



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER
AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY**

(Reference: [Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2019-2020
and ACT budget 2020-2021](#))

Members:

**MS N LAWDER (Chair)
MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)
MR J DAVIS**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2021

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr A Cullen (Ph: 620 50136)**

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

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Privilege statement

The Assembly has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.03 am.

Appearances:

Cheyne, Ms Tara, Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Minister for Human Rights and Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development

Starick, Ms Kate, Executive Group Manager, Economic Development

Priest, Ms Jenny, Executive Branch Manager, Business and Innovation, Economic Development

Hassett, Mr Glen, Senior Director, Business and Industry Capability, Business and Innovation, Economic Development

Campbell, Mr Morgan, Senior Director, Economic Recovery and Strategic Policy, Economic Development

Pryce, Mr David, Deputy Director-General, Access Canberra and Statutory Office Holder: Registrar-General and Acting Commissioner for Fair Trading

Rynehart, Mr Josh, Executive Branch Manager, Fair Trading and Regulatory Strategy Branch, Access Canberra

Mangeruca, Mr Giuseppe, Acting Executive Branch Manager, Licensing & Registrations Branch, Access Canberra

Chan, Ms Yu-Lan, Executive Branch Manager, Projects Governance & Support Branch, Access Canberra, and Statutory Office Holder: Chief Executive Officer, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission

Tyler, Ms Sam, Executive Branch Manager, artsACT, Economic Development

Elvin, Ms Harriet, Chief Executive Officer, Cultural Facilities Corporation

Triffitt, Mr Ross, Executive Branch Manager, Events ACT, Economic Development

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Ng, Mr Daniel, Executive Group Manager, Legislation, Policy and Programs Branch

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone, and welcome. I declare open this morning session of our second day of public hearings for the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality inquiring into the 2019-20 annual and financial reports and the ACT Budget 2021. Before we proceed, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the traditional owners, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and the continuing contribution of their culture to this city and this region.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Minister Cheyne, for appearing today in your capacity as the Minister for Business and Better Regulation, and I thank your accompanying officials from CMTEDD and the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission for attending today. For this part of the session, the committee will examine annual reports and budget outputs relating to the business and better regulation portfolio. I remind witnesses that the meetings are being recorded by

Hansard for transcription purposes, and are being webstreamed and broadcast live. The proceedings are also being held in accordance with physical distancing requirements, and room capacity limits are in force at the present time. We are all responsible for complying with COVID-safe requirements, and I ask you all to assist in this regard.

Please note the following housekeeping matters. All mobile phones are to be switched off or onto silent. Witnesses are to speak directly into the microphones and ensure that only one person speaks at a time. When witnesses come to the table, please state your name and the capacity in which you appear. Please respect the stated room limits and physical distancing requirements that are in place in this building, and please ensure that you have checked in with either the CBR app or as advised by the attendants.

I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations entailed by parliamentary privilege. I understand privilege statements have been emailed through to witnesses via their respective DLOs, and a copy of that privilege statement is the pink sheet on the table in front of you. When you first start, please confirm for the record that you understand the implications of the statement. Ms Cheyne, do you understand?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, I confirm.

Mr Campbell: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. As the committee has advised, it has decided not to have opening statements from witnesses at the commencement of the hearings, so we will now proceed to questions. I would like to start off with a couple of questions about the ChooseCBR program.

Ms Cheyne: Go right ahead.

THE CHAIR: I understand that it was based on the Northern Territory's voucher-type scheme. That was in a media release that you released last year. How did you learn about the NT scheme, and what analysis did you do about how suitable it would be for the ACT?

Ms Cheyne: First of all, the ChooseCBR scheme was an election commitment, but it was also detailed in the August 2020 economic and fiscal update. That was one of the last things that we released during the parliamentary term. Officials had done some work on it prior to the election, and prior to this term of government as a stimulus measure. My understanding is that the Northern Territory—Ms Starick will be able to speak to it in quite a bit more detail—had rolled something out in about mid-year. I believe that it was the first jurisdiction in Australia to do anything quite like it. It had been quite successful in terms of different discounts available, but Ms Starick can speak to some more of the detail behind the thinking there.

Ms Starick: I understand the implications of the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Starick: As Minister Cheyne said, we became aware of the Northern Territory

scheme. There were some other schemes that were being discussed in other jurisdictions that focused predominantly on tourism and accommodation, and the scheme in the Northern Territory appeared to be one that we, on analysis, could adopt here in the ACT within a time frame that met the needs that we had at that time.

THE CHAIR: Who was your target audience? Was it small business if it was not accommodation?

Ms Starick: Yes, it was small business. When you review the eligibility criteria, you see that there are a range of options. The scheme was designed to target industries that had felt an impact of COVID and businesses that had experienced a level of hardship within those sectors, but also small businesses where a voucher of this nature would have a benefit or an impact. There were a range of industries that were affected by COVID, including construction and mining, but obviously the nature and type of this voucher system was more applicable to small businesses.

Other eligibility that we looked at to ensure that we could focus on small businesses was the level of turnover per year—which was consistent with the Australian Tax Office definition of small business, which is under \$10 million in revenue—and also to ensure that they were businesses that were within the ACT, and with the maximum benefit that they had to have a shopfront. That shopfront did not have to be a store on a street; it could have been an outdoor recreation provider or tourism provider, but it has to be located here.

THE CHAIR: How did you arrive at the dollar amount—the \$2 million figure?

Ms Starick: This was a recommendation made to government for a figure following the trial. The trial was \$500,000 in the first instance, with 123 for administration, and then \$2 million was identified, I guess, pending the outcome of that trial.

THE CHAIR: Did you consult with the Business Chamber or restaurants and catering or those types of association?

Ms Starick: Yes, we did. We consulted with the Canberra Business Chamber, and also the CBEC, the Canberra Business Enterprise—

Ms Cheyne: Centre.

Ms Starick: —Centre, thank you. We consulted in order to understand how it would be received and what businesses might be thinking about. A couple of things that came up were around how to implement it at the point of sale. Then throughout the trial we also got feedback, as businesses were seeking to register, about what their experience was. We introduced a couple of things as a result of that, including a geospatial map. We also provided some additional information on our website in terms of frequently asked questions, in response to some of the inquiries that we were getting from businesses.

We also, partway through the trial, did a survey. The response from businesses was not significant—there was a lot happening at that time—but we did get some feedback, and certainly some themes emerged that were relatively consistent with what was

happening and what we were getting in social media and what we were getting in direct phone calls. We had a person offline to assist businesses to work through the registration, which was not onerous, but that was some assistance there. We have also, since, had discussions with CBEC and other peak bodies around how it was received.

THE CHAIR: Were cafes and restaurants included in the scheme?

Ms Starick: Yes, they were.

THE CHAIR: So how did you consult with them before and during? My understanding, from talking to a lot of owners of small cafes, is that they are not members of industry associations.

Ms Starick: No, but there are representatives in CBC, and we did talk it through with them. We also had the Northern Territory experience to go by and how that was received with restaurants and cafes there. So one of the things that we were conscious of at the time was how that point of sale could be managed, with either people having to come to the counter or people paying for their meal at their table or getting takeaway. So some of the ways that the scheme was rolled out was as a result of that feedback.

Ms Cheyne: As Ms Starick has pointed out, the scheme was informed by discussions that we had had about what the Northern Territory experience was; but it was a trial for a reason. While the Northern Territory model had been successful and looked like a useful model to borrow from, we are very aware that the ACT is a different market with perhaps different spending patterns. That is exactly why we wanted to test it and that is what we did for those three weeks—to get that feedback and to see if there were some things that emerged.

Since that time and during the trial, there was active monitoring, as Ms Starick said, of social media. People in Canberra are not afraid of telling you what they think. I engaged quite commonly and regularly online on social media on a range of different pages, but we were taking note and following up with what people came back to us about. In addition to the survey, the team has been encouraging businesses to reach out. We have also done a bit of outreach ourselves by going back to member organisations like the Canberra Business Chamber, but also standalone cafe or restaurant owners, particularly if they had something to say in the media. It was really useful for us to then follow-up with them and to get some ideas from them, too, some of which we are actively considering.

THE CHAIR: Do you have data showing you the take-up of the, you know, use of the vouchers geographically throughout Canberra and also the types of businesses?

Ms Cheyne: To clarify, Chair, do you mean the take-up from consumers or the take-up from businesses throughout Canberra?

THE CHAIR: From businesses. I think in many cases—not all—that may reflect the consumer home area. Geographically and also by the types of business?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, we have—

THE CHAIR: So there were cafes. I am not sure what category they fall into, but I know that you went to the markets at Wanniasa for the launch. What types of businesses had that take-up?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, we can talk about that in more detail on a high level. We were pleased to see pretty good representation from right across the ACT, including down south. It was quite deliberate to launch it not just in the CBD, where we expected that we would have decent take-up, but in some of our group centres and town centres in order to promote that. We understand that that business, in particular, promoted the scheme quite a lot. It certainly is a very good business, I have to say, having visited there and I highly commend them.

THE CHAIR: It is a fantastic business.

Ms Cheyne: It is a fantastic business.

THE CHAIR: Like most of the businesses in Tuggeranong.

Ms Cheyne: I absolutely agree, Chair. So we were pleased to see take-up from right across the ACT. I think I have said a few times that wherever you might be in the ACT, there is probably a business near you that is participating in the scheme. We did see that the most highly concentrated areas, I think, were Civic and Fyshwick, but we were not too shabby in other places either. Perhaps Mr Campbell can give some more detail.

Mr Campbell: I did see the privilege statement and I understand it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Campbell: We had 336 registered businesses during the program—206 of those were in North Canberra and 130 were in South Canberra.

THE CHAIR: So it is basically by the lake?

Ms Cheyne: Yes.

Mr Campbell: Yes, the lake and the Molonglo River. In terms of the industry breakdown, the largest number of businesses that we had were in the hospitality industry—182. The next was retail with 78; personal services, 36; and arts and recreation, 34; and then we had six sitting in another business category. We also saw that the spending went along those lines in terms of the number of businesses. So \$150,000 was spent in hospitality, \$111,000 in retail, \$22,000 in personal services, and \$25,000 in arts and recreation. When I say “spent”, I mean that it was spent in actual vouchers. Beyond that, there was obviously an amplified spend because of the minimum spend requirement with those vouchers.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Any further questions on the ChooseCBR program?

MS CASTLEY: Yes, I have a couple of follow-up questions. Who did you engage

with in the Northern Territory to understand their scheme, and what made you think that it would work in Canberra?

Ms Starick: We engaged with two levels of government in the Northern Territory—the Northern Territory government and the Darwin City Council—to understand what their experience was. There were a number of other local councils that were considering a myDarwin scheme, who were not dissimilar to Canberra in that they were local councils that were looking at adopting this for that localised effect.

As Minister Cheyne said, our trial was informed by what the Darwin City Council and the Northern Territory government told us, which was that it did take a little time for businesses to engage and for customers to start to use it. So we tried to extend the pre-voucher release phase for as long as we could before starting to backup onto Christmas, to run the promotion and encourage businesses to sign up. That was one of the ways that their experience influenced what we did. We also produced a pack for businesses. It was an online pack for them to be able to display a poster and FAQs. Many of those FAQs were based on the Darwin experience as well. So, while we talked with some of the peak organisations here, we had not experienced the voucher here, so we needed another source of intelligence to craft some frequently asked questions and information for merchants. So we again learned from the Northern Territory experience.

MS CASTLEY: I noted, before, that you said that it was for specific businesses; they had to fall into a certain category type. Was the Northern Territory as prescriptive as that or was it at all small businesses that you could rock up to and use your voucher?

Ms Starick: We certainly had the JobKeeper criteria, which I am not aware that Northern Territory did. One of the interesting things in rolling out the trial was understanding how to best target this investment to businesses that had been affected by COVID at that time. Also, with the compliance arrangement that we had with the ATO, we could assure ourselves that the businesses had an ABN and a bank account and were located here in the ACT, because we could double-check that information with the ATO.

MS CASTLEY: Yes, and how did you come at the \$2 million amount? How did you get that \$2 million from the trial?

Ms Cheyne: The trial was \$500,000. The commitment is for \$2 million.

MS CASTLEY: Why \$2 million? How did we get to \$2 million?

Ms Cheyne: It is an election commitment.

MS CASTLEY: Yes.

Ms Cheyne: \$2 million has a minimum multiplier effect of \$4. With the minimum spend that has been associated with the scheme, that is the case—every dollar of government spending is multiplied by four. For a \$2.50 discount, you had to spend a minimum of \$10 and for \$20 you had to spend \$80 and so on. I think a \$2 million scheme is nothing to be sneezed at.

MS CASTLEY: No. I was just wondering how we got to the \$2 million amount. I had heard that other states have done similar types of things, but businesses did not necessarily have to register; you could just turn up with a voucher and then they would accept the reimbursement. Was that considered?

Ms Cheyne: Interestingly, some of the things that have rolled out in Victoria and New South Wales have occurred after ours. I have been paying a reasonable amount of attention. In Victoria, the interesting thing is that people are using the vouchers that they applied to get from government. So there's a limited amount there and a limited amount spent—whereas the potential spend in the ACT for a person is much higher—but the business has to redeem it at a later date. So we will see if that is helpful or not. You know, that seems like an extra step to me, whereas I think we got reasonable feedback about how quickly we were able to provide the rebate to the businesses when a discount was claimed.

The Dine and Discover in New South Wales is going through a trial. It is going through a trial and, I think, a pilot and then a full rollout everywhere. That is not unusual compared to how different governments have been going about it. What is quite different about that is that JobKeeper is not part of the eligibility criteria but having an ABN is. I think that it is slightly more restrictive in terms of the range of businesses. The potential range of businesses for us is quite a bit bigger but something that New South Wales does have is the Service NSW app, so it has been integrated with that app and with that QR code. That is something that Ms Starick touched on before about the point of sale aspect and making that as easy as possible for businesses.

MS CASTLEY: One last point is that there were 336 businesses out of thousands of them. What sorts of thoughts do you have about increasing that figure? It was not the raging success we all hoped. We are all on the same side—we want to boost business—so what thoughts have you had so far as to how you will increase that amount?

Ms Cheyne: There has been a reasonable amount of feedback so far and, as you know, I have reached out to you and I am keen to have a longer conversation with you about ideas that you might have. Certainly, when we know when the scheme will roll out again—\$2 million dollars is bigger so I would be surprised if this is going to be a three-week scheme; these are all decisions for government later but I think that it will have a longer time—we can also build in a longer lead time for businesses.

There has also been plenty of media coverage about it, so I think people are much more aware of the scheme. We will be making it as easy as possible, and I think something that we can do, in engaging with some of our industry associations, is to say how to get the most out of your discount, how to attract new customers but also how to upsell to existing customers so that businesses see it as something that is a really worthwhile endeavour. Again, these are decisions for government, but 336 is not a bad starting point, and we can only grow from there. I would like to see us grow, whether it is through word of mouth or engaging with some of those associations. Perhaps it will grow as a result of having a little bit of a longer time to make sure that we are reaching out to businesses. We did try and have the longest possible lead time

to roll out the trial, but it was at the end of last year. Ministries were announced on 3 November. I think that within two weeks we announced that businesses could sign up. Businesses had about two weeks to sign up and then we had about 2½ or three weeks and then it was Christmas Eve. So we tried to give businesses the most amount of time within that space but now we have just a little bit more.

THE CHAIR: Members, to give everyone the chance to ask questions we might have to move on, and Ms Castley might have to put further questions on notice.

MS CASTLEY: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Unless Mr Davis has a supplementary, Ms Orr, do you have a question?

MS ORR: Yes. With respect to COVID compliance, I understand that Access Canberra has responsibility. I just wanted to get an update on how Canberra businesses have complied with the COVID requirements and Access Canberra's role in that compliance.

Mr Pryce: I understand the implications of the privilege statement. Access Canberra, working with ACT Policing and Health Protection Services, have a tripartite role with regard to COVID-19. It now focuses very much more on business-related compliance. I will hand over to Josh Rynehart, the Executive Branch Manager who leads this area, for more detail. We have seen throughout this pandemic strong compliance and a strong willingness of business to comply. Our role, using our engage, educate and enforce model, has really been in making sure businesses understand the public health directions. There have been many changes throughout the pandemic, so we have been helping them to understand their requirements, assisting them in how to apply them within their own business contexts and then working with them to achieve that compliance. We have seen stages—especially when step changes have occurred—when businesses have needed time to adjust and we have offered support to understand that, but overall the compliance has been very high—probably above 90 per cent, on average. Josh, do you want to go through that?

Mr Rynehart: I acknowledge and understand the privilege statement. Access Canberra has undertaken a little over 7,200 COVID compliance inspections on businesses since 20 March last year. As Mr Pryce mentioned, we take an approach which is to engage, educate and enforce. That model means that we first reach out to businesses and provide them with information about what the changes are and what the rules are, and work with them to understand what they might need to put in place in order to comply.

Then we follow up with routine inspections and routine visits, working to make sure that the businesses have been able to put those models into place and that they are able and currently complying. The third step of that is an enforcement step. We have not needed to go to that step in the ACT with businesses. Of the inspections that we do, as Mr Pryce said, we have over a 90 per cent compliance in businesses. Where we find opportunities for businesses to improve their compliance, we work with them. We might send them a letter indicating what we saw at the inspection and some advice about how they might become compliant; but, overwhelmingly, throughout the

process, businesses have willingly and actively complied with what has been asked of them.

