rec or by TCCS? Will this become the authoritative document that covers everywhere that sport is played in Canberra?

Ms Berry: That is the intention. I should say that that work began in 2020, prior to COVID. Unfortunately, COVID put a bit of a pause in all of our strategic plan development—the grants work, the infrastructure plan, asset maintenance, and the whole thing. We talked about, during the fires—the fires had just started—putting a climate action plan as part of our strategy. We then had to manage COVID over the next couple of years. It is a lot of work, and it has been condensed, but it has been full steam ahead this year, in bringing together all of that work which was started in 2019-20.

MS LAWDER: Minister, can you tell me what is the estimated life span of Civic pool?

Ms Berry: Civic pool, obviously, is an older facility. It has required significant maintenance to keep it safe and able to be used by the community. We have had conversations over a number of years with the community about the future of Civic pool. At one point, not that long ago, there was a conversation around whether that site would be used for a city stadium. That has now been put off the agenda, with respect to that site being used for a city stadium.

We made sure that the new pool at Stromlo, when it was built, would have capacity for a dive pool to be included on that site. There is work happening around the feasibility of a dive pool at the Stromlo site—understanding that the dive pool at Civic is an outside pool, and it can only be used in Canberra during particular seasons. It has a limited use; it is a very old facility, and it does need replacing. For that part of the site, there is a future plan within the ACT government, with sport and rec, to have a dive pool at the Stromlo site.

The pool at Civic will receive funding to keep it going for a little bit longer, while we

work on plans for that site. There is no plan at the moment for that site, since the city stadium has been taken off the register, if you like. At the moment it will still be a pool, and it will still be used as a pool. It will continue to be funded to keep the pool going for as long as we need to, with respect to what our planning is for that site. But it does have a limited life. It is becoming more and more expensive to keep it going. Do you have some more information on that, Mr Tanton?

Mr Tanton: I acknowledge the privilege statement. Minister, you have covered it off extremely well. We will continue seeking funding for the pool until a broader decision is made about the future of that site and the pool. We are starting that body of working regarding the feasibility of utilising Stromlo for a dive pool facility. That will come back to government once that process has been undertaken.

The pool, as it currently sits, is over 60 years old. There are parts of plant and equipment that are at end of life. Again, we will keep seeking funding to keep the pool open until a further decision is made.

MS LAWDER: Is there an end-of-life date that you have in mind, or will you just keep spending as much money as is needed to keep the pool operational for the foreseeable future?

Ms Berry: This falls into the infrastructure planning work that we are doing across sports facilities across the ACT, which includes pools. It is about understanding what we need in the city. Do we need two 25 or 50-metre pools in the city? Does that need to be somewhere else? If we do have one, does it need to be on that site? Could it be somewhere else? Those are the kinds of things we are considering, as part of the ACT government's broader infrastructure planning, as well as the work that TCCS and sport and rec are doing on their own facilities.

For as long as we can, we will keep the pool operating, because we know it is important for people to have access to that facility. At this stage it has no official turn-off date by the government, until we have done all of this other work, and planning for what we need in the future.

MS LAWDER: Has the contract for the management and operation of the Civic pool been finalised, and for what period?

Mr Tanton: It is still ongoing at the moment. We have contract discussions at the moment with the preferred vendor. We went out to a procurement activity earlier in the year, and at the moment we are finalising terms and conditions about having a round of contracts.

MR MILLIGAN: As I understand it, there was consultation on the draft estate development plan for the Throsby Home of Football; that closed in August. What was the reaction of local residents on a number of issues—the adequacy of parking, the narrow access roads leading into the facility, noise issues, and potential light pollution?

Ms Kelley: We are still waiting for completion of the EDP DA. Certainly, the issues that came through the consultation were readily addressed in the planning work that

had been done. With the car parking, there is extensive car parking on site, with the current plan. Even with the built car park, there is plenty of overflow car parking available, so we felt that that had been adequately addressed. There certainly were a number of comments around access into the facility off Horse Park Drive and the like. The traffic planning that has been done has shown that access into the site is the most appropriate, and noting that, at the times of day and on the weekend when it would most readily be used, it would not be a traffic thoroughfare. The intersection there comes off Gecko Way, I think.

Beyond that, there was not anything else that presented great issues. With the lighting design, that has been a mindful factor from the outset because it is adjacent to Mulligans Flat. There have been extensive discussions around potential impact on wildlife in and around the area. Lighting design is fairly sophisticated, in terms of the spill, and it will be focused more so around the enclosed oval, in the first stage of development, anyhow.

In summary, there was not any feedback through that process that put up barriers to the project proceeding.

MR MILLIGAN: In terms of Mulligans Flat, was there any concern expressed to the government from the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust in relation to having that facility there, and the potential impact on the local environment?

Ms Kelley: As I said, there have been lots of discussions, and we will continue to work with the interest groups as the project proceeds. Again, at this point in time, there are not any inhibitory things that have been raised that would put a stop to the project or necessitate a design alteration, further from where we are now. With the broader planning that was done for the site prior to the home of Throsby becoming a project, there were discussions, way back when, around the strategic development of the site, because of its location next to Mulligans Flat.

MR MILLIGAN: With this site, with the Home of Football, is it fully funded? Weren't there issues with part of the funding coming from private associations? Have they come forward to fill that gap or is there still a gap in terms of total funding for the whole project?

Ms Berry: I think there is a gap regarding the aspirations of Capital Football, for what they see the Home of Football being one day. However, the government will fund the first part of this project, and future additions to the project can be considered as normal budget processes within the government. We have had conversations with Capital Football and the federal football association in detail over many years about this facility, and in-kind funding from the football federation, which included content in the ACT. For example, we had the Socceroos match; we had the Junior Matildas and the Matildas play here. That was part of their contribution to the ACT, as part of the Throsby Home of Football agreement with Capital Football and the federal football association.

That does not mean that it stops there. We will continue to talk with the football federation about other opportunities here in the ACT, and the use of the Home of Football at Throsby, as well as with Capital Football in the ACT, about their

aspirations for that site.

Apart from the first part of what we will be building at the Home of Football at Throsby, we will continue working with Capital Football about their aspirations for whatever else they want to do at that site, as we do with all sports and sports facilities.