Mr Pryce: Ms Orr, I could just add some more numbers. To put that in a quantum, as of 31 December last year, we conducted a total of 6,443 targeted inspections and engagements through the pandemic. We have sent over 200,000 direct emails to businesses and industry in support of the public health directions and working through the COVID-19 response. As Mr Rynehart advised, we have provided 221 education and/or warning letters to regulated businesses. Where we have seen continued non-compliance—or there is not compliance at the rate that we want—we have given a formal warning letter, but businesses then have achieved compliance as a result of that. Sometimes you just need to say, “We are serious about this and there are consequences if you do not comply.” Often, it is more about the time frames in which we want them to get to compliance. Overall, it has been a very positive response from business and our approach—noting that the pandemic has had a huge impact on the community—has been to support the economic recovery and the overall recovery from COVID.

THE CHAIR: With the CBR app now being made compulsory, I have heard, in my seniors capacity, that some older Canberrans are concerned about that because they do not have smart phones. What was behind that decision and how are you accommodating—

Ms Cheyne: Absolutely, I can talk about that. Thank you for the opportunity to do so. The first bit of media that came out about that on Friday morning was an article that did not include one very important part of the announcement—that was that if you do not have a smart phone, you do not need to go and buy a smart phone.

THE CHAIR: They will be pleased to hear that.

Ms Cheyne: Yes; and I would really appreciate your assistance, Chair, in getting that message out. I have had some correspondence over the weekend that I have been responding to. So there is now, on the Check In CBR app, a business profile. That went live at about mid-morning on Friday, as well. So, for anyone who does not have a smart phone when they go to a business, the business can now check in on their behalf. We will take feedback, of course, about how that works in practice, but we have tried to make that as simple as possible.

Some people ask, “What is wrong with good old pen and paper?” Certainly the directorates have been working with business about privacy obligations and things like that, but that is another thing for businesses to think about. When pen and paper was used, businesses were still having to find the time in their days to transpose them electronically to make sure that they made their way to ACT Health; whereas, when it is immediate on the app, it goes straight to ACT Health. So there are benefits there for everybody, but particularly for businesses, in alleviating that burden and just making it clear for everybody.

Something else to clarify is that there are enforcement penalties if a business does not have the app if it is defined as a restricted business. Not all businesses will need to have the app, but we have seen extraordinarily good take-up already. Again, it is a

matter of engage, educate, enforce. It is not just businesses who are subject to potential penalties; it is individuals as well, so we made it quite clear in that announcement on Friday that this is really about a shared responsibility.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. Where is the data held, and for how long?

Ms Cheyne: It is held by ACT Health for 28 days.

THE CHAIR: And then it is absolutely deleted?

Ms Cheyne: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Any supplementary question on that?

MS ORR: Yes, it is about communicating with seniors, because I have had a few write to me as well. What plans are there to help push that message out there?

Ms Cheyne: Any time that we get a response—feedback—we have been responding immediately. Please feel free to forward that on to us but if it is useful for members, I am very happy to give you the lines that we have been using so you can have that clarification.

THE CHAIR: If you could provide them to the committee, that may be useful for us.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, absolutely, we can do that.

MR DAVIS: On page 26 and 28 of the annual report, you reference the wellbeing framework. I was wondering if you would mind telling us a bit more about how that community wellbeing data is being collected and, I suppose more importantly, how it is informing decision-making.

Ms Cheyne: This is not within my portfolio.

MS ORR: Where would it go?

MR DAVIS: Could I get some advice on where you think it would go? I have no doubt the community wellbeing data and that framework are being used across government.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, they are, and they are certainly going to inform future budgets, but the wellbeing framework is with the Chief Minister under the administrative arrangements.

THE CHAIR: Mr Davis, you could potentially put that in on notice.

Ms Cheyne: If questions on notice need to be directed, that was yesterday.

THE CHAIR: Do you want to substitute a quick question, Mr Davis?

MR DAVIS: I do have one question, which is shamelessly a Tuggeranong question,

as you might expect, Minister. I am interested in having a bit of a breakdown around the ChooseCBR program. Do you have some demographic data about the businesses that took that up in terms of location? Also, I would not mind diving a bit more into how the program was promoted to see if it was evenly promoted across the community or if certain business communities were targeted.

Ms Cheyne: I did cover quite a lot of this just before you arrived, Mr Davis.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you could go through the transcript and put any further questions on notice.

MR DAVIS: In my lunch break, Minister.

MS CASTLEY: Can I have one quick follow-up question on ChooseCBR?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Cheyne: This does require us to constantly wipe down desks and change officials.

MS CASTLEY: It is just about the admin. Are we expecting to spend much more than \$123,000, going forward?

Ms Cheyne: I can't say at this stage.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you could take that on notice.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, I will. Ms Castley and I are having a chat, when our diaries align, to talk about feedback.

THE CHAIR: Nevertheless, for the committee's benefit, could you take that on notice.

Ms Cheyne: Sure. I suspect I will not have an answer—simply because these are decisions for government—but I will check.

MS CASTLEY: I have a question on the waiver of liquor licence fees. Page 41 mentions a 12-month fee waiver for the refund of liquor licence and outdoor dining permit fees to offset the reduced ability to trade. There was an entitlement to over 749, but there were only 50 processed. I am just wondering why such a low number of people are getting their refunds.

Ms Cheyne: We will go to the detail.

Mr Mangeruca: I have read and understood the privilege statement. Businesses that were able to access that waiver could either elect to essentially keep the fee banked and apply it to future fees or choose to have the money refunded to them. It was the election of the business which of the two options they would take up.

MS CASTLEY: Sorry, can you explain that? They could use it for a different waiver or at a different time?

Mr Mangeruca: These fees are paid in advance. The waiver applied from a certain time. They might have paid fees in advance. Businesses were given the opportunity to not take up the waiver. They would get the free period and those fees that remained that would otherwise have paid for that waiver period were banked. When fees are again payable, that will be applied. That residual amount will be applied to the fees, going forward. Others elected to receive the refund amount they paid for that particular period.

MS CASTLEY: Are you expecting more to come out in the future if they have decided to not take the refund now?

Mr Mangeruca: When fees are again payable, that will be on a pro rata rate. That will be decreased from the fee that is payable.

MR PARTON: I want to move to the gaming space. The parliamentary and governing agreement commits to a rigorous cross-venue self-exclusion regime. At this stage we have not had much detail on that. I wonder if there is anyone in the room who can explain how that scheme is going to work and what sorts of penalties would exist for scheme breaches?

Ms Cheyne: Gaming policy is not me, but we do have an official in the room who might be able to speak more on that.

Mr Ng: As you identified, that is one of the commitments in the parliamentary and governing agreement. There will be a compulsory development process for us to support government with some options around implementing that change. One of the things that we will have regard to is—

THE CHAIR: Mr Ng, would you please acknowledge the privilege statement.

Mr Ng: I acknowledge the privilege statement. One of the considerations and bits of research that we will do when we develop the policy on that will be about the experience in New South Wales with their self-exclusion scheme. But, as Ms Cheyne identifies, that is a matter for the Minister for Gaming to implement under the gaming legislation.

MR PARTON: Can I just move on, because sometimes we have confusion as to exactly where the delineation is between ministers on this. The parliamentary and governing agreement also talks about clubs diversifying their revenue-generating streams. Does that sit here with you guys?

Ms Cheyne: Not so much. It is me and the Minister for Gaming, but the Minister for Gaming would be taking the lead.

MR PARTON: Mr Ng, if a club does not have land available for development, what are the other possible ways it can diversify away from poker machines?

Mr Ng: The process that government has been going through is to identify that land is a significant asset that many clubs have to use to redevelop and diversify their

interests. As with any other business, there are other opportunities for them to move into other business streams. Some of the clubs out there move into other ventures—for example, the operation of commercial gyms or the leasing of property that they already own to support different development opportunities such as childcare centres and the like.

MR PARTON: All of those options involve land additional to what is required to operate the club, don't they?

Mr Ng: In some respects, yes. Clubs can maintain their premises to operate gaming machines. I should make clear that these answers are in relation to community clubs that do offer gaming machines, because there are other ones that do not.

MS ORR: Can I just clarify? This is all stuff that is in a different portfolio with a different minister?

Mr Ng: As Ms Cheyne says, I think we would be expecting the Minister for Gaming to take the lead on the policy around diversification activities.

MS ORR: We have 15 minutes left in this section and I still have at least one question to go. I would be more comfortable with these questions being taken up in the right part of the hearing.

Ms Cheyne: For the benefit of the committee, I appreciate that the delineations might look a bit confusing.

MR PARTON: We were led to believe that we could not ask these in the session the other day.

Ms Cheyne: By whom?

THE CHAIR: In JACS? Or will it be the Special Minister of State this afternoon? Who is it going to be?

MR PARTON: In theory it will be Shane.

Ms Cheyne: The Minister for Gaming takes the lead on gaming policy, just as he has on liquor licensing policy as Attorney-General. In terms of the operational aspects, that is where I am the minister. Policy development is not me.

MR PARTON: Right.

Ms Cheyne: But operational is me.

MR PARTON: We will swing on notice and allow the committee to continue.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Parton. Ms Cheyne, I have a question about Access Canberra. It is something that you probably also displayed an interest in in your previous years.

Ms Cheyne: Is it about Fix My Street?

THE CHAIR: Yes, exactly. It is about residents who feel there is no feedback loop when they make a complaint or raise an issue through Fix My Street. For many years in my time in the Assembly and yours we have been assured that there is work underway to fix that. Can you provide any further information?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, I can, and Minister Steel will be able to provide some further information as well when he appears.

THE CHAIR: Technically is it you?

Ms Cheyne: It is both of us. I will try to explain why that is. As you know, Access Canberra is the front-facing element, whether that is on the phone or people providing feedback through the page. Actually getting stuff done is most often within Minister Steel's area or with his officials and all of the people out on the ground.

We have recently had a joint meeting that both Minister Steel and I were present at, together with the chief digital officer and senior officials from both directorates, to talk through exactly this. There has been some preliminary work from TCCS's end about user experience and feeding that back. We are moving—I think that Mr Pryce can talk about this—to a new system.

Mr Pryce: It is called the Salesforce system.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, Salesforce. We are transitioning things along to that, which gives us a new opportunity to make sure that people are getting the information that they need and not just seeing something that says “completed” when what has actually happened is that it has been assigned to someone or it is not something that can be done immediately but can be done at some point.

THE CHAIR: Yes. That is a source of frustration for people.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, it absolutely is.

THE CHAIR: They get a message saying “completed”, but when they walk around the block they see it is not completed.

Ms Cheyne: Yes. That is something that we spoke quite frankly about in that meeting—even in the table that you get if you are a regular Fix My Street user. I know that you are a regular user, Ms Lawder, like me. You can see the jobs that you have logged and what is in there, some of the words that are being used to describe something. If you see “escalated”, what does that mean to the common person? All of that is under review. I hope that by the next annual reports hearings we will have a bit more to say.

THE CHAIR: So it is in the preliminary phase? There has been no budget allocated to it at this point? It is still just pottering along?

Ms Cheyne: I am not sure. In terms of what budget is needed for it, I think the

Salesforce component does have a budget aspect to it being implemented, so being tied up with that helps.

THE CHAIR: Do you know the time frame for the Salesforce implementation?

Mr Pryce: Yes, Ms Lawder. Salesforce is the underpinning system. TCCS and Access Canberra were both moving to that. TCCS is on that platform. Access Canberra was just slightly behind because of COVID impacts, but we expect to be on that system by March. When we are on the same system, that will enable greater capability because we will be operating from the same fundamental technology links. That has been budgeted through our operational budget. But Yu-Lan Chan is the executive branch manager who oversees this work.

Ms Chan: I acknowledge the privilege statement. As the minister said, we are aware of the need to make the system easier to use and also give better feedback to people who have put a report in so that they can get meaningful, accurate, timely information.

The front end is relatively simple to change. That is the Salesforce element. What is complicated is the back of house. The front face feeds into multiple different systems. It will direct the job to whichever part needs to do the job—for example, Transport Canberra and City Services. Whether it is trees, streetlights or roads, there are different systems to do it and some of those systems are very complex.

TCCS is also in a program to upgrade, basically to transform a lot of those systems. So just as we are moving onto the Salesforce platform for the front end, it is also the back end which is the issue. We have been working very closely with TCCS. We want to make sure that it makes sense to the customer, the person reporting it, in terms of the flow of information.

We are looking to make sure that when somebody logs a job on the front end, it goes seamlessly through to the right system so that the right team can get the information very quickly. We also want to make it easier for the team that has done the job to close the report off in a meaningful way so that the customer gets information on what has actually happened.

The automation of the information flow across those systems is what is complex, and we have been working on that. Once we have migrated to the Salesforce platform, it will be easier to do the refining and redesign work that needs to happen. We are very conscious that this is an area where we can improve.

THE CHAIR: Have you had much feedback on the Fix My Street front end as it is? The categories to report in changed a while ago. I have had feedback from some people that they have been unable to find what they wanted to report, so they have just written to me instead. How is that going?

Ms Cheyne: Minister Steel and I have had that experience ourselves, and that has been quite useful to demonstrate in terms of—this is my favourite buzzword—wayfinding. It should not be hard to do that. That is something on the front end—making sure that something is easy to report and people do not click 10 different things and find it is still not there.

Part of all this is a review of some of those categories. There are five on that landing page now, and some things are not immediately obvious. For example, reporting a corflute under those five categories is not quite clear. There are lots of systems throughout the world that have a similar function to Fix My Street. We can look at how other systems delineate between different reporting methods.

Ms Lawder, I appreciate that you have given feedback in the past and I am happy to pull that out. But if you or any other members of the Assembly have feedback they think we might not have considered or be considering, this is the time to let us know. We would certainly encourage that.

MS CASTLEY: What is the time frame for the rollout of Salesforce—the customer front end?

Ms Chan: It is the front-end system. The platform goes onto that. We are basically just changing from one platform to another. You will not see immediate changes at that point; we are just migrating what we have. That should be done in this half of the financial year. Following that, we will be able to do the redesign work, but that is the complex work that needs to map into multiple other systems, so it will not be an immediate fix. We are very conscious that in the redesign process we need to build that in.

MS CASTLEY: Is it something we could expect by the end of the year?

Ms Chan: We are hoping to see gradual improvements. It will probably be iterative because there will be so many different systems behind the scenes as we roll through those changes to get those designed and implemented.

Ms Cheyne: In TCCS trees is one thing and roads is another thing. We might be able to fix roads first and then trees.

MR DAVIS: I think it would be safe to say that the transition to Salesforce to better link in with TCCS is perhaps an acknowledgement that our systems have not been as robust as they could have been previously. Will Access Canberra be working to some publicly displayed KPIs around the management of that program so that the community can have confidence that their requests, complaints and feedback will be addressed and we can set a community expectation about when they might hear back or when they can expect to see jobs completed?

Ms Cheyne: It is a good question and probably something that is, in some ways, more of a matter for Minister Steel, given his responsibilities for a lot of that operational side of things.

One of the challenges that I personally find with Fix My Street is that anything can be accepted. Some people say, “I have a problem with a road. I want a new road.” A new road is subject to a budget bid through capital works. That could be referred to the policy team to consider in a future budget down the line. In terms of the KPI for that, it might just be that one person wants a road because it would suit them, rather than being the best use of government expenditure.

MR DAVIS: I could probably separate my question. There would be two sets of KPIs. No doubt there would be some KPIs for organisations like TCCS for the delivery of infrastructure, infill or whatever it may be. I am trying to get to the bottom of the Access Canberra KPIs, if there is a potential to do that.

Access Canberra cannot control whether TCCS is on top of the workload, but they can control, to a degree, the relationship that they have with their customer and whether or not customer satisfaction is improved and people feel as though they are more engaged in the process of not just making the initial recommendation but participating and being part of the ongoing conversation until there is a decision on their suggestion one way or another. I admit that I am pretty new to this place, but at the moment the simple feedback I tend to get is: “I send an email, I get an immediate email back saying it has been lodged, and—ether.” That could be just a short-term impression, but that is the impression I have gotten of the service from constituents in the short time I have been here.

Mr Pryce: We acknowledge that the feedback loop and keeping our customers updated, especially with Fix My Street, need to be improved. That is something that, as the minister has explained, is a priority where we are working closely with both the chief digital officer and TCCS.

On your questions of KPIs, Access Canberra has eight performance indicators. A number of them go directly to customer satisfaction, efficiency of service and service delivery. In my view, those accountability indicators address the points that you are making because they make sure we are performing at high degrees of customer satisfaction and service, especially with our digital offerings.

We also do customer surveys. We have been having very good feedback through surveys. I can give you more details on that. Our digital services satisfaction level for 2020 was at 88 per cent. Our digital channel usage is an area where we are improving; it is 65 per cent, up from the previous 2019 result of 57 per cent.

We are constantly monitoring the feedback loop ourselves through our complaints management team. We also get a sense of customer satisfaction, those areas where they are not happy with a service or the level of responsiveness. We use all those datasets to inform our service delivery. Yu-Lan, do you want to add more?

Ms Chan: Yes. I may give another example of some things that might not be necessarily visible to the customers. With the rainy season, leading up to summer, there was a lot of long grass everywhere. We were receiving increased reports from people asking when mowing was going to happen. We liaised with TCCS and we were able to put up the mowing schedule on our website. In that way, people could say, “I do not need to log a job. I do not need to ring up. I can just see where the information is.” So we also do those sorts of things that would not necessarily be visible to customers. That is our goal: to make it easier for people to get the information straightaway.