MS LAWDER: How are the drainage issues being addressed, given the overflow from the pond at Mulligans Flat goes towards the site?

Ms Berry: It has been a challenge, Ms Lawder; thank you for that question. It was one of the issues that probably delayed the project, as far as it has been, particularly given that we have had three of the wettest years in over a hundred years in the ACT. Issues are arising that never existed before. I will ask Ms Kelley to provide an update on that.

Ms Kelley: The additional money, the extra \$9 million, that government committed to the project was primarily to address the challenges of the site. There has been extensive stormwater design that has gone into the site. Thankfully, sportsgrounds are a good option for flood plains because they are manageable. Certainly, the engineering and the civil design have accounted for it. That is where the additional funding was primarily targeted.

THE CHAIR: On that note, on behalf of the committee, thank you, Minister, and all officials, for being in attendance today. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice, please get those answers to the committee secretary within five working days of the receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript. If members wish to lodge questions on notice, you have five days from this hearing. The hearing is now suspended.

Proceedings suspended from 10.16 am to 4.18 pm.

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Mehrton, Mr Andrew, Executive Branch Manager, Policy and Cabinet,

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the public hearings of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2021-22. The proceedings this afternoon continue to examine the annual report of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Before we begin, on behalf of the committee I would like to acknowledge that we meet today on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

There are some housekeeping matters that I wish to draw to everyone's attention. These are COVID-safe hearings; please practice good hygiene. Please turn phones to silent mode. Please speak one at a time. When you speak for the first time, please state your name, the capacity in which you appear, and if you acknowledge the privilege statement in front of you that would be wonderful.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and web streamed live. When taking a question on notice it would be useful if witnesses used the words, "I will take that as a question taken on notice."

In this first session we will hear from the Chief Minister. Welcome, Mr Barr and all of your officials. Because there are no opening statements we will launch into questions. Chief Minister, can the committee please get an update on the Capital of the Equality strategy and the second action plan?

Mr Barr: Yes. The second action plan was released on 31 March this year. It contains five flagship actions to support local projects through the Capital of Equality grants program. That is action 1. Codesign of a gender focused health service with NGOs and LGBTIQ+ stakeholders is action 2. Support for the introduction of new legislation to regulate medical interventions on intersex people is action 3. Enhancing ACT legislation to further embed inclusion and equality for transgender, diverse, queer and intersex people is action 4. Finally, action 5 is to establish a whole-of-government data collection framework for sex, gender, sexual orientation and sex characteristics.

Within each of those flagship actions there is progress. The latest round of Capital of Equality grants for 2022-23 has been awarded. There is a diverse range of recipients there, as you would anticipate. The draft legislation for protections for intersex people was released in May. We have been undertaking quite considerable consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. We have released a listening report on the details of that consultation. There are some amendments being made to the draft legislation based on what we have heard through that consultation, and I would anticipate

introducing the legislation in quarter 1 of next year.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful. Capital of Equality grants are very popular out in the community. Could you outline for the community some of the recipients and the purpose of those grants?

Mr Barr: Sure. We have a list that includes A Gender Agenda, Queer Zumba, Capital Region Community Services, Hockey ACT, the Wanniasa School community, CLUBSCORE, Zev Aviv, DEiFY, and Jacklyn Lee and Ripley Stevens. They cover everything from Encampment, queer Zumba outreach, rainbow resources for early educators, a hockey pride project, a pride space at the school, a queer sport and art event, an anti-racist queer-centred leadership safe haven and space, and a trans and gender-diverse book club amongst all of those recipients.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful.

Mr Barr: I believe the full list is on the website.

Mr Mehrton: On the website and also in the annual report.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MS LAWDER: I have a supplementary question. There was also mention of a program evaluation of the first Capital of Equality strategy. Has it commenced? When do you think that evaluation might be completed?

Mr Mehrton: About a week ago we commenced a community survey on the Capital of Equality action plan, which will help us gather an initial tranche of data about community awareness and perceptions of the action plan. The full evaluation of the strategy itself will not be completed until probably quarter 1 or quarter 2 next year, so there will be a range of other data collection activities that we undertake. That will include probably bringing together the survey data that we collect but also some intensive case studies with individuals or organisations in the community to assess both the program effectiveness but also the aggregate impact that we think the strategy has had over the last few years, noting that this is the first strategy we have had, and it will conclude next year. So, that will help inform development of a potential future strategy.

MS LAWDER: Is that an internal directorate evaluation or have you gone out to the market?

Mr Mehrton: At the moment it is being led internally but we did receive some funding through the 2022-23 budget to supplement that. That will help us engage some external expertise, particularly to help us around some of those sensitive case studies or interview-type works that we may need to do.

MS LAWDER: Was the evaluation criteria established at the start of the strategy or is it being developed now, post—

Mr Mehrton: It is an ongoing process. We had an evaluation framework or a

program logic that is set out in the strategy when it was developed. It set out the high-level objective, which is for Canberra to be the most welcoming and inclusive city. That gets broken down into three intermediate measures. The actual indicators that we will measure that by were not developed at the time of the strategy's release. Partly that is because there is not a great depth or breadth of data on LGBTIQ+ people that is collected regularly. So part of the journey that we have been on has been funding or supporting work that gathers data on LGBTIQ+ experiences, but we do anticipate that there will be a fairly qualitative piece of work when we complete the program next year.

MS LAWDER: How are you ensuring a really broad participation in the evaluation? Is it only through established groups? I know there are many people who are not perhaps part of organisations.

Mr Mehrton: Yes. We certainly do have a community that is more closely engaged with the work, and we can reach out to that through organisations such as Meridian or A Gender Agenda, who we work very closely with on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis around implementation of the program. We also have ties through groups like our ministerial advisory council that have their own networks out into communities.

So in the first instance we are drawing on the networks that can reach out to those people that are most affected, but we can certainly explore more broad-stroke, community-survey-type measures that gauge awareness or attitudes even of people that are not themselves members of the LGBTIQ+ community, but whose attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people are quite relevant for assessing whether we have become a welcoming and inclusive city.

MS LAWDER: That was sort of my next question about supporters. Do you have ways of trying to reach them, as well?

Mr Mehrton: Yes. We have not formulated an approach to gauge the broader community at this stage. Again, that is challenging. There are not existing community-wide surveys that we can draw on for that, so we will need to think about how we can efficiently and effectively gather that wide-spread data. That said, we do have indicators like results on the marriage equality survey and other bits and pieces that we can draw on to give us a benchmark. Going forward, we will be looking at other measures, including through the wellbeing framework, with the intent of having an LGBTIQ+ lens that will, over time, allow us to build on that baseline.

MS LAWDER: Data collection. Can you give an update on how that is being rolled out? For example, how do you determine what data you want to collect?

Mr Mehrton: As the chief mentioned, one of the priority actions of the second action plan was to develop a data collection framework. We have developed, internally within the public service, a draft of what that framework might look like. That has been developed in consultation with organisations like the ABS, which we draw on heavily to be consistent with national frameworks, as well as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. We have a draft of that at the moment, which we are preparing to do some targeted stakeholder consultation on, external to the directorates that have already been involved with it.

We have not commenced that yet but that will occur in the near future, and that will help establish consistency across the ACT government about how different gender, sex, and sexual orientation variables get defined, so we have a common, consistent definition, but we also know when it is appropriate to use different variables or questions as well. At the moment we have done some of the initial preparatory work; the next phase will be consultation and progressive roll-out.

MS LAWDER: What are you going to use the data for?

Mr Mehrton: Any business the government conducts. We are not at this stage proposing that we insert a whole range of new questions into every form that government might put out to the community, for example, but where we do collect data already, we will be able to make sure that the definitions we are using are appropriate and sensitive. There will certainly be cases where we will look at the issues that are being brought to us from the LGBTIQ+ community and consider whether we need to be capturing additional data. At this stage we have not got to the point of determining whether there is a whole range of new areas where we want to include questions, but we certainly know—for example, in the health space—that we collect some data, but there is a range of policy analysis that we might be able to do if there was enhanced data. That obviously needs to be balanced against the individual right to privacy as well, so we are not quite at that point yet. At the moment, we are mainly focused on having the framework there to support the further work.

MS LAWDER: So who will hold the data and where will it be stored? Is it in a cloud? If you are thinking ahead, in light of recent events, how secure can people feel about their data?

Mr Mehrton: It would probably not be something that I can individually answer. It will depend on the various business systems that directorates are using for whatever program or business operations they are running.

Mr Barr: I imagine most of the data is de-identified and aggregated, so it will not be data that would represent individuals—as in names, addresses, or anything to that extent. Some practical applications would be about planning for health services and age care services—those sorts of questions where we would be most interested in being able to anticipate levels of demand for particular service types.

There is obviously increasing data collection through the census, but it is not yet at a point where there is a question about sexuality in the census. There is some de facto data collection by way of marital status or cohabitation data that effectively can capture people who are married or in some form of civil partnership, but that would not account for people who are single, and so it obviously does not give a complete picture.

Some of the greater value will be in the aggregated data sets. I guess the storage of that sort of data would sit with all of the other data and the wellbeing indicators, most of which is publicly available in its aggregated form on a website, anyway. You can obviously access nearly all of the census data even to a statistical level, district level, in groups of several hundred households. There is that level of data that is available. More of it tends to be aggregated by state or territory or by city, so I suspect a lot of

our data would principally be territory wide. But I could envisage a situation where you might want to know whether there is more demand in Tuggeranong over Belconnen or Gungahlin, or otherwise for particular services. We certainly have that level of data to assist in school planning and in delivering services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, so you could see the rationale for it, but I would always imagine that it would be at a district level or sub-district level rather than by street or suburb, I suspect.

MS LAWDER: Is that a conversation that the government has been having with the ABS about including that information in the census?

Mr Barr: Well, I know it is certainly one that the ABS has been constructing. As I understand the bureau's process, it is always thinking one census ahead. So it is asking questions and seeking engagement on what the 2031 census will look like because it has largely already fixed the 2026 questions. I think there is an inevitability about seeking some further information, but I note that these changes are not made quickly.

There is an interesting question about why we collect data on religion at this point, but obviously moving away from that would need to be a considered decision to no longer seek to collect data on religious affiliations. Equally, in adding new data sets, the ABS is also very conscious of how many questions it asks, so as to have the process not be too onerous and deliver the sorts of data that they need for a variety of obvious reasons.

MS LAWDER: I think I am done, but I did just want to say how well that chair suits you.

Mr Barr: Well, I do not know that I will be spending any time here beyond the hearings! Thank you, Ms Lawder. Cheeky!

THE CHAIR: WorldPride is in Sydney next year.

Mr Barr: It is; yes.

THE CHAIR: Is the ACT government doing anything to complement the program?

Mr Barr: Yes. We have had some engagement with the chair of the event and a number of board members. I do not know that it would be feasible, as it were, to ambush market this event, but I think there is an opportunity for some events and activities, post the main program in Sydney. So we are looking at what opportunities there might be for targeted post-event attraction.

The estimated economic impact for Australia is somewhere between \$660 million and \$840 million, so it is going to be a pretty big event. We are not going to program something to clash with the Mardi Gras parade or those sorts of things, but the end of the WorldPride festival coincides with the Enlighten Festival, so we are looking to work with the National Gallery and National Museum and a couple of other national cultural institutions, as well as some of our local institutions, to look at specific programming that might be attractive to a particular demographic within the broader

attendance. Again, I do not think Canberra is going to host the second biggest dance party of WorldPride, but there will be—

THE CHAIR: Not with that attitude!

Mr Barr: Indeed. I am not sure we would have a venue sufficiently large to accommodate it. But there is also a significant human rights conference that is being held as part of the broader event, so there will be a diverse demographic for whom some of the cultural activities here might be very appealing. That is what we are focused on, so we are looking to attract hundreds rather than expecting tens of thousands, but with a few well-targeted events I think we can capitalise on our very close proximity to Sydney.

What we would be looking for is a weekend or overnight stay—adding another couple of days—because there will be people coming from all over the world who will be in Australia and will be looking for a few activities in addition to their attendance at the WorldPride event.

THE CHAIR: Very good idea.

MS LAWDER: The ministerial advisory council. What are the terms of appointments? Can people just be reappointed over and over again or is there a limit?