MR DAVIS: I respect that I only hear from one-fifth of Canberrans on a regular basis, by nature of being a member for a particular constituency. That begs the question of

whether you keep demographic data on the numbers of people per district who are contacting you and whether you delineate customer satisfaction ratings by district. It would be interesting to see if, for example, the people in Belconnen are incredibly delighted, as opposed to the people in Tuggeranong, who may be left wanting to varying degrees. I wonder if that demographic data would be useful.

THE CHAIR: Members, perhaps we could take that on notice, because we have come to the end of the time for this session. If you have that information, could you provide it to the committee?

Ms Cheyne: Sure.

THE CHAIR: We will move to the next session, which is arts.

Short suspension.

THE CHAIR: We will resume with the arts. Minister and officials, I remind you to acknowledge the privilege statement when you first speak.

MS ORR: I want to ask about the You Are Here festival. Can you run me through that festival—what it is, how to get involved, and just what you are looking at doing with that festival in COVID times.

Ms Cheyne: Ms Tyler can speak to that.

Ms Tyler: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The You Are Here festival is funded through the artsACT's program organisation funding initiative. It is an independent organisation that receives funding on, currently, a two-year basis with funding—

Ms Cheyne: Do you mean Where You Are?

MS ORR: Sorry, Where You Are. I do also like the You Are Here festival—

Ms Cheyne: It is a fantastic festival.

MS ORR: But I would like to talk about the Where You Are Festival.

Ms Cheyne: Where You Are is EventsACT, I am sorry, Ms Orr. They are on at 10.45.

MS ORR: Can I go to the Homefront grants?

Ms Cheyne: That is definitely in this section.

MS ORR: Can you run us through the funding round that was developed and how that has supported artists during COVID? How has it gone?

Ms Cheyne: Homefront was designed to provide support quickly to artists, as one of the hardest sectors hit. Under former minister Ramsay, there was a first round and then another round. The second round was detailed in the economic and fiscal update.

That allowed us to front-end this support to artists across Canberra. We had quite a strong take-up in terms of the number of applications and quite good quality. We were able to support a very wide range of artists through those two rounds. Ms Tyler can speak about that in more detail.

Ms Tyler: Yes. We had over 370 applications for the Homefront funding initiative. In the first round, which was announced in early May 2020, we had 66 artists receive funding, at a value of \$503,586. In the second round, we had a further 59 artists supported, at \$449,000. In total there was \$950,000 in funding to individual artists, with a maximum amount of \$10,000.

The funding supported artists to both maintain and develop their professional practice. We used criteria within artsACT to assess the funding. What we have heard so far from artists who have received the funding is that it really supported them to not have to worry about paying the bills during COVID when a lot of their other work was not available to them.

I heard a story just this week that an artist who had been working in retail four days a week could no longer do that job during that shutdown period. The Homefront funding allowed them to expand their professional practice and focus on that in a full-time way. As a result of that focus for that artist, in the 2020-21 period she has been in 14 group exhibitions, she has been a finalist for five significant prizes, she was second in an international art challenge and she has had over 10 write-ups in different arts publications, both nationally and internationally. We really feel that the funding has allowed the artists who received it to focus on their art practice.

MR DAVIS: Is that Homefront funding part of artsACT's \$17 million budget or was that a separate bucket of money?

Ms Tyler: There were two allocations, one in the 2019-20 financial year, of \$500,000, as an additional funding allocation for COVID-19 support. A second amount was in the August economic and fiscal update.

Ms Cheyne: Just to clarify, there are quite a few different funding rounds; Homefront is not the only thing that artsACT does. ArtsACT also has two other pretty key funding rounds that are ongoing. There is arts activity funding, which is for requests for under \$5,000. That is throughout the year. At any time an artist can reach out and say, "This is what I would like to do and what I would be using that money for." Then there is a more significant arts activity round that is held twice a year. That is the arts activity \$5,000 to \$50,000 round. That is not ongoing like the other one, but applications come through and are assessed. That next round closes on Sunday of this week.

MR DAVIS: Can artists use those funding rounds to apply directly for income or is their grant application considered based on expenses for an exhibition space, tools and whatnot? Can it be that someone needs income to produce art?

Ms Tyler: It is a mix of both of those things. A lot of activities funding applications include materials to create works, but it might be paying other artists who are involved in the activity or hiring spaces. On occasions, there are artist fees for the

artist who is applying, for them to develop their practice. It is a mix of things within the activities funding.

MR DAVIS: On the subject of employing artists, the parliamentary and governing agreement has a commitment to deliver 100 jobs for artists.

Ms Cheyne: Appendix 4 does, yes.

MR DAVIS: It is all in there. What, if any, plans do artsACT have to include that approach in their forward planning?

Ms Cheyne: That is a matter for government in terms of delivery. That is a Greens election commitment, so it is not in the main appendix that covers the Labor and Greens commitments. They are the priorities. It is something that I am very aware of. A lot of the rounds that we have been able to put out have been about supporting artists and their practice. In terms of a more long term vision, the sustainability of arts practice in the ACT is something that I am actively considering.

MR DAVIS: Are you comfortable with arts funding being used to give artists an income?

Ms Cheyne: What we have usually been seeing with these arts rounds, as Ms Tyler was saying, is that this is an income for artists but for creative practice. The answer is a qualified yes.

MR DAVIS: The annual report states under “Future direction” that artsACT will “deliver a new funding model for arts organisations, with funding anticipated to commence from 2022”. How is that new funding model being developed? And how many individual artists who are outside the key arts organisations are you intending to consult through that process?

Ms Tyler: The arts organisation funding plan has been developed over a number of years. We have had conversations with arts organisations that are currently funded and those that are not currently funded through our key arts organisation and program funded organisations. We are currently working through time frames for that organisational funding program development, noting that the diversion of resources to support people through COVID last year meant that some of the engagement activities that we had planned have not taken place.

In terms of engaging with individual artists, we hear feedback a lot from artists who have applied for funding through our conversations with arts organisations and workers within those organisations. In terms of numbers, I do not have an exact number of artists that we would be engaging with through that development. It really is about conversations with the organisations themselves—those who have not received funding previously and where the gaps in the existing funding exist.

MR DAVIS: I suppose you would only be able to answer anecdotally, but I am curious about how artsACT deals with artists you might be working with who are not, or do not feel, represented by some of the key arts organisations—artists who slip through the cracks. Is there a clear pathway for those people to engage in artsACT and

provide feedback?

Ms Tyler: Yes. A proportion of the funding that artsACT administers goes directly to the organisations, but there is a proportion that goes directly to individual artists. Organisations that might not feel they are being serviced by an arts organisation that is funded have an opportunity to apply for funding for their own practice, direct to artsACT, through the up to \$5,000 which Minister Cheyne mentioned before, which is an ongoing process throughout the year, and through our two rounds of \$5,000 to \$50,000 activities funding, which are peer assessed.

In terms of the representation opportunities for those artists in talking to artsACT, we have feedback to artists who have applied and have not been successful and to those who have been successful. We offer open information sessions for our arts activities funding rounds and we offer one-on-one sessions for artists who are wanting to apply for funding, to provide them with information about how to apply, what the assessors are looking for in the applications and the process there.

There is also an opportunity for artists who are not successful to get feedback and reapply for the same project once they have received feedback on making their application stronger. They are not always successful the second time either. It is often a very competitive field for arts activities funding, in both the up to \$5,000 and the \$5,000 to \$50,000.

The minister also has a creative council. Members of the arts community who are represented on that body, and artists who have feedback for us and for Minister Cheyne, have the opportunity to talk to members of the creative council.

Ms Cheyne: Membership of the creative council is through ministerial appointment, and members on that council are remunerated, to go to your point about paying artists. They provide invaluable advice. One of the features of the membership of the creative council is their connections right across the board. I had my very first meeting with them about two or three weeks ago. The work program that will be building up over time is a lot about using those connections and using them as a voice to do outreach that I might not be able to do easily, as one person, and for them to give that feedback.

MR DAVIS: Awesome. You mentioned one-on-one support, particularly through the grant application process. Perhaps I have a chip on my shoulder, having been an artist before I came to this place, but grant applications are such a process. Sometimes you just want to get to the art. In the last 12 months, how many people would you say that you have supported through that? I know there are only so many hours in the day, but how many artists have you provided with that one-on-one support to talk them through the grant process?

Ms Tyler: I do not have that number on hand, but I can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Yes; take that on notice.

Ms Tyler: We also provide funding to Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres for an artist toolkit program, which is a capacity building program where the staff at Ainslie and Gorman offer workshops for artists to help them develop their project ideas. They are

not grant writing workshops per se; they are a project development opportunity for individual artists. So as well as the one-on-one support that artsACT can provide, there is also that funding that is provided to Ainslie and Gorman.

Ms Cheyne: In terms of encouraging that conversation, that is pretty active encouragement. It is not a matter of saying, “Apply for the grant and then if you don’t get it we will talk to you about it.” It is: “Talk to us before you submit.” It is front-loading that process. As recently as 23 hours ago on Instagram, with the big funding round, the \$5,000 to \$50,000 round, closing soon, we actively say, “Please call us. Here’s the number. Do you have any last-minute questions?” Almost as soon as that grant program opened, we said, “We encourage you to have that chat with us now as you are developing your idea.”

MR DAVIS: I should stress that that is not a reflection on artsACT. It is just the whole-of-government grant process. Applying for a grant is an effort.

Ms Cheyne: Yes; it is another thing. I completely understand that, and it is something that I am actively looking at right across government, but also with my minister for better regulation hat on, defining regulation in the broadest possible sense—are there barriers to applying for grants and things like that? We welcome any feedback in that space from you or from artists about how we can make that smoother.

The anecdotal feedback I have is that the artsACT grants process is quite smooth. I think providing that front-end support really helps, but equally the Homefront grant process was not particularly onerous. You did not have to answer thousands and thousands of questions; you just had to demonstrate the value of what you were wanting to do.

MR DAVIS: Does the artist toolbox program that you mentioned that runs out of Ainslie and Gorman House exclusively run out of those premises or does it have the capacity to be run in other venues?

Ms Tyler: I am not 100 per cent sure. I can double-check that as well.

THE CHAIR: Please take that on notice.

Ms Tyler: I can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MR DAVIS: That would be great. To broaden the question on notice, I would be interested in whether programs like that or similar programs—or that assistance with the grant applications kind of support we have been talking about—are exclusively run in the CBD, in Ainslie, or if artsACT have been quite proactive in taking that out to the suburbs, into the districts, to engage a whole breadth of artists.

Ms Cheyne: We will find out.

Ms Tyler: In terms of the one-on-one sessions, just to elaborate, we do have those sessions in multiple locations. The ones that artsACT have run have been in

Tuggeranong, Belconnen and central.

THE CHAIR: I have a question about grants from a slightly different angle. There were COVID-19 organisational emergency support funding grants?

Ms Cheyne: Yes.

THE CHAIR: There was a *Canberra Times* article in July last year about Belconnen Arts Centre, which is a fantastic venue. I have been there a few times myself, and it has lovely programs and events. But it did get quite a significant chunk of the grant funding, and some other applicants got significantly less and nowhere near what they had applied for. What was the Belconnen Arts Centre \$550,000 intended to be used for?

Ms Tyler: The impact of COVID-19 on the Belconnen Arts Centre was unique among the arts facilities and organisations across Canberra. That was not only because of the issues that were faced by many organisations in not being able to offer programs, sell tickets to performances, have exhibitions and those kinds of things, but also because stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre was finalised during that COVID period and, as a result of the budget not taking place in the normal time frames where ongoing operational funding might have been considered, support for Belconnen Arts Centre recognised that it was taking on a new facility where ongoing operational funding had not been offered, at that point, and there was the impact of COVID in the programs that it was delivering that were again impacted by a construction period that was still happening at that first period.

THE CHAIR: To the quantum of 10 times what other organisations received in grants?

Ms Tyler: In terms of the allocation of funding to the arts organisations that received that, there were 26 organisations that were eligible for that funding. There were 10 applications received by the ACT government, with one later withdrawn. Those organisations received the amount that they requested in that funding.

THE CHAIR: The *Canberra Times* article indicates that, for example, Tuggeranong Arts Centre only got half of what they had applied for. I imagine they found it difficult to continue under those circumstances. How did the directorate determine how much to give an organisation, compared to how much they had applied for?

Ms Tyler: The individual circumstances of each organisation were very different during that period in terms of what they were able to access from federal government funding through JobKeeper and other initiatives. The allocation of funding was based on analysis of their financial position, the application which was made, and their ability to remain solvent throughout that COVID period.

THE CHAIR: Are you, in effect, saying that organisations that had been very prudent and stockpiled a bit of money were, in a way, penalised by receiving less funding?

Ms Tyler: No. There were a range of different circumstances, as I indicated. With Tuggeranong Arts Centre as an example, some of the programs that they would have

normally offered during that period were not able to proceed, and funding that would have been diverted to those programs which had not been expended already was also able to keep them afloat during that period. Different organisations, depending on how the organisation as an independent incorporated association or company limited by guarantee were managing those finances, made those decisions for themselves. We used the information that was available to us in their financial statements and our understanding of the programs that were being offered at the time or not offered.

THE CHAIR: The article in July last year indicated that Tuggeranong Arts Centre felt as though they were slapped in the face, that it was a real kick in the guts to receive such a small amount, either when compared to another centre or two or when compared to what they had applied for.

Ms Tyler: I do not have the figure in front of me as to what the actual application amount was from Tuggeranong and what they received, but we can provide that information on the difference in application amount and what was received. From my understanding of the situation, they had not requested a quantum that was significantly above what they received and did not compare to the amount that was requested from Belconnen.

MS ORR: How has the Canberra Theatre adapted to COVID and being able to put on performances? What measures were put in place to make sure we still could enjoy the theatre? And what are you looking at for this year's season?

Ms Cheyne: It is stating the obvious, but in all areas the arts were hit very hard, and Canberra Theatre Centre was no exception to that. Ms Lawder, I know you are a frequent patron of the theatre and promoter of the theatre. We had to go into that lockdown period, and then into the period of very reduced capacity. In addition to that, one of the most difficult things for all theatre venues across Australia—and the world, but particularly Australia—has been crossing borders and the touring of different companies: not being able to do that or being able to do that.

I will get to the nub of your question, but in some cases that has hobbled us. There was a situation with *Bluey* recently where they were meant to be rehearsing somewhere else but then the border closed and they were able to rehearse in Canberra, which gave us a bit of a boost. But, largely, it has been more difficult to bring tours here. The Canberra Theatre Centre has, to use an overused word, pivoted quite substantially to ensure that there is still a program.

THE CHAIR: I will give you points for using it.

Ms Cheyne: “Pivot”, “resilience”—what more can I come up with?

THE CHAIR: “Unprecedented”.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, that is right. I will try and sneak “wayfinding” in there again today. But it has pivoted in being able not only to provide opportunities for artists but to continue to employ staff and also to have a theatre program. Ms Elvin can talk in more detail.

Ms Elvin: I have read the privilege statement and will abide by it. The minister has touched on many of the points in this very complex situation. As you would appreciate, the performing arts are one of the most severely impacted sectors of the entire economy.

There are two particular reasons which lead to that situation. One is the impact of social distancing requirements. In the theatre world, we bring large groups of strangers into an enclosed environment for perhaps a few hours and ask them to sit very close together. You have virtually all the different factors that compound in a situation like COVID to create risk.

The second key factor here is that a lot of the product that we present at the Canberra Theatre Centre is touring product, and that product is dependent on productions being rehearsed, mounted and toured around Australia. That means that they are captive to all sorts of changes with border restrictions and lockdowns in different jurisdictions.

A good example of the impact of this was when we, sadly, had to postpone the Canberra season of the musical *Shrek*, which was due to be performing about now. There was huge interest in bringing that to Canberra, but unfortunately it became a victim of the five-day snap lockdown in Brisbane on its opening weekend there. It lost six nearly fully booked performances and then went from a situation where Queensland allowed 100 per cent audience capacity in performances to one where it allowed 50 per cent. The entire season then had to be reticketed. In the midst of all that, it became just too difficult to tour that product and bring it to Canberra.

We have been grappling with both of those factors: the social distancing and the impact on touring product. I pay due respect to my staff, who have been versatile, resilient and adaptable, and our audiences, who have been very patient and adaptable; and particularly acknowledge the great support that we have had through government funding to help us keep going. Through that, we have managed to get through the critical COVID period and we are now very much in the process of rebuilding our business.

We are now finding that people are very keen to see live theatre. There were some concerns early on that people might be nervous about coming back into an auditorium, but we are not finding that that is the case. For example, we put on a season of *The Wharf Revue* late last year and that broke records for us in terms of audience attendance. We have just had a very successful season of the children's show *Bluey*, in January this year. And, as the minister mentioned, we were able to pick up the rehearsals for that. It was due to rehearse in South Australia. That became subject to a snap lockdown in Adelaide. That was sad for them, but it meant for us that the company came to Canberra and rehearsed here. The Canberra economy benefited from having the company here. As you can imagine, with a reasonably large company, you have all those bed nights and meals and all the attendant expenditure that has been pumped back into the local economy. They then did a preview season before Christmas. That was very well received. And they came back to us for the season that they had already booked in January. It was very popular.

There is a show on sale at the moment that you might have seen on our banners, *Fangirls*, a wonderful new musical which I encourage everybody to attend. We are

seeing very good advance sales for that. We are learning that if we can get the product on stage, there really is a demand for it.

Digital opportunities are great. We put on a wonderful series of livestreams last year, CTC@Home, which was a great way of keeping us connected with our audiences, keeping our staff engaged and providing professional work for local artists. That was very successful.

Ms Cheyne: That was for 40 artists? Is that right?

Ms Elvin: Yes. There was huge interest in that. At the same time, our audiences are hungry for live experiences and they are very willing to come back when we can provide them. I was talking with our box office staff when we had to postpone the season of *Shrek*. I went over there and offered them some support. As you can imagine, those staff have worked through so many postponements, cancellations and reschedulings. They have reticketed some productions a number of times. I said to them, “How are you going to cope?” They said, “First of all, we can do it. We know that we are able to do this. Secondly, we are finding that audiences are very prepared to buy tickets because they know that if there is a COVID-related interruption, we will simply refund their tickets, no questions asked.” People feel very confident buying tickets in those situations. That is a rather longwinded answer to your question, Ms Orr, but if there are particular points you want to ask me about, I will be very happy to respond.

MS ORR: That was very comprehensive, thank you.

THE CHAIR: In the better infrastructure funds, I note that some arts projects were funded under the Cultural Facilities Corporation money allocated, including for the Canberra Theatre Centre. Can you outline what is being done and when it might be completed?

Ms Elvin: In terms of the better infrastructure funding for this year, which I understand is what you are asking about, Ms Lawder—

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Elvin: With this year’s funding for the Canberra Theatre Centre—which will be fully expended by June this year, because that program is a year-on-year program—we are expecting to spend the CTC allocation on carpet. As you can imagine, in a large performing arts centre with lots of throughput, we always need more carpet.

THE CHAIR: And that will be completed in this financial year?

Ms Elvin: That is true for the better infrastructure project. There are some other projects which are due to end this financial year. Those are covering other items. We did also benefit from the government’s screwdriver-ready additional funding, which was great. We were able to do a few projects under that.

Usually in theatre, it is very difficult to schedule any catch-up program because you are trying to fit it in between different seasons. One benefit of this unfortunate

situation is that we have had a lot of dark nights when we have been able to do a lot of work on the venue. That has been great—to get to things like sprucing up the dressing rooms, refurbishing toilets and so forth, without having to schedule that around different productions.

MR DAVIS: The annual report states that the government has commenced work on \$1,670,000 worth of upgrades to local arts facilities as part of that local arts facilities project, including the Ainslie, Gorman and Watson arts centres. What percentage of that was spent to improve the energy efficiency of those buildings and facilities?

Ms Tyler: That funding is for design and capital works at Ainslie, Gorman and Strathnairn art centres. I do not have that percentage available, but we can take that on notice.

MR DAVIS: That is fine. How much of arts funding more broadly was spent in the last 12 months to improve the energy efficiency standards in buildings owned and operated by artsACT?

Ms Tyler: I will have to take that on notice.

Ms Cheyne: We will take the substantive part of the question on notice, but for your interest, we replaced older style light fixtures with energy efficient LEDs at eight arts facilities as part of that screwdriver-ready work. You are no doubt aware that there have been some major upgrades of the former transport depot, including replacing the roof.

Ms Tyler: I do have an answer for the one about upgrading arts facilities. In terms of how much we spent on sustainability measures for the upgrading arts facilities, none yet. However, we are looking at heating, ventilation, and cooling upgrades and insulation at the buildings as part of that package. Whilst we have not undertaken the work yet, that is part of the investigation in the works that we are doing.

MR DAVIS: What framework does artsACT use to determine what kind of investment is considered sustainable to make your facilities climate ready? There are different schools of thought about what is energy efficient, unfortunately.

Ms Tyler: It is an interesting question because the facilities have been developed over many, many years and some of them are in heritage buildings. A facility like Gorman Art Centre has a significant number of heating, ventilation and cooling units within the building. We try to make sure we keep on top of the maintenance and upgrades to improve the operational costs of the buildings as well as energy efficiency and sustainability. We can look at that in more detail in terms of providing a response.

MR DAVIS: It would be great to get clear if artsACT have a goal to reach a certain energy efficiency standard for their facilities and, if they do not, whether they are interested in developing that sort of thing.

Ms Cheyne: Mr Davis—with your indulgence, Chair—if you have a suggestion on what might be a better framework than another, I am happy to take your advice.

THE CHAIR: I have a question about a promise during the election on Labor's plan for Tuggeranong, which includes upgrades for Tuggeranong Arts Centre. When will those upgrades be budgeted for and take place?

Ms Cheyne: That is an absolutely an election commitment and something we will be delivering over this term of government. It is a matter for budget cabinet.

THE CHAIR: What will be upgraded?

Ms Cheyne: I believe the priority area is the theatre.

THE CHAIR: So it was not allocated in this budget?

Ms Cheyne: No.

THE CHAIR: Do you think it will be in August?

Ms Cheyne: I cannot predict the future, unfortunately. I would love to tell you what the next four years will look like in detail, but these are matters for budget cabinet to determine.

THE CHAIR: You said you thought it would be the theatre. Are there other areas that may be included in an upgrade of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre?

Ms Tyler: The commitment was for upgrades to the theatre to increase capacity. So we will be working with Tuggeranong Arts Centre directly on scoping for that work before government considers options.

Ms Cheyne: In terms of timing, the two major infrastructure upgrades are Tuggeranong Arts Centre and Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres, I suspect Tuggeranong would be before Ainslie and Gorman in terms of the staging.

THE CHAIR: I would support that.

Ms Cheyne: Naturally.

MR DAVIS: Do you feel you have the facilities that meet the demand for the arts community in Tuggeranong?

Ms Tyler: I am not sure we have a formal study that would suggest that.

Ms Cheyne: I have been to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre twice in recent months: once on an occasion that you were at, Mr Davis, and Ms Lawder and I were there recently for the opening of a fantastic exhibition, on which there is a talk this Sunday. I encourage everyone to get along to that. The feedback I have had is that Tuggeranong Arts Centre is highly valued for a range of reasons, not least the mix of the theatre and exhibition spaces and what can be shown there but also the engagement it has with Lake Tuggeranong and its accessibility in being so central in the town centre. If you have further feedback I am happy to take it.

Short suspension.

THE CHAIR: We will now examine the annual reports and budget outputs relating to the economic development portfolios, specifically those falling to the Assistant Minister for Economic Development. On behalf of the committee, thank you, Minister, and your accompanying officials for attending today. We will now proceed to questions.

MS ORR: The RISE Canberra project: can you explain what it is and how it worked and assisted community groups during COVID?

Ms Arthy: I have read and understood the privilege statement. Before I hand over to Mr Triffitt to talk about RISE Canberra, the context within which this festival was conceived has been remarkable in terms of how the team switched from a very face-to-face public model of event delivery into one which really tried to keep the events sector engaged. As you can imagine, the events sector has been one of the most hardest hit sectors throughout COVID. So the team devised RISE Canberra as a way mainly to support events providers but also to keep a sense of community spirit happening within the ACT and have Canberrans with access to content other than COVID news.

Mr Triffitt: I have read and agree to the privilege statement. As Kareena has outlined, RISE Canberra was an initiative delivered in response to COVID-19. It was delivered across two key platforms—the development of a community-facing online platform, the RISE Canberra calendar, and the organisation and delivery of the Where You Are Festival.

The RISE Canberra calendar was launched on 26 May to operate for six months, being the central point of contact for event organisers to promote existing and emerging online and offline services and events delivered by local Canberra businesses, event organisers, artists and organisations within the COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions.

The Where You Are Festival ran from 10 July to 11 September. The objectives of the festival were to support the creation and innovation of unique event concepts for delivery during the COVID crisis, and it linked to a funding program for local artists and event organisers to stimulate the engagement of local artists, event suppliers and contractors during the COVID crisis and provide events that connected a self-isolating Canberra community while maintaining physical distancing.

Some 340 events were listed on the RISE Canberra Calendar during the program. The total estimated attendance across the program was 184,000 people engaging in different ways. Approximately 140,000 of those attended through the Where You Are Festival, which was made up of approximately 18,500 physical attendees at events that were ticketed and approximately 126,000 through digital engagement. The balance of the 184,000 were people attending third-party events that were promoted through the RISE Canberra Calendar.

Some 95 per cent of the attendees surveyed said the festival met or exceeded their expectations, and 20 groups or individuals received funding through the Where You

Are Festival, with a total contribution of \$240,000 distributed to event organisers, local artists and businesses.

MS CASTLEY: Can you give me some examples of the events in the Where You Are Festival?

Mr Triffitt: They included events like the Lake March, which was a dance procession held around Lake Burley Griffin. There were a range of streamed events. There was a Live in Ya Lounge hybrid concert, which was delivered with physical attendees as well as online activities.

MS CASTLEY: How long did the funding last for? I understood that there was no continued funding, so they had to close some of those things down. What was the time frame?

Mr Triffitt: The funding for the Where You Are Festival was from 10 July to 11 September.

MS CASTLEY: What were the admin costs?

Mr Triffitt: The administration costs were around \$10,000. The total budget was around \$330,000; \$80,000 was invested in a marketing campaign to promote the RISE Canberra calendar and all the activities were conducted outside the Where You Are Festival, as well as the festival itself.

MR DAVIS: I have a question about the women's safety audit. Obviously we did not have any major events in 2020 but we will in 2021. Will there be women's safety audits at the major events this year?

Mr Triffitt: There certainly are. We conduct a safety audit before every major event.

MR DAVIS: Will this audit process ensure to include women of diverse ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds? If so, what framework is in place to ensure that?

Mr Triffitt: We work with the Community Services Directorate to set the guidelines. In going through the audit process we address any issues on a case-by-case basis. But it is very much led by the Community Services Directorate.

MS CASTLEY: The performance accountability indicators show that the target regarding satisfaction with Canberra Day was low and was not met. How much money was spent on Canberra Day last year?

Mr Triffitt: Some \$60,000 is budgeted for the delivery of Canberra Day as part of the Enlighten Festival.

MS CASTLEY: Can you give me the figure of how many people attended?

Mr Triffitt: I believe the figure is around 3,000, but I might have to take that on notice and confirm.

MS CASTLEY: Some of the survey responses were that the event was pretty spread out and there was not enough advertising and the day was too long. We are obviously having some more Canberra Day events this year; how have things changed?

Mr Triffitt: Essentially, the changes to Canberra Day have come about from the extension of the Enlighten Illuminations to Canberra Day. In 2020 the strategy was to move from Commonwealth Park, where there was poor attendance in 2019, and to extend the activity from the Canberra Balloon Spectacular, which achieves excellent attendance on the Canberra Day public holiday, through the Enlighten precinct throughout the day and then into the Enlighten illuminations that evening.

The events that occur in the morning and in the evening on Canberra Day have been very successful, but the activity during the day has proven not to be very successful in terms of keeping people within the precinct for that period time. The level of activity, and obviously, the size and scale of that precinct are issues.

This year we will be augmenting the Canberra Balloon Spectacular to have a special Breakfast at Balloons event which will involve Skywhale and Skywhalepapa. Then throughout the day we are looking to engage with local businesses and attractions to provide activity for Canberrans. But the main focus will be on the activities in the morning around the Breakfast at Balloons and in the evening with Enlighten illuminations.

MS CASTLEY: \$60,000 is a lot for 3,000 people. Is that a good use of money?

Ms Cheyne: In terms of the outcome for the last Canberra Day, we have useful feedback. We would like to see a bit better bang for our buck, but it was also an unusual Canberra Day and Canberra long weekend. I recall on the Sunday night it had rained quite significantly. I was at Symphony in the Park and it bucketed down. So that may have affected some things the next day. We are taking that feedback on board and making improvements.

One area where we have taken the feedback on board and made a change is that the Enlighten illuminations used to end on the Sunday night and we would still have Canberra Day on the Monday but there would be no illuminations that night. Now there are. I think that makes sense for a whole range of reasons.

MS CASTLEY: The providers for these festivals—the sound and lighting and all of that stuff—are we going to Canberra businesses for those or are we heading out to Sydney and getting the bigger guys to come in? What is the priority there?

Mr Triffitt: Definitely the priority is sourcing all the equipment and activity through local businesses. Probably the one exception is Enlighten illuminations and the projections, where we need to have a national contractor that has that level of skill and expertise for that type of event. But, in relation to the engagement of artists and contractors with the community events, it is a high priority to ensure that they are local businesses.

MS CASTLEY: Is the budget still \$60,000 for this year?

Mr Triffitt: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I want to ask about the movie that was shot in January in the city. How quickly did we know about this, and did we receive payment for closing down some of the city area? How did it all work?

Ms Priest: I have read and understand the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Was it a Liam Neeson movie?

Ms Priest: Yes, *Blacklight*. Production of this major international film, *Blacklight*, took place in Canberra from 14 to 19 January. The film had an estimated production budget of US\$34.7 million. We were lucky for this production to set its eyes on Canberra; it was a product of Victoria's misfortune in terms of their lockdown and them needing to look further afield for where they may be able to shoot that film.

What occurred then was a very good process that the production company found excellent in terms of dealing with one layer of government and the logistical ease of working through our agency who worked across other parts of government—Access Canberra, Transport Canberra and City Services—to ensure that all the licensing and regulatory requirements were being processed, their questions addressed and the permits provided. The production brought over \$2 million in revenue to the ACT economy, with around 100 local jobs, 30-odd of which were directly related to the screen and upskilling of our screen industry participants. So it was a very good outcome.

Regarding the liaison that went on with the local community, everybody was very happy with how that went. In fact, we had some avid supporters in the areas where the streets were shut down, in terms of residents being very, very supportive and keen to see what was going on. There was minimal disruption throughout the production. It went very smoothly and the production company is very much in further conversation with the territory, through Screen Canberra, about what else might be able to come to this city. In addition to the economic benefit brought by the film production itself through the spend that occurred here, there were benefits through the upskilling of our local screen sector as part of that.

THE CHAIR: No direct payment to the ACT government?

Ms Priest: No direct payment. Other jurisdictions at times pay for films to come, but in this particular instance, because of the circumstances and the immediacy of their need to find somewhere else to film and the ACTs ability to facilitate that quite readily, there was no payment from the government.

THE CHAIR: There must have been some cost to the taxpayer, with road closures and having to deal with that infrastructure adjustment for that period. Does the ACT government bear the cost for that?

Ms Cheyne: Essentially a working group was convened. You are right, Ms Lawder: it was a decent exercise in terms of who needed to be involved from TCCS and Access Canberra, and the team in Economic Development essentially doing a walkthrough

with the production team but also getting a good understanding about any impact on residents and businesses and how to make sure that it all flowed smoothly. In terms of cost I will ask Mr Hassett to answer.

Mr Hassett: I have read the privilege statement and agree with it. There were fees the production company met in relation to permitting for temporary traffic management plans. But also they required quite detailed logistics around the city—the removal of some bollards and street signs and a street light. They met the costs of all of those things. In terms of the across-government effort, the public service was involved and there was a cost to that, but there was a really strong return with the production happening here.

Ms Cheyne: I want to take this opportunity to publicly commend the entire team and the cross-government working relationship here. The really strong feedback we have from the production company is how easy we were to do business with. The ACT establishing its reputation as a filming location is something that, as minister, I am particularly interested in exploring, as well as some of those things Ms Priest was talking about more broadly for our creative industries. I am sure Mr Davis is interested as well, in terms of jobs and sustainability right across the ACT. Not only is it attractive to do business here but we have the workforce with the skills to be able to do it all. The more things that come here, the more we can build up that workforce capability and capacity. I would not say it was the most straightforward exercise, but everyone working together with this shared goal created some really good outcomes.

Mr Hassett: It was certainly a learning exercise, and there is follow-up activity happening with the production company today actually. There is a feedback session with the ACT government officials that were involved and the production company to talk about what we have learned and what worked well and what we can change to bring other productions to the town.

It was a really technical shoot as well, with a car chase, One of the elements was that it was using state-of-the-art technology. The whole shoot was developed in CGI, so we saw a computer-generated version of the shoot before it actually came. The production knew exactly where everything had to be for every frame of that shoot, so it was the best of the best that came to Canberra for that particular car chase scene.

THE CHAIR: Did you receive any complaints or concerns from residents or business owners?

Ms Cheyne: The main filming was between 14 and 19 January, but the production company came to Canberra at the start of December to do some plate shots. I do not really understand what that is, but someone will be able to detail that. That required some shutting down of a road near Glebe Park on a weekend. We had some feedback about that and it was really helpful to get that then and to work with residents of all of the different apartment blocks on how we could make sure that access points to their complexes were not impacted or that the impact was minimised.

I personally had a phone call. I reached out to a chair of an executive committee of a body corporate to talk through some of the aspects. But Glen and Jenny and their team helped set up that working group to go through all of the issues. I do not believe there

was any feedback from residents during the actual shoot.

Mr Hassett: It was all positive.

Ms Cheyne: So a good outcome ultimately.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for your appearance today.

Hearing suspended from 11.08 to 11.30 am.

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

Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development

Priest, Ms Jenny, Executive Branch Manager, Business and Innovation, Economic Development

Kobus, Mr Jonathan, Executive Branch Manager, VisitCanberra, Economic Development

Elkins, Mr Matthew, Acting Executive Branch Manager, Venues Canberra, Property and Venues, Commercial Services and Infrastructure Group

Triffitt, Mr Ross, Executive Branch Manager, Events ACT, Economic Development

Bailey, Mr Daniel, Executive Group Manager, Property and Venues, Commercial Services and Infrastructure Group

THE CHAIR: For this part of the session, the committee is examining the annual reports and budget outputs relating to the economic development portfolio. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Minister Barr, for appearing today in your capacity as the Minister for Economic Development, and also thank the accompanying officials from CMTEDD for attending. Before you speak, could you confirm for the record, out loud, that you understand the implications of the privilege statement.