Mr Barr: We have a general policy of a sort of two-term limit, if you like. Sometimes there can be exceptions. Particularly if you are looking to manage a chair or deputy chair handover, you can sometimes extend a term by 12 or 18 months. Initially, it was between one- and three-year appointments, depending on the level of commitment that the individual was prepared to make. We have wanted the council to be more diverse than the initial recruitment round was, way back when it was first established. We are about to recruit for three positions on the council. We get a lot of the L and the G within the LGBTI; we are looking for more bisexual, trans, intersex, queer-identifying individuals, and we are also very keen for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the council. I think its strength will be in its increased diversity. There is clearly still an important role for lesbian and gay members, but we are also looking to ensure that the entire rainbow family is represented.

MS LAWDER: Is that the government sort of identifying a few people and going out to them or is there an application process?

Mr Barr: No, there is an application. I mean, we do endeavour to put the opportunity in front of people. The extent of the government going out is to try and reach many different people, through a number of different communication channels and existing organisations. And there is sort of a gentle encouragement at times for the particular organisations: “It would be great if you could promote this opportunity.”

The next expression-of-interest round opens soon, and closes, I think, in early March next year. So we would look to finalise those appointments in the second quarter of 2023. Sometimes we have had more applicants than we can provide places for, and we have kept a reserve list so that people do not have to keep on applying each time. That is so that you can go back to that list and ask, “Are you still interested? There is

a position available.” That has certainly worked in the past.

Obviously, these are volunteer positions, so you are looking for people to be willing to volunteer their time. The other question is about how we utilise the skills of the council. Part of our recruitment is that obviously our success is linked to the council’s sense of their time being well spent. I think we can point to council providing very specific and important advice on the conversion therapy legislation; improving processes for birth certificate and birth registration arrangements; the Safe and Inclusive Schools initiative, and how that was framed and structured; and the projects that we have listed in the second action plan. Obviously, the council was quite engaged in a number of those. The council has also, of its own accord, wanted to focus on particular areas, and I am familiar with the work that was done, for example, on aged care. That is not a direct ACT government responsibility, but the council wanted to have input to federal consultations, which we encourage it to do.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On that, we will call it a day. On behalf of the committee, thank you Chief Minister and all officials for your attendance today. The committee will now suspend briefly.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Steel, Mr Chris, Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and
Special Minister of State

Major Projects Canberra

Edghill, Mr Duncan, Chief Projects Officer

Little, Mr Martin, Deputy Chief Projects Officer

Canberra Institute of Technology

Robertson, Ms Christine, Interim Chief Executive Officer

Andersen, Ms Josephine, Acting Executive Director, Industry Engagement and
Strategic Relations

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Starick, Ms Kate, Executive Group Manager, Policy and Strategy, Economic
Development

THE CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody. We will now hear from the Minister for Skills. As we have some new people in attendance, we will go through some housekeeping matters. These are COVID-safe hearings, so please practise good hygiene. All mobile phones are to be switched off or put into silent mode. Please speak one at a time and speak directly into the microphone so that Hansard can hear you.

The first time witnesses speak, please indicate your name and the capacity in which you appear, and acknowledge the privilege statement. Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and web streamed live. When taking questions on notice, it would be useful if witnesses use the words, “I will take that as a question taken on notice.” As there are no opening statements, we will jump straight into questions.

Minister, could the committee please get an update on the delivery of the CIT campus redevelopment in Woden?

Mr Steel: Sure. I will hand over to Major Projects Canberra to talk through where we are at as we continue to work through the design. Work has been going on, on a temporary interchange which will help to facilitate the build of the new campus on the existing interchange site, which will be demolished soon. The development application has gone in, I understand, for the demolition works on the existing interchange site. Of course, work continues on the new interchange, which we understand will be complete in 2025.

The temporary interchange will allow transport services to continue during the construction period, providing safe access for pedestrians in and out of the interchange, and we are looking forward to that starting next year. I will hand over to the team to provide some more information on the design of the campus itself.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful.

Mr Edghill: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. As the Minister noted, there are a number of works happening across a number of different fronts on the project. I will begin with the bus layovers, for example. If you have had the opportunity to travel down Launceston Street you can see that that is really taking shape now. There are some final concrete pours to go for the hard-stand area for the buses themselves. The wet weather probably has not played particularly well into our hands with respect to that project, but that is coming along well.

There are associated roadworks on both Easty Street and Launceston Street, which are in their final throes now. Easty Street, which is the street which is parallel to Callam Street, is essentially finished except for some final tidy-ups when we get to the end of that piece of work. With respect to the interchange, the temporary interchange is now arriving on site. Those in the Woden Town Centre can actually see the temporary interchange shelters taking shape. The part that is not immediate, but which has happened, is that a lot of utilities and other services have been moved out of the way for that project already.

At the CIT campus, the main facility itself, there has been, since we signed the contract with Lendlease a little earlier this year, a substantial amount of design work which has occurred in the background with our colleagues in CIT and elsewhere across government, with a view to getting the design to a point where the development application for that facility can be lodged.

In terms of the design of the facility itself, I think it has been very useful for us to be working both with our colleagues in CIT but also with Lendlease, which has had design responsibility to take into account community feedback to date and to develop a design which will meet the needs of CIT, not just now but as a vocational educational facility well into the future. So there is flexibility built into the design, but it will also deliver a great urban rail outcome for the people of Woden and Canberra more generally.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned taking community feedback into the design. How have you done that?

Mr Edghill: If I may, I will pass to my team—either Martin or Rebecca.

Mr Little: I am happy to go first. I acknowledge that I have read the privilege statement. In terms of community consultation, there has been a range of activities underway for the last 12 to 18 months. This includes attendance at the Woden Valley Community Council monthly meetings, also engagement through the YourSay website, and feedback from there. We have also run a series of pop-ups in the local area just to socialise the project with the community. That has provided valuable feedback.

We have also established a community reference group, which is quite a diverse, large group from around the Woden community. We are also in the process of establishing a construction interface information group that will be closely aligned with the construction of the main project itself.

We have also created the business partnership plan, which has been canvassed much earlier in the year with the local business community. The same participants also sit on the construction interface group and the community reference group, so that has been quite beneficial. We have also had an ongoing relationship with those business stakeholders, just as we start to move into the demolition phase early next year.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful.