MS ORR: Enlighten Festival—that goes in here?

Mr Barr: It is more tourism, not this section.

THE CHAIR: Output 3.1.

MS ORR: Thank you. I will just ask until we find an area that we can pick up. Venues?

Mr Barr: Yes.

MS ORR: How have ACT-owned venues managed to attract other types of events or attractions so that they can keep operating throughout COVID?

Mr Elkins: I understand the privilege statement. Venues Canberra has been busy from November 2019—probably not the busy we expected when we were sitting in November 2019. We went through a period where we were able to support the community with equestrian relocations at EPIC. Through good negotiation and through community, and also working closely with ESA, we were able to set that up and to operate that effectively. Over that period we were also running Summernats.

Across the period, as we went into COVID-19 and a period of shutdown for the venues, one thing that became clear to us was that we needed to be able to reach back

into government and provide support. And in a very short period of time—I think it was over a 24-hour period—we were able to set EPIC up as a COVID testing centre. Still, to this day, I think, we are averaging around 250 people a day. We have had some peaks of up to 700 people a day through that testing centre, which has been challenging but a really positive thing we have provided through the use of that space. We also had some commercial opportunities in difficult times. We were able to provide parking around some of our venues for rental car services that had more stock of cars than they had ever had sitting in a lot before. We were able to do that both at GIO Stadium and at EPIC.

We worked really closely over a period of time with the Office of the Chief Health Officer and with Health to make sure that we were also building to understand what the new norm would look like. We worked very closely with Health and we were one of the first areas in the events sphere to start developing our COVID-safe plans. Those COVID-safe plans allowed us to deliver events and probably led to getting events happening in the ACT. This was from our smaller venues. At Albert Hall we had a citizenship ceremony in, I think, June. Then we progressed through to delivering the first rugby league matches and rugby union matches in early July. That was really our ability to work closely both with Health and across the wider government, understand the needs, be nimble, respond to the needs of the NRL and Super Rugby teams and get football back—but, more importantly, get Canberrans back to sport and, also more importantly, get our contractors back working at the stadium.

Over that period, we were also developing and working with Cricket Australia. That time we spent considering what our COVID-safe plans would look like for Manuka Oval and we were able to negotiate two international matches for delivery at Manuka Oval: Australia versus India in a men's ODI and Australia versus India in a men's T20.

MS ORR: What does ODI stand for, for those of us—

Mr Barr: One-day international.

Mr Elkins: Then over the period we were able to continue to work with Cricket Australia and the Big Bash League to deliver what would be 13 Big Bash matches at the venue. Thirteen Big Bash matches, just for context, is what a double season would look like normally in the Big Bash. It was an iterative process where we kept going back and working with, and having a good relationship with, Cricket Australia and the BBL to make sure that we could keep providing support and keep providing opportunities for the ACT to host these matches, which culminated in two finals matches and stretched the period from December to early February.

MS ORR: What were the attendance figures for those matches like?

Mr Elkins: We were at reduced capacity. We started at 50 and got up to 65 per cent. We were sitting around 85 to 90 per cent for most matches; some of them tapered off a bit. But for the period of time they showed the really good intent of Canberrans to support sport and also to support sport at Manuka Oval.

MS ORR: Most of those attendees were local, then?

Mr Elkins: They were largely local. That was not through a want of people attending from interstate but, due to the nature of COVID-19 hotspots, we did have a limited capability to have interstate visitors.

MS ORR: Have these extra matches, with the local attendance being quite high even through COVID restrictions, made a good case for the future ability to support these types of things?

Mr Elkins: I think over a long period of time Manuka and GIO Stadium have shown great capacity to host major events. The developments we have done across a period of time have supported both the hosting and the experience of patrons. We have put new roofs on and we have put new infrastructure around the venues—a new screen at GIO Stadium. They have also shown to the hirers a great experience for the hirer, the user. The new media centre at Manuka Oval also gave a great experience.

MR DAVIS: I think it is fair to say that in the context of COVID, local community sports has, a lot of times, filled the gap when major sports have not been able to play or players have not been able to travel here. In the 2019-20 territory budget, the government committed to waiving hire fees for ACT sports grounds for six months through to the end of March 2021. Would the government consider removing sports ground hire fees for volunteer-run organisations in the future?

Mr Barr: That is not a question for me, as it is not in this output class; that is sport and recreation. We just look after the elite areas. So that is a question for Minister Berry when she appears. The distinction here is that my responsibilities are the major venues—Manuka Oval, GIO Stadium—and the commercial contracts associated with the elite sport that is played there. Community sport sits with Minister Berry, as Minister for Sport and Recreation.

MR DAVIS: I note on page 63 of the annual report a reference to the Mature Workers Grants Program. Would that fall under your—

Mr Barr: That is not in venues. I think that will be the skills area with Minister Steel.

MR DAVIS: Does the UNSW development fall under your—

Mr Barr: That is definitely us, yes.

MR DAVIS: Noting the impacts of COVID-19 on the higher education sector, including UNSW, does the ACT government intend that the UNSW development will be delayed?

Mr Barr: The ACT government does not intend it, but obviously we are cognisant of the issues that the higher education sector is facing.

MR DAVIS: Are you planning around an expectation that it may be delayed?

Mr Barr: We have flexibility in terms of the milestones within our agreement with UNSW to allow for a longer period, noting their financial pressures. They have,

however, commenced their community engagement on the campus master plan, and I have spoken with the vice-chancellor, who has reiterated the university's commitment to the project.

THE CHAIR: The MOU that was signed in 2017—you have indicated there is flexibility time-wise in that agreement. Is there a set period in which it must be executed?

Mr Barr: There are certain milestones but they are subject to further detailed negotiation as we get into the next phases. We outlined a broad plan. At this point they are meeting the time frames. But the government's financial contributions are tied to milestone outcomes, so if they are delayed then so too are the government's contributions towards the new campus.

THE CHAIR: Are you able to share what the upcoming milestone date might be?

Mr Barr: Yes. They are currently in community consultation on the draft master plan for the campus. That is obviously a pretty significant milestone, completing that. Clearly, this is also on designated land: it sits within the parliamentary triangle. The National Capital Authority is the planning approval body, so engagement with them is another piece of work that the university needs to undertake.

THE CHAIR: When do you expect that community consultation may be completed?

Mr Barr: It is underway now and will run until 1 March, so the next week or so.

THE CHAIR: It is imminent.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MS CASTLEY: In the highlights section on page 80 of the report there is a dot point that says you undertook \$12.8 million in planned maintenance services on properties across the government portfolio and \$9.3 million went towards building upgrades in government, leisure and community facilities. There was also a \$2.4 million upgrade to the Manuka pool. In the future directions section it refers only to Stromlo Leisure Centre. I am wondering about the Gungahlin pool and—

Mr Barr: Again, that is the wrong output class. This is Minister Berry's area; this is not my area of responsibility.

MS CASTLEY: As a major venue?

Mr Barr: Gungahlin Leisure Centre is not a major venue.

MS CASTLEY: How do you classify a major venue?

Mr Barr: GIO Stadium, Manuka Oval, Exhibition Park, the Arboretum, Stromlo Forest Park—it has to be at that territory-wide scale, not a regional facility. That is in terms of my ministerial responsibilities, as distinct from the directorate's responsibilities. So your question is perfectly legitimate; I am just the wrong minister

to ask it to. Minister Berry would be the one to ask that question.

MS CASTLEY: Have you been briefed on the Gungahlin pool?

Mr Barr: I have had the same level of briefing as cabinet ministers and what I have seen in the media but, no, I have not had a specific briefing. Minister Berry has responsibility for that particular asset.

MS CASTLEY: A major venue, then, would be supporting high-performance athletes?

Mr Barr: Yes.

MS CASTLEY: Do you argue that the 200 squad swimmers at Gungahlin pool that are now disaffected—

Mr Barr: Again, that is for Minister Berry.

THE CHAIR: I might ask about elite sporting teams.

Mr Barr: Yes, that is my area, if they play at our venues.

THE CHAIR: On page 55 of the annual report, in relation to ongoing performance sponsorship support for elite sporting teams, what budget was allocated for this specific item in 2019-20 and how much was actually spent, budget versus actual?

Mr Barr: You are asking specifically around the Raiders, Brumbies and Giants?

THE CHAIR: Yes, the elite sporting teams.

Mr Barr: Just those ones, or do you want to include the Capitals and others? As I said, the distinction is that when we have a commercial arrangement for an elite sporting team that plays at one of the venues, we roll that together under my responsibility. Where they are not playing at Manuka Oval or Canberra Stadium, the responsibilities sit with Minister Berry. So—

THE CHAIR: The point I am referring to in the annual report is where it says “Support for Canberra’s elite sporting teams, including the UC Capitals”. Can you outline what was included in that support? It is on page 55.

Mr Barr: In relation to UC Capitals, that is Minister Berry. We have three performance agreements that are in my responsibility. They relate to the Raiders, Brumbies and Giants, because they play at either GIO Stadium or Manuka Oval and the commercial relationship is both venue hire and sponsorship from the territory’s perspective. So for simplicity, in terms of dealing with those sporting teams, rather than having two different areas of government and two different ministers we have one, and they deal with me.

The substantive issue that has been different in the COVID year is that the Giants did not play games at Manuka Oval, so they were not paid the match fee for playing at

Manuka Oval. That is really the only substantive difference. The Raiders and the Brumbies continued to play at Canberra Stadium, at least through most of the season, although of course it was disrupted. The Raiders had to play, I think, their first six rounds away from home, but they did come back to Canberra Stadium, so those arrangements remained as per our performance agreements.

THE CHAIR: So actual expenditure was less than was budgeted?

Mr Barr: It was less than was budgeted.

THE CHAIR: Because of no Canberra games for the Giants?

Mr Barr: Yes.

THE CHAIR: How much has been allocated for those sporting teams, sponsorship and venue—those three—in the 2020-21 budget?

Mr Barr: It would be the continuation of the contracted arrangement for season 2020-21. The Giants agreement has two parts: their match fee component and then our performance sponsorship arrangement. So, should their games proceed at Manuka this year, they would receive the payments for those matches. There is of course a venue hire arrangement and then revenue sharing on certain things as part of the commercial arrangements, but the incentive structure effectively incentivises the Giants, the AFL and the ACT government to maximise attendance, which leads to the strongest financial return for all parties.

But we still remain in a situation where we are effectively subsidising elite sport playing in Canberra. That has been the case in the history of elite sport in Canberra. All sporting teams are subsidised. That effectively, depending on how you wish to account for it, is a per ticket subsidy for spectators, so they pay \$10, \$20, \$30 or \$40 less than the true cost of organising the match, based on a pre-COVID inflated sporting market.

If I could make one observation about COVID—Matthew touched on this in the context of all those Big Bash games; we did not have to pay for them. The less greedy elite sport is, the more sport we can have in Canberra. But there obviously is a business model that underpins elite sport, which is broadcasting rights and getting venue fees and the like waived or match fees paid. That is the business model that has been shopped around the states and territories in an ever-increasing bidding war for content.

If I could point to one pleasing outcome out of COVID, it would be that that bidding war is done and the amount of money in elite sport has shrunk significantly because of no attendance, so not much crowd revenue. Government is not churning millions of dollars into a bidding war for events, and the sports themselves have significantly cut back their expenditure. So I would hope that that model will remain into the future, because that will be better for Canberra because we will not be in a bidding war with the New South Wales and Victorian governments for elite sport, a bidding war we can never win.

THE CHAIR: It is certainly better for the sport-loving public if that is the case.

Mr Barr: It certainly is, yes. And it has proved that you can stage all of these matches without having to be heavily publicly subsidised. Now the sports are not making as much money, and salaries for elite athletes are less. They have all taken pay cuts. But it is a more sustainable economic model for the sports and for the community and for governments.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned that the per consumer ticket price might be \$10, \$20, \$30 or \$40 subsidised. But for some people it still feels quite expensive to attend some of those games. Why is it so expensive?

Mr Barr: It is the sport sector price and they set a yield curve. I mean—

THE CHAIR: Especially for families.

Mr Barr: Yes, I know. But what has happened when they have set the price too high is that attendances have dropped and so have their revenues. I note and I credit the Brumbies as a good example here. They recognised that they had priced their fans out of the market and they dropped their prices and started to get more people attending. But this is the revenue trade-off for the sports.

I understand. If I were in their position, I would be seeking to maximise revenue, of course, because the more money you have, the better players you can buy; that is the economics of sport. That is how it works. It is no longer local tribalism; it is an elite labour market. But the reality of that labour market is that it has crashed and elite sportspeople have taken a big pay cut because there is not the money in sport that there used to be. That has been a COVID impact.

THE CHAIR: With the parking at these venues, for example in Bruce, who collects the parking revenue and keeps it?

Mr Barr: We do, but we also have to pay a licence fee to the commonwealth for the land. The commonwealth owns a lot of that land out there and we pay a rental fee even though we maintain the assets for them, particularly the Canberra Stadium. The commonwealth upped the rental fee and so we had to recoup that. That obviously comes from users of the stadium, be they the hirers or those who are parking there.

THE CHAIR: And the bus services? The free—

Mr Barr: We pay for that. We have done that and made them free in order to encourage more people to utilise public transport. But we do that in partnership with the event organisers. They recognise, again, that the cheaper and easier it is to get people in and out of the stadium, the bigger crowds they are going to get.

THE CHAIR: Are they ACTION buses or Queanbeyan buses?

Mr Barr: It will depend on the contractual arrangements for specialised services and whether there are route services that service the precinct. That tends to happen with Manuka a bit more than Canberra Stadium, but I have seen a mixture. It will depend

year to year on who wins the bid to provide the bus services at the lowest cost.

THE CHAIR: I could make the cheeky comment there that you do not seem to have trouble getting weekend bus drivers for the sports, as opposed to other weekends.

Mr Barr: Not at all. There is a contract payment. That is how it works.

MS ORR: I have a question about airline attraction.

Mr Barr: This is coming up in tourism.

MS ORR: Okay. It turns out I am far more passionate about tourism than this output.

MR DAVIS: You noted before that you have responsibility for Stromlo Forest Park. Has the government considered developing that park into a multi-sports facility?

Mr Barr: Yes. We have a master plan for the park that has been through a couple of iterations. That includes a range of sporting facilities. The master and the broad planning responsibilities sit with me but the delivery of individual projects within the park can go to portfolio ministers if it relates to them. For example, Minister Berry, through sport and recreation, has responsibility for swimming pools. We identified the site and said, “Yes, we will have the Stromlo pool within Stromlo Forest Park,” and it was then up to Minister Berry’s directorate to deliver the project. That is an example of how it works.

MR DAVIS: Is that master plan publicly accessible?

Mr Barr: It certainly is. It is on the Stromlo Forest Park website.

MR DAVIS: I knew that; I was just testing you.

Mr Barr: The iterations here go back to the last decade. This has been a process of continual engagement with the various stakeholders who utilise the park—cycling, running, equestrian, and aquatic now. There has been more than a decade of engagement.

We have recently invested in new mountain bike trails. That is another example. The master plan allows for a range of small-scale retail and hospitality activity which, if you go there on the weekend, you will see is very heavily utilised. Down the track is on-site accommodation. One of the projects that I would love to see in the fullness of time is a gondola from the bottom to the top of the mountain. But we will be looking to commercial partners to achieve that. None of this is new. It has been talked about extensively over the last 10 years and we have just been progressively adding to the facilities in the park.

THE CHAIR: I am quite keen on the idea of a gondola, but does it mean that ANU have pretty much given up on their astronomy there?

Mr Barr: No, they have their activities at the top. We talk to them, too, about complementary matters. The location of their facilities is a little bit further around

from the prime mountain biking tracks.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I have seen that, and I am sure you have, too, in other places overseas. You go up with your bike and—

Mr Barr: Yes, and ride back down.

THE CHAIR: Very interesting.

Mr Barr: You come down a bit faster than you go up.

MS CASTLEY: Why is Manuka pool noted as one of your special venues but Gungahlin pool is not? What is the difference?

Mr Barr: It is not. It has a heritage overlay, of course, but all of the pools sit with Minister Berry's area of this directorate. I appreciate your interest in Gungahlin pool—

MS CASTLEY: Yes, I am very interested.

Mr Barr: and you will get the opportunity to ask the questions of Minister Berry when she appears.

MS CASTLEY: I am new—

Mr Barr: Yes, exactly.

MS CASTLEY: and you have been here for such a long time.

Mr Barr: I have, yes.

MS CASTLEY: I am keen to get as much information as I can.

Mr Barr: Which is all good.

MS CASTLEY: What about the Arboretum? Is now the time to ask about the Arboretum?

Mr Barr: Yes, you can ask a question about the Arboretum.

MS CASTLEY: Is there any demand to build a hotel?

Mr Barr: Not at this time. We had a market-sounding process and, in the middle of COVID, unsurprisingly, there was no interest in making an investment at that point. But we will approach the market again, in a post-COVID recovery phase. The National Capital Authority are the approval agency and they have set some very strict parameters. I do not think "hotel" is the best description of what would go there. Think eco retreat, resort-type. It will not be a 10-storey building with 200 rooms in it. It would be a low-scale, small, boutique facility that is consistent with the types of built form at the Arboretum. You have seen the visitors centre and the Margaret

Whitlam pavilion. That sort of scale is what we are talking about.

MR DAVIS: If there was in fact now, or there becomes in the future, market appetite for such a facility and the government has not launched into its market soundings, could the—

Mr Barr: We have done the market soundings.

MR DAVIS: Revisiting.

Mr Barr: Pre COVID, there was interest, but there just was not a bidder in the middle of COVID. But when we put it back out to the market, I would expect there will be interest.

MR DAVIS: If there was interest prior to it being put back out to the market, could an interested player in the market use the government's unsolicited bid process to make their intentions clear?

Mr Barr: I would not think so because we have put in place a framework for a land release in accordance with some pretty strict planning requirements from the NCA. An unsolicited proposal in that context would presumably be looking to do something that was outside the pretty strict parameters that have been set, so I would not be entertaining that—partly because it is not my position to overrule the NCA's planning requirements. I cannot do that; nor would I seek to.

I think we are pretty clear on what we want, and there is room within an expression of interest process for a degree of innovation. But I do not want someone coming back to me and saying they want to build the World Trade Centre—90-storey towers—on the Arboretum. We are not interested. It has to be small, low-scale, boutique, and fitting for the setting. We have set some very strict parameters in that regard, so I am not going to entertain unsolicited proposals that would vary from that.

MS CASTLEY: How much did it cost to do the market research in the first place?

Mr Barr: Very little, but I will take that on notice. It really is just an engagement. We put something out and we seek feedback from the market.

MS CASTLEY: Will the same process occur again post COVID and do you know when that will happen?

Mr Barr: Not quite the same process because we have some of the information that we need, so it would be a more specific expression of interest process that would follow.

MS CASTLEY: Will you be targeting ACT businesses for that, so that we stimulate—

Mr Barr: Not limited to; it would be an international opportunity. Most hotel chains now are global, so we do not rule them out. Canberra's accommodation market is missing most of the large international players. We have recently had a Marriott group

hotel open up in partnership with a local developer. That is the Midnight Hotel on Northbourne Avenue. We do not have a significant presence at all from the Hilton group. We have only one Hyatt. There is a pretty reasonable representation across the Accor brands.

Principally, Canberra's accommodation market is local. The gap for us is that we miss out on all of the international marketing, loyalty memberships and programs that come with the major hotel chains. Our emphasis in attraction has been to try and get some of those bigger players in. It is very difficult to run an independent hotel. You lack the marketing and promotion power that the majors have.

MS CASTLEY: Even at a major place like the Arboretum?

Mr Barr: Yes.

MS CASTLEY: Isn't it fair to say that people would come to the Arboretum—

Mr Barr: It certainly has the capacity as a destination venue. I am not seeking to exclude it; what we want is the best possible hotel operator. That can be local, it can be a nationally based firm, it can be an Asia-Pacific firm or it can be a global one.

What normally happens, though, is that the property ownership is distinct from the hotel management arrangements. There are a lot of circumstances where a property owner contracts in a particular hotel operator to run their hotel under a particular brand. That will often be a commercial decision, but we can seek to guide that in terms of what we are looking for to fill a gap in our accommodation market.

Our problem is that we have a market that is very much geared to providing mid-range accommodation at the prevailing government travel allowance rate. What we do not have is enough at the bespoke, boutique or higher end, and that is a gap that we are looking to fill.

MS CASTLEY: What I am hearing is that you will be able to put measures in place to make sure that ACT people are employed and contracted to work in this facility. It won't just be—

Mr Barr: Of course, yes. The staff would be locally sourced. That would be one of the rationales for having the accommodation, but it may be that it is managed by a national or international hotel brand. Most of our hotels have local ownership but some are managed under some form of hotel arrangement. The big three are Accor, Marriott and IHG. IHG have Crowne Plaza amongst their assets, as well as Holiday Inn—that part of the market.

We have Hyatt. The Doma Group run Little National. They are a smaller brand; then there is Hotel Realm, that you might be familiar with, in Barton. There are a variety of players in our market. We do not have some of the big brands, and that is an identified gap in our tourism offering.

THE CHAIR: I would like to go back to elite sporting performance. It says in the annual report that 137 athletes were provided with performance service support in 2019-20.

Mr Barr: Sport and rec. Minister Berry will take that question.

THE CHAIR: Fair enough. Obviously, we are all very confused about what is in and what is out.

Mr Barr: The simple thing is that most of sport and rec is with Minister Berry. The only things that sit with me are where elite teams play at those two venues. That is my involvement in sport because we have venue contract arrangements and tourism arrangements. It made sense that they deal with one area of government.

THE CHAIR: And Invest Canberra?

Mr Barr: Yes, that is us. That body under that title does not exist anymore but it is within the investment area of Economic Development.

THE CHAIR: In the annual report, on page 49, it said there was a target of 30 responses. That was the target but 22 were achieved. Can you outline some of the reasons why that target was not achieved?

Mr Barr: COVID would have been a pretty big factor, I think you will find.

THE CHAIR: Was it on track until COVID?

Mr Barr: By the sound of those figures, yes. It might have been on track to exceed, then COVID hit.

THE CHAIR: Did you say that Invest Canberra no longer—

Mr Barr: Under that title.

THE CHAIR: What is it now?

Ms Arthy: I have read the privilege statement. Invest Canberra was a name given to a unit that existed a few years ago and it is now included in a team called Business Innovation, which covers a whole range of areas, including all of the work with universities, priority investment, and the work under Minister Cheyne's portfolios with business. It is now incorporated into our investment function within that. We have a program within that which is looking at investment. We are looking to update the titles within the accountability indicators for the next budget.

THE CHAIR: So output 3.1, innovation, industry and investment—

Mr Barr: That is the group we are talking about here.

THE CHAIR: In the annual report, talking about the 2021 priorities, it says, "Creating, leading and fostering an innovative and responsive approach." Can you talk about how you have created an innovative approach and what is new and different this year, in being innovative, compared to previous years?

Mr Barr: Obviously, COVID has impacted on the way business is undertaken and has necessitated significant innovation in the operation of business, government and the community sector. I would certainly point to the use of technology being a major shift, and that presents an economic opportunity as well, particularly for a city like Canberra, that has tremendous expertise in these areas. That is one practical example.

We spoke yesterday with the Commissioner for International Engagement on how we have had to adapt our international engagement. You touched on a question yesterday around the Canberra Economic Recovery Advisory Group. One of the tasks that we are setting that group over the remainder of this fiscal year is to undertake some further quite targeted research work with us in order to get the policy settings right, particularly in relation to the future jobs fund and our priority investment program, to look at what the emerging opportunities will be for ACT government strategic investment partnerships.

To put it in the simplest terms, we are looking to leverage the \$30 million that we will provide over this parliamentary term with co-investment from other partners, be they universities, private sector or federal government, so that we can generate more than \$30 million of economic activity and employment creation through the use of our investment funds. Clearly, a KPI for the program will be how much co-investment we can leverage, and the priority investment program to date has had that particular focus.

THE CHAIR: In some of that innovation space, has it been locally generated intellectual property that the ACT government has assisted with, and what kind of benefit, financial or otherwise, do we get through that?

Ms Arthy: The short answer is yes. It is usually generated through CBR Innovation Network, which the ACT government provides funding for. It is a partnership with all of the universities and some leading companies as well. There are various programs run through CBRIN. A lot of the focus is on start-ups. It is helping people to take a really good idea, then helping them to turn that idea into a business opportunity.

They run a range of programs which might involve on-site assistance, where they can provide office space to guide and mentor businesses. They can take some businesses all the way through to what is called an accelerated program and into an incubator, which is there to really target those companies that have the potential to upscale. So that is through our investment.

We also provide investment through our investment program that helps universities to be able to create new IP and to be able to upscale as well. While we do not have a direct impact, through our support and our approach, by partnering with, typically, research institutions and universities, we are able to support the generation of IP.

THE CHAIR: So the ACT government does not take ownership of that IP?

Ms Arthy: No.

THE CHAIR: Can you tell me a little bit about what programs are being funded from that output in this current budget?

Ms Arthy: In this current budget it is the continuation—

THE CHAIR: 2020-21.

Ms Arthy: Yes, it is a continuation of the standard programs for CBRIN. There is additional funding under the future jobs fund which will support some further projects. The details of that are still being finalised. I expect to be able to talk more about that shortly.

THE CHAIR: Did you outline before that it comes largely through the universities or is there another application process that people can apply through to CBRIN?

Ms Arthy: CBRIN has tentacles out everywhere in the business community. They are really incredible with how they do the reach. They do a lot of work trying to reach out, usually through the universities, to students, as well as through all the different networks that they have, and through companies, to advertise for people to come together.

A simple thing that they do is that, every first Wednesday, they do a first Wednesday connect around a theme. They encourage people to come and pitch their ideas. That, in itself, is a way for them to connect ideas with potential investors. They run grants programs as well, which are open for many businesses. For example, during COVID, they ran, using ACT government funding, a program for 50 entrepreneurs to try and help them shift their business as a result of COVID. The universities are more coming through us, as part of the priority investment program. We run at least one round every financial year.

MS CASTLEY: What is CBRIN?

Ms Arthy: CBR Innovation Network.

MS CASTLEY: You mentioned start-ups, and helping start-ups to become businesses. How many of those businesses actually got launched?

Ms Arthy: I would have to take that on notice because CBR Innovation Network does that, but we can provide that information for you.

MS CASTLEY: That would be great.

THE CHAIR: Did I miss my chance yesterday to talk about Singapore Airlines?

Mr Barr: That is in VisitCanberra.

THE CHAIR: The next one.

MS CASTLEY: Can I follow up on Invest Canberra? How much was spent on Invest Canberra? Was it because of the failure to meet its targets that it got rolled into this new section?

Ms Arthy: No. Invest Canberra was a name given to a particular unit at a particular

point. If you separate the name of the unit, Invest Canberra, from the function, the function continues. The function is usually highly successful; we meet our targets. It is just that, with COVID last year, we were not getting any interest from people internationally wanting to come and invest. Usually, these leads are given to us from, say, Austrade, who have companies interested in coming and investing here. But with COVID that just dried up. There is nothing else in it, in terms of why Invest Canberra is no longer used; it is just an old, outdated business unit name.

MS CASTLEY: The same business unit but it has now just—

Ms Arthy: It has evolved. That is right; a different name.

Mr Barr: Yes. The other change that has occurred is that the information that was on the Invest Canberra webpage has moved to the Canberra.com.au webpage. It is all consolidated into one spot.

MS CASTLEY: Yes, I googled it and I could not find anything on Invest Canberra.

Mr Barr: That is right. It used to exist, but our clear finding is that, when people who do not know us are looking, the unique thing is Canberra. There is only one Canberra in the world. Certainly, people tend to google “doing business in Canberra”. You do that, and you land on the Canberra.com.au page; that brings together the investment, doing business here, studying, working and living.

Our experience over the years has been that, although it might make sense administratively to set certain things up within government in that way, that is not how the market approaches Canberra. We have changed our administrative arrangements to reflect the lived reality of how people—investors, entrepreneurs and individuals—engage with the city. They do so more through a central portal. Rather than trying to maintain hundreds of different webpages, we put it all on Canberra.com.au.

MS CASTLEY: In light of COVID, we have had very few cases recently. How has COVID impacted or affected our ability to attract investment?

Mr Barr: Obviously, it closed international borders. There is a global recession. There is a lack of capital for many businesses who have had to absorb significant financial losses because the recession has really hit their balance sheet. The capital available to invest has been reduced, and that is both a national challenge and a global one. It is worse elsewhere in the world because some of our biggest sources of investment have suffered significantly as a result of COVID. Balance sheets have just been run down, businesses have failed and economies have collapsed. That is a global issue.

Frankly, another big source of investment for Australia has been out of China. There are clearly geopolitical issues at play at the moment that have seen those sources of investment dry up as a result of international events that are a little bit above our pay grade in this building.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions under this part, we will take a very

brief break to enable the changeover and resume in five minutes or less.

Short suspension.

THE CHAIR: We now move on to our next section, which is the tourism portfolio, the annual reports and budget outputs. On behalf of the committee, thank you to Minister Barr for appearing today in your capacity as the Minister for Tourism and for your accompanying officials. Can you please confirm for the record that you understand the implications of the privilege statement? As we seem to be in the pattern, I have asked the most recent question so, Ms Orr, would you like to start off with a question?

MS ORR: Yes. Regarding the Enlighten Festival, what are the steps the government is taking to run a COVID-safe Enlighten, given that it is to start in the next couple of weeks?

Mr Barr: We will invite Ross Triffitt to come and sit up there.

Mr Triffitt: Thank you for the question. In relation to the Enlighten Festival—

Mr Barr: You just need to acknowledge the pink card.

Mr Triffitt: Sorry, Chief Minister. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Triffitt: The Enlighten Festival is made up of five separate events. All five of those events have their own COVID-safe plan, in line with the ACT public health restrictions and the COVID-safe event exemptions committee. They have all received exemptions through that process, through the COVID-safe event protocol. The Enlighten illuminations specifically have been capped at 8,000 people per day. There are two event precincts operating. One is the BentSpoke beer garden and the other is Enlighten Alley. They are operating for two hours and 15 minutes, with a changeover in cleaning in between, and with a maximum capacity of 2,000 at each session, for a total of 8,000 per day.

Regarding the other events, Lights! Canberra! Action! is limited to 2,000 at Stage 88 and Canberra Balloon Spectacular is limited to 2,000 people per day. They have been relocated to the Patrick White Lawns to create greater separation between the Enlighten Festival main precinct and the illuminations. The Symphony in the Park attendance is limited to 2,000. All events are ticketed, so they require pre-registration for contact tracing purposes. The Canberra Day event Breakfast at Balloons attendance is limited to 2,000 as well. The general public that are attending the architectural projections can do so without registering, but they do check in with the CBR Canberra safe app.

In terms of additional measures, we have additional security, cleaning staff and COVID-safe marshals in place to manage the physical distancing and increased hygiene measures during the event. We have staggered start times in terms of the

changeover of the various precincts, with the ticketholders, to manage any potential crowd congestions. We are implementing one-way pedestrian traffic in certain potential choke points during peak times. The national attractions after dark events are controlled and operated by the national attractions. They are also ticketed events and have their own COVID-safe arrangements. All the ticketing will be contactless as well throughout the event.

MS ORR: Given that this is the first return of a major ACT festival, what sorts of crowds are you anticipating and how are you preparing for those? I acknowledge that you have already said a few—

Mr Triffitt: Definitely pre-registrations. There is a limited amount of occupancy at the different sessions. That has been widely communicated and a priority in the messaging and the marketing of the event. The event is different this year in the fact that the night noodle markets are not going ahead. We anticipate that that will have an impact on normal attendance and certainly alleviate some of the congestion that has been experienced with the event in the past. But it is really around the key messaging that is occurring through the marketing of the event and the fact that we are restricting access to key areas of the festival.

Mr Barr: Ironically, one of the biggest challenges in staging the event in the past has been the sheer vastness of the space and needing to fill it to create a sense of intimacy, activity and buzz, because otherwise it can be a very long trapse between the different architectural projections. That, of course, is a major benefit in COVID, because there is all this space. That is one of the reasons why we are able to stage the event, because the population density is much lower. We have got this massive space and we are going to limit the number of people in it.

That makes it very different, for example, from the National Multicultural Festival, which is about as jam-packed as you will ever get at an event in Canberra. That is the distinction as to why we can run Enlighten in the way that we have, or the way that we are proposing. I have enjoyed the irony, the fact that throughout the history of Enlighten, which is an event that we started more than a decade ago, the biggest challenge that we have been trying to overcome for nine years has been how do we get enough critical mass to make this work. This time around, though, it will be all about enjoying things with a lot of space around you.

THE CHAIR: Something that I often get asked about in relation to events such as Enlighten is about parking and people getting fined for parking. Do you prepare a parking plan with these events?

Mr Triffitt: Yes. We certainly communicate all the transport arrangements and different options for the event, including information about the parking. Obviously, parking is under the National Capital Authority, but we do provide that information as part of the marketing and promotion of the event: how to get there and what is the appropriate way to attend the festival.

Mr Barr: Obviously, the NCA have a very strict process and requirements around parking and they do not like illegal parking in the parliamentary triangle. They police it late at night. It is what it is. If I were the federal government, I would pretty

zealously protect all of the national assets within the parliamentary triangle.

THE CHAIR: It is a tension, though, about people being able to get there easily.

Mr Barr: That is right. I guess, having ticketed and managed numbers this time will alleviate some of that pressure. This is a challenge when your events are so popular that so many people want to attend all at once. The parking issue can be a difficult problem—I understand that—but there is only so much space. We do our best to encourage people to attend at different times and provide public transport and shuttles from structured car parking and the like.

There are physical limitations. Canberra has less of those physical limitations than most other cities, but we just have to move beyond the idea that everyone can get a park at the front door on every single thing that they ever want to do in their life. It is just logic and physics that says you cannot do that. So that is going to be the challenge at major events. The roads are only so wide and there are only so many car parks. We have more per capita than any other city in Australia, I imagine, but there are physical limits to that, particularly when you are staging events on someone else's land, as is the case with Enlighten.

THE CHAIR: Sure. But when you are coming from Banks with a couple of kids and—

Mr Barr: That is right.

THE CHAIR: you have a stroller and—

Mr Barr: In that instance, that makes sense. But for people who are not coming from Banks then there are other ways to get there.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Barr: Or there are other times.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Davis, a substantive question?

MR DAVIS: Thank you.

MS CASTLEY: I had other questions on events.

THE CHAIR: Sorry.

MS ORR: On Enlighten?

MS CASTLEY: No, other events.