MS LAWDER: I wanted to ask a couple of questions about CIT Tuggeranong. It appears, from just walking past the site, to be very quiet and potentially underutilised. How do you determine which courses to run at CIT Tuggeranong, and to ensure that they are appealing to the people who live in Tuggeranong especially?

Mr Steele: I will hand over to Christine Robertson, the acting CEO of CIT.

Ms Robertson: I acknowledge that I have read and understood the privilege statement. Thank you for that question. I will ask Ms Josephine Anderson, to talk us through some of the activities at Tuggeranong at the moment—in particular, how we are engaging students in programs that are of relevance to the cohort in that environment.

Ms Anderson: Thank you, Christine. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The major course delivery underway at Tuggeranong is in the business and leadership space and in the early childhood space. You are right; there is some capacity in the timetable to deliver other courses at Tuggeranong. We are actively engaged in looking at utilisation of that campus and seeing how we could offer some ICT and cyber-related courses in that space as well, because it is very well appointed and there is definitely scope to run additional courses there. The space is also used by the Education Directorate. So it is used by other parties as well.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to provide to the committee, I guess on notice, all CIT students by postcode, and the courses that they are engaged in? I am just interested to see what courses people with a Tuggeranong address are particularly interested in.

Ms Robertson: I will take that question on notice.

MS LAWDER: Great; thanks. For example, I have noticed that there is a lovely well-appointed bar for the responsible service of alcohol. That appears to have been closed for COVID and remains closed. Is there an intention to run courses there utilising the bar, and to reopen it?

Ms Robertson: I will pass over to Jo Anderson.

Ms Anderson: Yes; absolutely. We are looking at expanding course delivery across the board. You are right, it is a very well-appointed facility out there. We will be looking at what we can do to meet the needs of students who live in that area, in that space, as well.

MS LAWDER: Continuing on with the RSA theme, I know there are some businesses in the area who put their staff through RSA training. Does the CIT engage

with the local businesses to offer the use of their facilities for employees? For example, Limelight cinema has a bar, and its employees have to do an RSA.

Ms Anderson: Yes. I do not have a specific example of the RSA in that space, but I can assure you that there is very strong engagement across the board with industry, especially in the hospitality space.

MS LAWDER: Perhaps you might need to take it on notice, but are you able to provide some figures about local businesses that have used the space at CIT Tuggeranong?

Ms Anderson: We can take that one on notice, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Great. Thanks. My understanding is that the lease runs out in 2026. Is the government going to recommit to the CIT Tuggeranong, or is there some review underway and there is a possibility that CIT Tuggeranong might close? What is the current status?

Mr Steel: I do not think it has been proposed to close, at all. In fact, I think it is the opposite in terms of what CIT is looking at with respect to expansion of future courses and utilisation of the existing space there. It is well fitted out for the purposes that it currently provides. I do not know whether you want to add anything more on that one.

MS LAWDER: That is good to hear.

Ms Robinson: I do not think we have anything more to add at this point.

MR MILLIGAN: In your annual report it states that there were 1,135 enrolments at CIT. This is in relation to JobTrainer. I am just wondering how many enrolments were there with independent registered training officers?

Ms Robinson: Sorry, could you repeat that question?

MR MILLIGAN: Sorry. JobTrainer. Apparently, in your annual report it states that there were 1,135 enrolments that went through CIT. I just would like to know how many other enrolments were done through independent registered training organisations as a part of the JobTrainer.

Ms Robinson: Again, I will pass that question to Ms Anderson.

Ms Anderson: I think that is probably a question that colleagues in Skills Canberra or Ms Arthy can answer.

Mr Steel: Did you want to add anything, Ms Starick, or do you want to take that on notice?

Ms Starick: I have read and understand the privilege statement. If we look at the first tranche of JobTrainer, there were 2,275 enrolments undertaken. There are still some courses available through CIT that can be enrolled in. That is, at CIT. In total, as at June 2022, there were 2,809 enrolments through the first tranche of JobTrainer, and

554 of these enrolments are attributed to private RTOs.

Through the extension of the JobTrainer, there were 2,500 free training places available. Of these, there were 575 that were reserved for aged care, and 170 that were reserved for digital courses. I might need to seek advice around the number of these that were attributed to private RTOs or CIT, or we can take that on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: If you do not have that figure, I am happy for that to be taken on notice.

Ms Starick: We will take that on notice, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I was hoping you could explain to the committee how the ACT skills needs list is formulated in consultation with employers?

Mr Steel: Thank you. The skills needs list, of course, is used to inform the subsidy levels that are applied to skills training, and we consult with employers and industry about their needs on a regular basis, and that list is updated. The most recent list was updated for 2022-23 financial year on 6 June this year. It contains 121 qualifications covering 175 occupations.

We also undertake work consulting on the critical skills needs list, which informs the skill migration program settings as well. At the moment we know that there is a large number of industries that are facing not just skills shortages but workforce shortages. So it is an area of ongoing discussion, and at the moment we are having some targeted discussions across a number of different industries with roundtables being held this month and next month focusing on caring industries, including age care, disability, childhood education and care. We have already had a roundtable with the tourism industry and hospitality industries. We are also talking with the construction industry about their particular needs, and we will be having a conversation with the renewables and emerging technologies area, and ICT and cyber industries about their needs. There is quite a bit of work going on in the cyber industry around developing a workforce strategy as part of the Canberra cyber hub at the moment. This is a big focus, and if we need to make tweaks to the skills needs list and the critical skills needs list, we will be doing that in consultation with industry to find out what their specific needs are so that we can reflect that in the program settings.

THE CHAIR: The industries you have listed, have they had long-standing skills shortages or are there certain industries that are experiencing new emerging shortages?

Mr Steel: Many of them have had long-standing issues, and I think age care is clearly one of those that we are all familiar with. There are a range of different reasons for that, remuneration being one of those. It has often been asked, “Why do we have constant skills needs?” There are always going to be changes in the economy, and you may have changes in where people are working at one particular point in time.