MS ORR: Okay.

MS CASTLEY: We will wait.

MR DAVIS: Just confirming that we can do output 3.1—given the confusion in our first session, that is a good question to ask—innovation, industry and investment?

Mr Barr: Matters related to aviation industry development is the section we are on now.

MR DAVIS: Great. That is my question.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MR DAVIS: Regarding page 50 of the defence industry spend, I note the emphasis on investment and promotion of the defence industry.

Mr Barr: That was the previous session, but ask it anyway.

MR DAVIS: Thank you. It has been a little bit confusing this morning.

THE CHAIR: We are obviously easily confused here.

MR DAVIS: I obviously am, Madam Chair. Thank goodness you are here to keep me honest.

THE CHAIR: Me too; I did not mean only you.

MS ORR: I reckon that next hearing we run these sessions together.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR DAVIS: Referring to the 2017 defence industry strategy, does Electro Optic Systems remain a key player for our defence industry planning?

Mr Barr: For our defence industry planning?

MR DAVIS: Yes.

Mr Barr: They are a major player in the ACT defence industry, but of course we do not procure anything from EOS because we are not in the defence business.

MR DAVIS: No. I understand, though, that they are mentioned.

Mr Barr: They are a business that operates in the territory, yes.

MR DAVIS: Right. Are you concerned that we have a weapons manufacturer that is operating in the territory as part of that strategy?

Mr Barr: They do a range of things. They do not manufacture weapons, as I understand it. They manufacture targeting platforms that are utilised for a variety of different purposes, but defence is one of them.

MR DAVIS: Okay.

MS CASTLEY: I have a supplementary on aviation, if I can?

Mr Barr: That is probably a new question, but yes.

MS CASTLEY: A new question?

THE CHAIR: Ask your question and we will work it out.

Mr Barr: I presume you are not asking about EOS defence?

MS CASTLEY: No. Johnathan was on aviation, so I am slipping in with that.

Mr Barr: EOS is not in aviation. Never mind. You will all learn over time. It is okay.

THE CHAIR: Have you finished, Mr Davis?

MR DAVIS: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Castley, we will move on to your question, a new question.

MS CASTLEY: I will go back to VisitCanberra then and take the other one on notice. On page 53 of the highlights in the report it says that we have promoted Canberra internationally through partnerships with Singapore Airlines, which delivered marketing campaigns in Hong Kong, India and the UK.

Mr Barr: Correct.

MS CASTLEY: How much does our partnership with Singapore Airlines cost?

Mr Barr: That is within the budget allocation for aviation partnerships. The specifics of individual contracts across the different airlines are commercial-in-confidence, but the global amount is in previous budget papers. Can you recall the totality across all airlines?

Mr Kobus: Yes. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The Chief Minister is correct. We had a long-term partnership with Singapore Airlines prior to the onset of COVID. The agreement we had with them came to an end because of the inability to deliver the services that we committed to with them when they were flying daily flights into Canberra.

In terms of the budget we had allocated across all of our aviation programs per annum, we had around \$800,000 committed to that across all airlines and then a component of that was also committed to Singapore Airlines. Airlines like Singapore Airlines have agreements with many entities around Australia. They negotiate independently with all states and territories around their access agreements and how that works over a period of time. So that is why those remain commercial-in-confidence.

MS CASTLEY: There have been no international flights for almost a year. What is the point of continuing the partnership?

Mr Barr: There is not.

Mr Kobus: Correct.

Mr Barr: The point of continuing to engage with them is that we want them to come back and fly again post COVID.

MS CASTLEY: I understand. How much did we pay for the marketing campaigns for Hong Kong, India and the UK?

Mr Barr: That is commercial-in-confidence.

MS CASTLEY: So we cannot get a breakdown of it at all?

Mr Barr: No, it is commercial-in-confidence. If you consider that all of our aviation partnerships across all airlines is no more than \$800,000, you can get a sense that it is going to be a factor less than that.

MS CASTLEY: Okay. There were five international business-to-business travel trade events. We have participated in those?

Mr Barr: That was yesterday's session with the Commissioner for International Engagement when we discussed those. You asked questions.

MS CASTLEY: Yes, I did. The question that I have, then, is: did they help in light of our partnership?

Mr Barr: Yes. Aviation partnerships are part of our tourism and our international freight strategy. Obviously, aircraft carry cargo and our relationship with Singapore Airlines involved both passengers and freight and had been part of a quite extensive exercise, in partnership with Canberra Airport, to create an exporting capability from the airport for fresh produce. So we had seen, pre-COVID, when the flights were daily, produce from the Canberra region being exported into Singapore and South-East Asia in the belly of the Singapore Airlines plane that was flying into Canberra every day. That was a partnership with Austrade. The New South Wales government were involved as well, together with the Canberra Region Joint Organisation, which is the collective of all of the surrounding New South Wales local government areas. It was a multi-level government—local government, territory government, state government and Australian government—partnership with Canberra Airport, Singapore Airlines and the local exporters network.

MS CASTLEY: The report reveals that VisitCanberra arranged tours for 82 journalists from Singapore, Malaysia, China, the UK and New Zealand. How much did we pay for these 82 journalists to travel?

Mr Kobus: The specific amount on the 82 journalists I can take on notice and write that down. We run what is called a visiting journalist and influencer program. Through that program we host journalists, whether they be international or domestic journalists, for a whole range of purposes. Those journals could be from mainstream

media such as newspapers—they could be major publications—or they could be travel agents.

We use those as mechanisms to help people become familiar with the destination. In the instance that we would host a travel agent or sales agent, that would be about ensuring that they have the capacity to sell the destination better when they go back to where they come from. If it were from a journalist's perspective, that would be a mechanism to assist those people in creating content that they can distribute to the market that they are talking to. From a domestic perspective, the cost that we incur, on average, per visit is less than \$1,000. That is per visit for those journalists.

MS CASTLEY: Per person.

Mr Kobus: Per person, yes. Generally, we would cover the cost of accommodation or any other product that they want to experience or see. In the instance of the international visitors—this is an example of where we worked in partnership with Singapore Airlines—we would want those international agents to travel on Singapore Airlines to Canberra to have that experience. Part of our arrangement would be that they travel on Singapore Airlines. They come here and we cover the cost of things like accommodation, meals and other things that help them experience it.

MS CASTLEY: Sure.

Mr Barr: I would add that the accommodation providers obviously partner with us and offer discounted rates because what is in it for them is that they get a story about their product. I would also add that every state and territory tourism authority does this. Tourism Australia, on behalf of the Australian government, does this with an international mandate. So there is nothing unusual about it.

MS CASTLEY: No, I was just getting information. That is what I am here for.

Mr Barr: That is fine. I am just providing more information to say that this is standard practice—

MS CASTLEY: Perfect.

Mr Barr: for every state and territory tourism body.

MS CASTLEY: Great.

Mr Barr: Australia and, indeed, every tourism body around the world is for publicity. That is the nature of the business.

MS CASTLEY: On publicity, do we have anything tangible to know how much—

Mr Barr: Yes, we do, because we see the articles later on.

MS CASTLEY: Great.

Mr Kobus: Yes. For example, in the 2019-20 financial year we hosted journalists

from publications like *Vogue Living*. That journalist came to Canberra, stayed a couple of nights and then wrote an article on the experience that they had. That has a total print readership of 248,000 in hard copy and another 120,000 online. To cost that averages out at under \$1,000 per visit. We get very good reach and distribution from those.

Mr Barr: It is more effective than buying paid advertising, which is why we do it.

MS CASTLEY: Great. The figure was 82 people. Is that the usual number of people that we sponsor?

Mr Kobus: We had a pretty good year that year. Working in partnership with Singapore Airlines, we had access to a number of agents. One of the things that really helped boost the number of people that we engaged with from an international perspective was that we had an international resource that is based in Singapore. That person works on our behalf to create those connections and provide opportunities for us to leverage through that side. That is a mixture of people who are travelling for the purpose of creating content and sharing that content, as well as people who are coming here as agents to learn about the destination so that they can help Canberra internationally.

Where we have spread that effort would then occur across a number of different key markets. That includes Singapore, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and China, predominantly. But then we also looked, when we could, at hosting people from the UK and the US as well. Also, we would often have referrals from Tourism Australia. Tourism Australia works on behalf of all states and territories to promote opportunities and attract people to come to Canberra for those purposes. As an example, one of the visits that worked really well for us was Tourism Australia providing an opportunity for Anushka Sharma, who is a Bollywood actress, to come to Canberra and do a shoot for *Vogue* magazine in Canberra. From that, we then got broad distribution to one of our core international markets, India, through hosting that, in partnership with Tourism Australia.

MS CASTLEY: She is obviously an influencer. Is there a list that we can get of people who are on board?

Mr Kobus: We can provide a list of the people that we hosted and the benefit that that provided or the measures that we have in place.

MS CASTLEY: That would be great.

Mr Barr: One of the best influencers at the moment is Nick Kyrgios. He has been doing some excellent promotion for us—unsolicited at times, too.

MS CASTLEY: Fantastic. What about the criticisms of Canberra? Were there many of those? Have we had feedback on what they hated?

Mr Kobus: That is a good question. Fortunately—

MS ORR: Who would not like Canberra?

Mr Kobus: One of the advantages we have with our journalist program is that people are coming here to create content for a specific purpose, so that is often favourable from the outset. Probably social media is the area where you put the destination on show and people can talk about what they want. I think what we find and where we have confidence in continuing to create mechanisms for social influencers coming to Canberra is that we stand behind the destination and we stand behind the product. Generally, people have their expectations exceeded and generate really positive content and imagery about the destination.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you.

Mr Barr: Just to conclude on that—the rationale and why we have this output class around aviation attraction—while we have been talking about new hotel developments and the like, some of the challenges that we face are that people cannot get direct flights here. Having to fly here from another city is clearly a barrier. Particularly in the international market, they want to know the product and know the sort of experience they are going to get. They make their booking decision based upon: do they know the airline and do they know the sort of hotel that they are going to be staying at? That is clearly a segment of the market. They are a Marriott loyalty member, so they will only stay at Marriott hotels. If we do not have a Marriott hotel, they are not staying here.

We do now have one, but we spent a lot of time getting one. The same argument applies: the hotel chains have hundreds of millions of members. Some of the gaps that we have identified in our market include not having enough low-cost airlines, so it is too expensive to fly here. We are chasing cheaper means for people to get here, both domestically and internationally. They have got to have an understanding of the product, so we want more and diversified hotel offerings. That does not mean boring business hotels. It can mean a wide variety of innovation.

Some great examples in recent times have been the Midnight Hotel in Braddon, which is different, and the Nishi hotel that the Ovolo Group purchased following our approach to them in Hong Kong to get into our market. They bought that hotel. It is now part of a series of their hotels that they have in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. It gets access to a marketing chain that did not previously exist. The building and the hotel experience is very different and it is a real selling point. It is a destination hotel for the city. That is what we are looking to achieve. That is the task that Jonathan has and that we will continue to pursue.

MS CASTLEY: I am going to say that it sounds like a KPI you have set yourself to make sure—

Mr Barr: Absolutely. We would not have got Singapore Airlines if we had not gone to Singapore seven times to convince them. This is face-to-face getting people over the line to make a big business decision to invest in our destination. That is what we have been doing.

MS CASTLEY: What will it take to get more airlines to come directly to Canberra?

Mr Barr: Our market size is a factor. As our population continues to grow, there is a better business case for flying here. We are always going to be a smaller destination than Sydney and Melbourne. So what we are looking for is the range of what are considered narrow body, single-aisle aeroplanes to be able to fly the distance from Canberra into Asia, for example.

What will be an absolute game changer for this city is if you can have an aircraft with 150 seats that can fly the distance. Previous aviation technology meant you had to have the wider body, twin-aisle, 250-seat aircraft in order to make the distance. As the efficiency of aviation continues to improve and you are getting new aircraft coming into the market, that is a real opportunity for Canberra and one that we are actively pursuing.

MS CASTLEY: Do we think that will happen this year?

Mr Barr: Not this year. What has happened in international aviation is that most of the fleet is grounded. The big thing from COVID is that a lot of airlines are phasing out the massive super jumbo A380s that have 500, 450 passengers and are going with smaller point-to-point aircraft. That would help destinations like Canberra and would allow for city pairs that would otherwise not be serviced because you have got these massive aircraft that are only going to go between big cities. It is about smaller, more efficient aircraft. That is our game and that is where we are focusing our efforts with both domestic airlines and Asian-based ones. It is the Middle East as well. We had Qatar flying to Canberra too. Our other connection to Europe has been through the Middle East.

MS CASTLEY: With regard to the aviation industry, I have been unable to find a line item in the budget for that in budget paper B.

Mr Barr: It is within the output class. It is not specified as an individual line item. Within the marketing budget of VisitCanberra is where the marketing partnerships fall and that is within the output class for VisitCanberra. If there is a specific budget initiative where we put more money in or a program ends and we renew it then you will see that in budget paper 3, in the new initiatives for this area.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you for the information.

Mr Barr: No worries.

MR DAVIS: You flagged that one of the challenges for encouraging airlines to come here is the size of our market. I wonder what, if any, work has been done with our government and the Queanbeyan-Palerang, Riverina, Yass Valley and Snowy-Monaro councils in terms of encouraging their population bases. I note from a simple Google search as we sit here that, if you live in Wagga, it is probably cheaper for you to bus to Sydney and fly out of there than it is for you to bus from Wagga to Canberra and fly out of here.

Mr Barr: Correct.

MR DAVIS: There are some transport linkage challenges there and conversations to have. Are they happening?

Mr Barr: Yes, they have. The reason we got Singapore Airlines and Qatar flying was because we made those linkages and sold the Canberra region as a population of 750,000 to 900,000, not just the 420,000 inside the territory and then the 50,000-odd in Queanbeyan, Jerrabomberra and those surrounding areas. So, yes, we sold the region, Canberra plus two hours.

We have been working on lobbying to get improved transport connectivity into Canberra and Canberra Airport. The Barton Highway duplication work that has been funded by the New South Wales government and the Australian government is an example of improving transport connectivity from the north-west. Clearly, the Federal Highway is duplicated, so Goulburn and those sorts of areas can get straight in with the Majura Parkway duplication that goes straight past the airport and bypasses the city. It was another project that enabled that. We are also looking at what we can do on the Monaro Highway to allow Cooma and those areas to the south to get easy access to Canberra Airport.

It is not just about passengers. It is also about freight, as we were discussing earlier. The whole project has been focused on being able to get fresh cherries from Young onto the plane and oysters from the South Coast onto the plane: all of the Canberra region produce. That is part of the business case. If you do not feed the belly of the plane then it can be very expensive if you are just trying to make it stack up on passengers alone. But then, our market is diverse in that there is business travel, there was international student travel, and there was leisure and visiting friends and relatives. We are a year-round proposition; we are not seasonal. It is not like everyone only comes here in summer or winter. We are not a ski resort or a beach. We are a year-round proposition. So that helps the airlines in that regard.

This has been essentially my last decade's work, and then it all went up as a puff of smoke when COVID hit. But we have done it before. We know what to do and we have had success. I met with Singapore Airlines last week, when I was in Sydney, and we will keep at it to try and get them back.

MR DAVIS: I am interested in exploring more about our strategic relationships with those regional councils around our borders. How much would you say we stomach the burden of the administrative and actual cost of this promotion and these negotiations with airlines? Is the partnership an equal one?

Mr Barr: No, we do the bulk of it, because we are the biggest player. Our government would be 20 to 30 times larger than any of the local councils. We are an associate member of what is called the Canberra Region Joint Organisation. The organisation is the New South Wales councils and it is a creature of the New South Wales government. Very generously, they allow us to be an associate member and we are now branded "the Canberra region", which is a massive breakthrough because, before, all of the New South Wales government planning had this ACT-shaped hole in it and it just was not engaged with us.

I made it a priority when I became Chief Minister to be more involved in the region, so I now sit on that body. I represent the ACT at Canberra Region Joint Organisation meetings. We host; we have an event here in Canberra every year. That involves

working with John Barilaro, the New South Wales Deputy Premier, as his seat obviously covers many of these areas, together with all of the surrounding lord mayors. We host meetings in Canberra. We have done a huge amount of work. They have got all the produce. We do not have much farming inside the territory. It has been a really genuine, collaborative effort between the New South Wales local government areas and us. I guess, to be frank, they get a bit more attention from Canberra than they sometimes do from Sydney, so they want to have a close relationship with us, and we are really pleased to be able to do that. I think that is an important role that we can play for the region. But we need each other.

When you think about it, it is a unique tourist experience that, within two hours of this city, you get beaches, ski fields, national parks and rural Australia. There are not many parts of Australia that you can go to get all of those experiences within a couple of hours drive of a major city. Plus, of course, there are all of our national cultural institutions and the Canberra region wineries. It is a really compelling story.

MR DAVIS: Yes.

Mr Barr: We have had to go into Singapore and other places to tell it, and tell it again and again and again. I came out of Singapore Airlines headquarters seven times being told no. We just kept on coming back. And that is what we will keep on doing.

MR DAVIS: I suppose my concern, which is a question, is not with our relationship with those regional councils, even through that network. Has any cost-benefit analysis been done to ensure that ACT ratepayers are getting bang for buck in terms of their investment in these programs and their association with this organisation and so that, to put it bluntly, our regional community is not riding on our coat-tails while we are doing the bulk of the work with the expense?