What is unique about the current circumstances is that there are workforce shortages across the board. With such a low unemployment rate, particularly here in the ACT with more job vacancies than there are people actually looking for work, clearly that

is affecting a wide range of industries at the moment. Skilled migration is part of the answer there, certainly, as well as focusing on skilling our own here in Canberra and making sure that we are reaching out to some groups that typically have found it harder to get into the workforce. It is a real opportunity for them to get in, and providing some extra support around them has been part of the discussion. We are not just subsidising training but also providing some of those extra supports to get them through training and then into a job. We are doing that work. Those cohorts include mature-age workers in particular, and other groups who might have found it a little bit harder to get into a job prior to this point in time.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS LAWDER: I am interested in future course development. Cybersecurity is perhaps a logical example. I have seen some of your ads, but what are you doing about new and emerging course opportunities?

Mr Steel: Quite a bit of work is being done on that at the moment. As part of the development of industry-specific implementation plans for our Skilled to Succeed strategy, we are asking those particular targeted industries not only what can be done to address workforce shortages and the like but whether there are areas where we have not got courses currently or where skill sets need to be developed, and how we can work with RTOs like CIT or private RTOs to develop those skill sets, that training, to support people to get into the job and support industry growth.

Cybersecurity is one of those areas where I think there is some work to do in course development, so that will be part of the conversation with that sector. The most recent piece of work that CIT have done on this, which has come out of their strategic compass, has been connected the government's commitment to transition our workforce in Transport Canberra to electric vehicles so that mechanics are skilled to work on those vehicles when they come on line. We have been working with CIT to make sure that diesel mechanics are skilled up and getting all the training that they need to be able to work on electric vehicles. That has required a new course to be developed. So that partnership supported a new course which will support not only government workers to transition but the entire private sector of mechanics.

That applies to first responders as well. I should not forget training for firefighters. They might arrive on a scene with a crashed electric vehicle and need to know how to demobilise that vehicle. That is certainly part of the work. I will hand over to CIT because I know they are doing a lot of consultation with industry at the minute about where those gaps are, where the new and emerging areas of skills need are, and where there might be a case for developing new courses and programs.

Ms Robertson: Thanks, Minister. I can add to the work that we are doing in the electric vehicle area, which is ahead of the rest of the country in terms of innovation. We have developed, over 2022, an accredited course that will be on offer at the certificate level to students. We have 40 students on the wait list for that particular initiative. We also continue to look at where we might be able to deliver short course offerings—we refer to those as skill sets or micro credentials—to engage more students in shorter form learning. That will allow them, then, to potentially earn and learn at the same time.

In terms of giving students the opportunity to work with industry but also to work with universities, we are currently very involved with the University of New South Wales in developing what we refer to as a maker space. That will be an opportunity for CIT students, University of New South Wales staff and students, and also industry, to look at new and emerging opportunities that can prototype within that particular maker space. That maker space will also be a pilot as we work to eventually move into the new space in Woden. By the time we decamp to Woden we will have, hopefully, a working prototype that will allow us to work across the university VET sector but also to work with industry opportunities to keep ahead of that innovation trend that we need to be leading across the ACT.

MS LAWDER: You have said that with the EV course you are ahead of the rest of Australia. I think Minister Steel mentioned firefighters, first responders. Have you been developing the course? Is it something you can leverage from interstate or overseas courses, or do you start from scratch to develop such a course?

Ms Robertson: Again, we are developing that course. That course is recognising that there will be a whole range of knowledge and skill sets that are needed when an electric vehicle is involved in a motor vehicle accident. It is about work, health and safety first and foremost but then also the skills required to disable an electric vehicle and to safely remove any passengers that might be harmed in that process. That is ground-breaking for Australia. In CIT our electric vehicle area has been developing that initiative. Jo Andersen may be able to add a little more on that.

Ms Andersen: Yes. Thank you, Christine. We have been working very closely with industry, in particular the ACT Emergency Services Agency. CIT has delivered a skill set which comprises two units of competency to 40 people so far, with another 20 people to go through that course in 2022. We are working with industry to build that skill set to incorporate another two units of competency, so we will be even better placed to respond to those needs and to provide a really comprehensive course to address all of the elements that Ms Robertson referred to around safety et cetera.

MS LAWDER: So was that delivery to first responders?

Ms Andersen: That will be part of the scope of delivery next year, yes.

MS LAWDER: Right. So the 40 or so you have done so far have not been first responders?

Ms Andersen: Some of them may well have been but not as a cohort.

MS LAWDER: I know this is a very broad question, but do you do any courses relating to recycling, perhaps re-using materials and that kind of thing? Are there any courses in that sort of area?

Ms Robertson: I cannot give you specifics on that at the moment. I could take the question on notice to provide you with some more detail. Within all of our trades qualifications, the qualification suite has been updated recently and there will be scope within those qualifications to ensure that we work sustainably across the

various trades that we deliver. But if you are looking for specific information, I would have to take that question on notice.

Mr Steel: It is something that has been identified in the government's draft circular economy strategy. Skills has been identified as an area where we need to have discussions with industry about what their needs are, and that would include whether there are courses that are currently meeting their needs or whether further course development is required. Some of the particular re-manufacturing skills, if we are going to do more of that sort of higher value work in the ACT, may require skills in manufacturing. There are skill sets for that and qualifications that may be applicable but we will need to work through that, depending on exactly what they are doing with the resource.

MS LAWDER: Do you train electricians at CIT?

Ms Andersen: We do.

MS LAWDER: Are there specific competencies or work around batteries, home batteries as well, including installation?

Ms Robertson: My understanding is that there are not. I would have to have that confirmed.

Ms Andersen: Thank you. We do offer a skill set in battery storage systems.

MS LAWDER: As part of a general electrical apprenticeship?

Ms Andersen: It may well be embedded in a qualification, but we also offer that as a separate shorter course.

MS LAWDER: So if you are already an electrician you might be able to—

Ms Andersen: Exactly, or if you are working in the industry and you want to upskill in that particular area, that course is available.

Ms Robertson: My understanding, just to add to that question, is that this is not a requirement of the industry, so until such time as it is mandated that there are specific licensing requirements for electricians to undertake that training, it is a qualification they can choose to do but do not have to do.

MS LAWDER: Sure. Are plumbing and gas fitting part of the same qualification or are they two separate things? I am just interested in whether you are looking at perhaps phasing out gas fitting, given the ACT government's stance on gas and what impact that may have on your training offering.

Ms Robertson: At the moment there is still a demand for that training. Ms Andersen, again, may be able to give us some more information on that, but my understanding is that at the moment we are still offering that as a required licence qualification.

Ms Andersen: I can absolutely confirm what Ms Robertson said: that qualification is

still in high demand.

Mr Steel: There is no policy intention by government to phase out that training, because we know that those systems will remain in use for a long period of time. They will still need to be maintained. Indeed, people are still buying those systems at the moment and are still allowed to buy those systems under the current government policy, so they will need to continue to be fitted to properties, commercial and residential. There is still going to be a demand for those skills, going forward, but of course there will be demands in new areas of skills development as well, around renewables, and we are already doing a significant amount of work across that area.

MS LAWDER: Thanks.

MR MILLIGAN: Going back to JobTrainer, I want to know what the government is doing to address any vacancies or shortfalls in enrolments. Are you considering expanding what courses are available through JobTrainer or are you considering offering more courses through independent RTOs as well to start to fill those gaps?

Mr Steel: A wide variety of courses are available through JobTrainer. We took that decision to try and encourage people to come forward and choose courses that interest them. We have seen a very significant take-up of JobTrainer, both the courses delivered through CIT and also in the private RTO sector. We are promoting the scheme. We are supporting RTO enrolments with advertising that has been going on. I think we are in the market at the moment, advertising for JobTrainer 2 and the courses that are still available there. We will continue to work with RTOs to encourage people. RTOs themselves have been undertaking their own advertising and marketing to encourage students to take up the free courses. There has been a tremendous level of enrolment.

There are still some enrolments available. As we move into the end of the calendar year we are hoping that many young people who may be finishing their year 12 or year 11, depending on where they are at, may be considering the opportunities and taking up training in some of these areas that are on offer. It is a great offer to have free training in these courses. It is not something that is offered very often. It certainly was not offered when I was a young person. I will hand over to Skills Canberra to talk about what they have been doing to partner with RTOs to support enrolment.

Ms Robertson: Thank you. I might start and then pass to my partners. An example of where we have done some work to increase enrolment is aged care. That is one of the priority areas under JobTrainer and it is also a priority area for our industries. What we know is that we train a lot more people than actually remain engaged in aged care. As the minister said, we are currently in the market with a promotion campaign. One of the areas that that promotion campaign is targeting is aged care, and we have seen an uplift in enrolments.

In terms of working with private registered training organisations, through recent releases of courses we asked RTOs to work with their industry partners to identify the courses on offer that industry would most likely pick up. They came with a letter of recommendation, so we knew through that process that we were getting the most relevant courses that provided the best employment opportunities for people who

participated in that training. That is just another example of how we partner with training organisations.

MR MILLIGAN: What is the methodology behind how you break up the JobTrainer funding? How much goes to CIT and how much goes to independent RTOs? Do you have a formula or a process for how you break that funding up?

Mr Steel: There is a specific requirement to have a certain number of places delivered in aged care and also in digital, cyber, areas, so that was a key requirement. We look at who is available to take those course enrolments. Obviously, CIT is the largest provider in Canberra of qualifications; therefore, it would be expected that a significant portion of the JobTrainer fund would always come through CIT. We are seeing that being augmented in the proposed one-year agreement for fee-free TAFE training next year as well, acknowledging CIT's ability to deliver courses across a wide range of skills needs areas.

There was the opportunity, as well, for private RTOs to deliver courses. There was a process behind that. There was a key difference in the second round of JobTrainer from the first, which was that organisations applying to deliver places also needed to demonstrate that there were going to be job outcomes at the other end, that there was a demand in industry for actually employing people who undertake the training, which I think is an important thing when we are trying to address the skill shortages that we have.

Ms Robertson: Building on what the minister said, another key difference was that in JobTrainer 2 the eligibility for JobTrainer 2 was looking at people who were, perhaps, more vulnerable in our community. We designed the rollout of that second phase of JobTrainer to align with what that group of people may need.

We had three streams. There was the stream that we have been talking about, which focused on aged care but also on digital skills—digital literacy being a key requirement for many roles, from hospitality through to construction. It was seen as an important stepping stone for the skills that people would need for their employability. The second stream focused on pre-employment and pre-apprenticeship programs for school leavers, and the third program focused on foundation skills. These were skills that people needed to participate in successfully in training, and then there was the opportunity to either participate in more training or move on to employment options.

MR MILLIGAN: The 2021 RoGS report stated that 75 per cent of students in our vocational educational training sector actually attended independent RTOs and not CIT. So why is the majority of funding for job training going to CIT when there is a clearer, higher demand on independent RTOs for students?

Mr Steel: Well that is one metric of the training system. The other metric is around full qualifications and CIT delivers far more enrolments and places for full qualifications. We know a lot of people are going to the private sector for the shorter courses so that is probably what that metric reflects. But we know the full qualifications are significantly valued by industry and that is where CIT is delivering a large number of places. Those places cost more to deliver for a full course that often goes across multiple years but deliver a significant output for the economy, and hence

the investment in those through CIT.

MR MILLIGAN: Okay, so 2023, if there are still vacancies for JobTrainer and you cannot fill them, would the government consider offering those places through independent RTOs just to fill those places? What the government thinks about—

Mr Steel: I do not think we are at that point yet. We still have a little bit to go and we are confident we will be able to get the money out the door for JobTrainer. With the current marketing campaign underway it is a great offer for students to take up the free training. We will see if there is any residual that can be reallocated back in and invested back into the system at the point we have that issue.

THE CHAIR: I had some questions about the Australian sign language courses at CIT. How much demand is there for Auslan courses at the moment?

Ms Robertson: I am not aware that we actually offer Auslan at CIT. I believe there is only one provider who receives ACT government funding to deliver those courses, but I will defer to colleagues in Skills Canberra or Ms Starick to provide more information.

Ms Starick: I think we will take that on notice, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Just a few more questions on notice then. Is there a reason that there is no further Auslan study above and beyond Auslan I and Auslan II provided by CIT? That would be the more notable question on notice.

Mr Steel: Yes, we will take that on notice, thanks.

MS LAWDER: Are there courses at CIT that have very low student numbers but CIT feel community or service obligations to provide even though they are such small numbers? And if yes, or no, what is your minimum student involvement threshold for a course? Is it 8, is it 16, is it 50?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Christine Robertson.

Ms Robertson: Thank you for that question. Yes, there are programs we deliver with small numbers in enrolments. In terms of a threshold, thresholds very much depend on the facilities need, the equipment need and whether or not we have staff available that have expertise to deliver those programs. So there is no one threshold number that we would apply. We look at each qualification we are delivering, each course we are delivering, ensure we have appropriately trained staff and assure that we can meet the training needs that are detailed in the training package for that particular qualification. All of those criteria would be applied to making a decision around the ongoing viability of those programs. But yes, there are numbers of qualifications with small enrolments which we would consider important to deliver for communities.

MS LAWDER: Can you give me an example?

Ms Robertson: Yes, Jo, are you able to talk about some of those?

Ms Andersen: Yes, absolutely. We do have lower enrolments this year than last year, for example, in some of our business and leadership courses and in some of the courses delivered through CIT, Yurauna. But again, numbers have been quite volatile recently in the past couple of years in the wake of COVID. So as Ms Robertson said, there is no minimum threshold at this point for those courses because they are really valuable courses and of course we would apply marketing efforts to building the student cohort undertaking those courses as well.

MS LAWDER: For those sorts of courses that may have low enrolments, is there an attrition rate? If you did a certificate two and then were going onto a certificate four but only 60 per cent of people might go on. Do you have that sort of information?

Ms Andersen: It is very likely we do have that information. Some courses do not articulate neatly of course. But yes, we would definitely have that information about students who go on to further study either in a similar field of education or a different field of education.

MS LAWDER: I am not sure if you are doing a review but what is the opportunity, for example, to reinstate courses such as Auslan that may have ceased seven years ago but which has, for example, NDIS demand?

Ms Robertson: That would be a consideration we would look at with Skills Canberra in terms of demand across the ACT for that qualification. We would also need to ensure we were able to attract appropriate qualified trainers to do that work. We know that there is now a high demand for Auslan qualified graduates. We know that the number of RTOs delivering that program are not significant across the country. So there would be a number of factors to take into consideration but demand would be one of those factors and appropriately qualified staff and funding.

MS LAWDER: Does CIT have a community service or—I am not sure what term you would use, some sort of obligation for equity and inclusion to try to provide those types of skills for our community?

Ms Robertson: We certainly do have a community services obligation and we work very closely with a range of communities, including our Yurauna community to look at specific needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community across the ACT and within the Canberra region. So those qualifications are developed in consultation with a broad number of organisations and employers, with the government and Skills Canberra as well. Also at the national level; looking at what the national need is and the national demand for those sorts of qualifications.

THE CHAIR: So in terms of determining whether or not there is demand for a certain course at CIT you consult with Skills ACT. Does Skills ACT have a view as to whether or not there is a shortage of Auslan interpreters in the ACT?

Mr Steel: I think absolutely through the work that they do with the fine model and forecasting industry skills needs and the development of the skills needs list and the critical skills needs list, that is certainly looked at. Working and hearing directly from industry about what their needs are is part of the discussion and RTOs are also expected to have that industry engagement to inform their course offerings. For us, it

informs where we put our subsidies for the delivery of that training. We have certainly been informed by industry directly about what their needs are as well as the broader economic needs.

THE CHAIR: So that is the industry side of the equation. How would the community go about informing CIT whether they have a preference or a desire for a certain course to be offered? Should they write to us as MLAs? Should they write to CIT directly?

Ms Robertson: So there is a range of consultation methods we are involved in that we have ongoing through our delivery of our broader qualifications. If we are talking about Auslan, through the community services sector. There would be a broad range of organisations that have regular access to our staff and our qualifications, who are involved in our industry advisory groups who would provide specific information about their particular needs at a point in time. We would consider those, again in consultation with Skills Canberra, around opportunities to increase our courses and where there may be decline in demand, opportunities to phase out courses if that demand is no longer there.

THE CHAIR: Have either industry or these community engagement methods identified a shortage of Auslan interpreters?

Mr Steel: We can take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: It is my understanding from a quick look at a few of your annual reports that there has been a bit of a decline in student satisfaction and also in business satisfaction with outcomes from CIT. What work have you done to analyse the reasons behind that sort of decline over a number of years?

Ms Robertson: We are involved on a yearly basis in the National Centre of Vocational Education Research student satisfaction survey and the employer's survey. So 2021 survey data shows CIT graduates that are satisfied with their training is significantly higher than the national level. I am just trying to find that.

MS LAWDER: I think I had gone back to about 2018.

Ms Robertson: Yes, so there has been significant improvement—

MS LAWDER: More recently?

Ms Robertson: I will have to find those figures for you. So yes, in 2021, CIT student satisfaction result was 87.7 per cent, which was higher than the ACT government's key performance indicator required at 85 per cent. It is also in excess of the national average which I am just unable to identify at the moment. In our employer satisfaction survey, which was undertaken on 29 August and 19 September 2022, we identified 88.6 per cent of our employers were satisfied with the service that we are providing. Again, our key performance indicator requirement of the ACT government is 80 per cent. Ms Andersen, I am not sure if you are able to pull up any of those?

MS LAWDER: Do you have a trend over time, at all?

Ms Andersen: I do not have figures with me from previous years but certainly, as Ms Robertson has said, there are really high student satisfaction outcomes. The performance indicator required for CIT is 85 per cent in relation to student satisfaction. In 2021 CIT achieved 87.7 per cent. Likewise, an employer satisfaction survey showed 90 per cent satisfaction rate for employers. Indeed, in terms of students achieving the main reason for their training, that was 84.9 per cent. So very high satisfaction in achievement rates compared to other providers across the country. I think significantly one of the statistics that stands out is that 52.1 per cent of CIT graduates who were not employed before training, were employed after training. This compares to other government providers around the country where only 41.8 per cent were employed after training if they were not employed before training.

MS LAWDER: Perhaps in terms of trend over the past five years you may be able to take that on notice?

Ms Robertson: We will take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee thank you Minister for your appearance today, as well as all officials. Also, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the minister, statutory officers and officials who have appeared throughout the day. Witnesses who have taken questions on notice today, could you please get those answers to the committee office within five working days of the receipt of the uncorrected proof. If members wish to lodge questions on notice, please get those to the committee office within five working days. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 5.35 pm.