Mr Barr: Comparative to population and resourcing capability, these are local governments. They do not have a state level economic development function as we obviously do. The New South Wales government has been involved as well. It is not to say that at a state level, out of Sydney, they have completely ignored this. They have worked with us. But we are the lead, because it is Canberra Airport and we are 420,000 people and the rest of the region is significantly smaller.

MR DAVIS: But are we confident that our economic benefit—

Mr Barr: Absolutely, yes.

MR DAVIS: is relative to our expense and contribution to the programs?

Mr Barr: By a massive factor, yes.

MR DAVIS: Great.

MS ORR: Just in the context of aviation, we have seen a lot of flights into Canberra, as we have discussed, cease during COVID times. What are we doing to attract not just international but regional and budget and all the opportunities we could possibly have coming into the ACT?

Mr Barr: We continue to actively engage with each of the New South Wales regional, Canberra regional, national and international airlines. In partnership with Canberra Airport, we have been able to secure an expansion of Pelican air services. That has included up to Byron, Ballina, Port Macquarie and Newcastle. Link Airways, a new Canberra-based airline that was previously known as Corporate Air, I understand, who had mostly a corporate focus, has switched to undertaking passenger flights. It flies to Hobart and Newcastle at the moment.

I have had a series of meetings with Rex, Regional Express, and we look forward to them re-entering the Canberra market. I will meet with Qantas and QantasLink in coming weeks. I am also hoping, once things have settled down a little for Virgin, to meet with them. I met with Singapore Airlines last week. I am meeting with Jetstar later this week. We will continue our engagement with all of the players, be they small regional, either Canberra or New South Wales-based, up to the national level operators.

In short, the purpose is to re-establish the domestic network. One of the benefits in the last six months is that direct services from Canberra to different destinations have exploded at a domestic level. I have left out Alliance Airlines, flying to the Sunshine Coast as well. We work closely with Canberra Airport, VisitCanberra and the aviation development area to prioritise this. Why? Because the cheaper and easier it is to get to Canberra, the more tourists and the more economic activity we will experience. Aviation is a key part of a key strategy, but it is not the only transport strategy we have to get more people to Canberra.

Another project I have been working on for a number of years is improvements to the Canberra-Sydney rail corridor. We are starting to get some traction on that as well, with the New South Wales government investment in improving the rail line in the Southern Highlands to make it more direct and to cut some time off the journey. The New South Wales government have also just put out a contract for renewal and operation of new trains on the CountryLink regional fleet. Canberrans can expect in the coming years that the rail trip to Sydney will be with a new train and it will be quicker than it is at the moment. Sydney is our biggest domestic tourism market, so having an alternative to driving and flying for our biggest market, having a better rail connection, has been a priority, and we are getting some outcomes on that as well.

MS ORR: Are there any cities in particular that you are focusing on to get direct flights to? You broadly said Australia, but are there ones in particular?

Mr Barr: Clearly, the biggest market for us that is most conducive to air travel is Canberra-Melbourne. Sydney obviously has close competitors in driving and the Murrays coach—not just Murrays, but coach travel. It is a three-hour trip, almost regardless of your means of travel, or four hours on the train at the moment. Canberra-Melbourne is obviously one where we want competition on that route. That is why I am talking to Jetstar about that. We definitely want Virgin back on that service with a decent frequency, and Qantas and QantasLink with their different products.

Brisbane is the next biggest market for us. Again, it does not have a close competitor

in terms of driving or rail. The Gold Coast is a big market too. That region's population is 750,000. The next biggest ones for us are Adelaide and Perth, and then you get to Hobart. We do not have a direct flight to Darwin at the moment. We did at certain points, but I do not think that is one that Qantas will be interested in in the short term. They are the major domestic markets. The other area of focus for us has been trans-Tasman because, again, those city pairs can be serviced with a 737, so a 150-seat plane. Our focus there is our sister city, Wellington, and Auckland.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, we have spoken a lot about air travel, but no doubt you will appreciate the climate impacts of the aviation industry. We are an international climate leader. Why is the ACT not leading the debate, instead, on the bullet train or high-speed rail on the eastern seaboard?

Mr Barr: We are certainly involved in that, but that is an answer for 30 years hence, and it is a \$10 billion to \$100 billion investment, so it is well beyond our means. If we were to be an investment partner in that, we would have to put the entire territory annual budget in, which we are not going to do, obviously. So high-speed rail is a great plan for the future, and the corridors should be reserved, but I am more focused on the practical realities of turning our 19th century rail service into a 20th century rail service that can be done for less than a billion dollars. High-speed rail does not deal with all of the other markets; it is not going to Melbourne at this point in time and it is not going to Brisbane.

MR DAVIS: But if our intention is to be a net zero emissions city and a net zero emissions economy, should we not be, like we are in other spaces, leading the debate?

Mr Barr: We have been involved in discussions with the aviation industry on reducing their emissions and looking at new fuel types to fuel planes.

MR DAVIS: And how have we done that?

Mr Barr: We have participated in advocacy. We have spoken with airlines about their particular innovations and approaches. Qantas is using oil from mustard seeds, I believe, as part of a biofuel injection into their avgas arrangements. We have also advocated for people to purchase carbon offset, and for that to be possible as part of your ticketing experience. It is the case that you can fully offset your flight through an additional fee—and it is pretty modest—on most aviation. I am not going to position the ACT as a place that people cannot fly to. If we do that, we may as well give up on 20,000 jobs in our economy.

The answer here is that the aviation sector—and this will be a global thing; it will not be an ACT-led thing—improves its emissions profile by using different fuels. What I touched on earlier is that planes are way more efficient now than they were before, and there is clearly an economic incentive for the airlines, and the aviation industry as a whole, including the manufacturers, to deliver more efficient planes, because the major cost for an airline is its fuel. So they have an economic incentive to do it. There is clearly a moral obligation around emissions reduction, but I am not in the business of flight shaming anyone, and we are certainly not going down that path. We can encourage—and we do—improved environmental efficiency for airlines, but I draw the line at flight shaming.

MR DAVIS: I would like to see us walk and chew gum at the same time. We have light rail, but we can car shame people at the same time. So would you ideally like to see in the future Canberra as a city connected to a high-speed rail network along the eastern seaboard?

Mr Barr: That is a worthy objective, but it has been talked about since I was in primary school and I think it was still—

MR DAVIS: Light rail has been talked about since I was in primary school.

Mr Barr: Yes, I know. We were able to deliver it because it was within our means, but obviously we do not own the land; we are a tiny player in the high-speed rail debate, but it has been going around and around, every couple of years for the best part of 40 years now. I do not rule out that it could happen in the future, but it will take a federal government to make an investment in the order of \$50 billion to \$100 billion.

MR DAVIS: For so long as the conversation about high-speed rail continues to percolate, do you see the ACT government as a passive or active contributor to that conversation?

Mr Barr: We have been an active contributor in the context of spending a lot of money over the last 30 years on route planning and feasibility studies on where stations would be located; would it be a spur route; would it be a through line—Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne—and how would you possibly accommodate high-speed rail through the centre of the Canberra CBD? There have been more studies on this than I think almost any other infrastructure project in Australian history. We have participated in all of those, but I need to be clear: there is no way that the ACT government will be building high-speed rail.

MR DAVIS: That is okay. That was not my question.

THE CHAIR: Mr Davis, we have exhausted the 45 minutes we allocated for this particular session.

Mr Barr: Yes, we did promise everyone an early lunch, did we not?

THE CHAIR: Do you genuinely have one more supplementary question?

MR DAVIS: One more supplementary. Chief Minister, you say there have been a range of feasibility studies, which does draw parallels to the light rail debate of Canberra. What is your understanding of the consensus of those feasibility studies?

Mr Barr: That it is uneconomic and could only be delivered with either a major capital investment from the Australian government to the tune of \$50 billion to \$100 billion, and would require tax subsidies and fare subsidies for anyone to be able to afford a ticket on it. It is a very difficult project.

Now, there may be a change in technology or a willingness by an Australian

government to make that sort of investment, but it would be heavily subsidised. If the private sector was going to deliver it, it would have been done. The challenge in Australia is that there is a massive distance between our major cities and our population is too small. When you look at where high-speed rail has worked in other countries, they have much shorter distances between their cities and much greater populations that underpin the economics and business case of the particular projects. That is why I have advocated, and we have been active in seeking, faster rail. As I said, it is a great 21st century technology solution, but at the moment what is feasible—and we should not make the good the enemy of the perfect—is to get a better and faster rail service between Canberra and Sydney. That can be done for less than a billion dollars. The investment has already started and I thank the New South Wales government for doing that—for committing to buy new trains and for improving the track in the Southern Highlands, which hopefully will shave at least 15 to 20 minutes off the journey time, which starts to make it comparable with driving or flying.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister, and your officials.

Hearing suspended from 1.07 to 2.00 pm.

Appearances:

Gentleman, Mr Mick, Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directory

Miners, Mr Stephen, Acting Under Treasurer

Young, Mr Michael, Executive Group Manager and Public Sector Workers Compensation Fund Commissioner, Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Economic, Budget and Industrial Relations

Shields, Ms Penny, General Manager, ACT Insurance Authority, Commercial Services and Infrastructure

WorkSafe ACT

Agius, Ms Jacqueline, Work Health and Safety Commissioner

ACT Long Service Leave Authority

Savage, Mrs Tracy, CEO and Registrar

THE CHAIR: I declare open this afternoon session of this second day of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equity public hearings inquiry into the 2019-20 annual and financial reports and the ACT budget 2020-21. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Ngunnawal people; their elders, past, present and emerging, and their continuing contribution to the culture of our city and this region.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you, Minister Gentleman, for appearing today in your capacity as Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety and your accompanying officials from CMTEED and other government entities for coming along today. For this part of the session, the committee will examine annual reports and budget outputs relating to the industrial relations and workplace safety portfolio. I remind all witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and are being webstreamed and broadcast live.

The proceedings are also being held in accordance with the physical distancing requirements and room capacity limits in force at this time. We are all responsible for complying with COVID-safe requirements and I ask you all to assist in this regard. Please respect the stated room limits and the physical distancing requirements that are in place in the building and please ensure that you have checked in, either with the CBR app or as advised by the attendants.

I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations entailed by parliamentary privilege. I understand that privilege statements have been emailed to witnesses via their respective DLOs, and a copy of the privilege statement is on the table, the pink sheet in front of you. When you speak for the first time, please confirm out loud for the record that you understand the privilege implications of that statement.

As the committee advised, it has decided not to have opening statements from

witnesses, so we will now proceed to questions. Minister Gentleman, I have a question about priority 1 on page 9 of the Healthy Minds—Thriving Workplace strategy, which says:

Establish Executive Champions to drive implementation of Healthy Minds—Thriving Workplaces.

Do you know the program I refer to?

Mr Gentleman: I have heard of it, yes.

THE CHAIR: Could you please provide some details on who are the executive champions.

Mr Gentleman: I acknowledge the privilege statement and the bounds therein. Directorate officials should have the details of those champions; I will ask Mr Young to give you that detail.

Mr Young: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The Healthy Minds—Thriving Workplaces strategy is an ACT public sector focused initiative and one of several initiatives that have been put in place under a broader health and wellbeing strategy.

To the question of executive champions, I might begin by offering some background and context. This strategy was one where we took a slightly different tack in comparison to similar workplace interventions. It was identified that psychosocial/psychological health and wellbeing were a particularly important contributor to a significant proportion of public sector workers compensation claims and notified incidents and that was one of our key workplace risks that we were seeking to address as part of that strategy.

In order to maximise penetration and awareness of that strategy across the public sector workforce, we identified that there would be value in putting in place an executive champion model. There was a process of consultation undertaken to identify executive champions who would be willing to step forward across directorates and take ambassadorial roles in promoting workplace health and wellbeing.

We have used them as a mechanism to promote all of the key elements and interventions of that strategy, which include things like the mental health guru program, which is designed to reduce stigma around mental health and wellbeing, and training for managers and supervisors in how to identify and respond to staff who may be exhibiting signs of having difficulties.

As to the specific champions, I do not have that list with me, but I anticipate that by the end of the session I will be able to provide those names. A key takeaway is that they were senior leaders from across all directorates and they were picked because, prior to initiating that strategy, there was a whole-of-workforce survey conducted which identified the importance of senior leadership having a visible role in destigmatising and promoting workplace health and wellbeing.

THE CHAIR: Why is it necessary to specifically identify them? Shouldn't it be part of a senior executive's role at all times?

Mr Young: It certainly is. However, the champions that stepped forward took on additional roles in terms of promoting the specific health and wellbeing interventions that we have in place. But you are quite right. As senior executives, we all have a role to play in workplace health and safety and there are a number of whole-of-government policies that reflect those responsibilities.

Mr Miners: I would like to add to that, if it is all right. I am aware of the privilege statement. One champion I will identify is me. I am the executive champion for the scheme as a whole and I work closely with all the executive champions within each of the directorates. Your point about this being part of whatever the executive should do is absolutely correct, and executives across the ACTPS are aware of that. Mental health issues, particularly over the last 12 months, have been something we have really focused on quite a lot.

The benefit of having the identified people, from my perspective, is that it allows us to roll out the work that has been done through Mr Young's team. We are able to focus that, get that across to directorates; they can then channel that out more broadly. It gives us a really good way of making sure that these issues are really at the forefront of everyone's agenda but done through people who are particularly able or have a particular role in pushing that agenda.

THE CHAIR: Is there a budget associated with the strategy?

Mr Young: The costs of the program are met through the output 5.1 appropriations. There is no additional budget that has been set up.

THE CHAIR: In line with my earlier comment about everyone being responsible, I presume the executive champions do not get any additional remuneration for being a part of that program?

Mr Miners: If I have, I have not noticed it.

THE CHAIR: Well, you can give it back.

Mr Miners: I am quite happy to.

THE CHAIR: Fair enough. What are the KPIs? What does success look like? Is it a reduction in mental health injuries? How are you going to measure the success of the program?

Mr Young: We have a number of whole-of-government measures in place that are, as you have suggested, focused on reducing the number and the severity of work injury and mental health injury occurrences.

THE CHAIR: And duration?

Mr Young: Yes; that is one of the measures for severity—the amount of time that

people need to be away from the workplace. Ideally, there is no absence from the workplace: injuries are managed by reasonable adjustment and people are able to continue to work in that same workplace. Where people do need to leave, we have indicators around providing a safe and timely return to work.

Likewise, awareness of WHS policies and programs, particularly around mental health, is something that we measure by way of periodic employee survey. So there are those measures as well. There is both the front-end awareness and the tail-end incident and injury data.

Mr Miners: I have two more things to add very quickly. One of the key things about the strategy is that it does focus on mental health in terms of everyone. It does not just look at one part of the spectrum; it looks at mental health right across the spectrum in terms of the five in five, rather than the one in five who will suffer severe mental health problems.

It is about making sure that it is something that everyone is aware of and reducing that stigma, as Michael said, so that these issues are talked about. Those things can be very hard to measure. In a lot of ways, it is what does not show up that is what we are really looking to measure. It really is about making sure that people can address the mental health issues, that people are aware of it, and that we can deal with the issues before they actually become issues and make sure everyone has a very positive, supportive workplace to work in.

THE CHAIR: When, physically, did this program start?

Mr Young: I will provide that date for you before the end of this session.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any data to date on how it has been going?

Mr Young: The indicators that I described have been in place for quite some time, and a survey was initiated prior to the commencement of that program, so I think we are in a good position to measure outcomes. However, it is the nature of those lag indicators that I described around incident and injury data that it does take some time to come through. I do not believe we will be in a position to give authoritative advice on how effective it has been for some months yet.

THE CHAIR: But you have a benchmark before you started that you will be able to compare once you do it?

Mr Young: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We talked about severity, frequency, incidence and duration—however you want to measure it. You spoke about stigma; how would you measure that, and reducing stigma associated with it?

Mr Miners: It will always be a little bit subjective in that space. Certainly, what we have seen within CMTEDD—which is where, again, there is probably the bit that I am still most visibly seeing, but it is across everywhere—is just the willingness to open up on these issues.

Through the CMTEEDD champion and through others, we have had a number of sessions now where we have had people talking about their own challenges with mental health. If we look at the way that meetings are run, when we talk about health and safety, those meetings over the last six months in particular—part of it is COVID, part of it is this strategy and part of it is other factors—are much more likely to start with checking on how people are in terms of their mental health.

Previously, the safety was much more around whether we had any safety concerns—trip hazards and those sorts of things. I am already seeing that through a lot of the meetings that I am attending. People are willing to start with the position of, “How are you?” and not just, “Are you okay? That’s great; fine, thanks very much,” and moving on. There is a genuine discussion about how people are coping and how they are dealing with stressors. I think it is embedding that much more, and I am seeing it. How do you measure it? That is very tricky. Are we seeing that sort of change in the workplace? Yes, we are, and there is much more willingness to talk about these issues in an open way.

THE CHAIR: With the survey you did before, which I said you might be able to use as a benchmark, was that pre-COVID and some working from home or post?

Mr Young: It was, and that is an important point. We significantly pivoted the content of the health and wellbeing policy in response to COVID, and particularly the sudden move to work from home arrangements for a significant proportion of the workforce. A number of the information products—the interactive videos, the focus of presentations—took on that dimension around needing to guard for risks to psychological wellbeing that might come from isolation or those rapid changes to working arrangements. Incidents of that nature are also one of the metrics that we are monitoring via our whole-of-government hazard management system.

THE CHAIR: Did the survey take place before working from home came in?

Mr Young: The initial survey was prior to COVID, yes.

THE CHAIR: Is there any hard or anecdotal evidence about changes during the COVID period last year?

Mr Young: We are able to monitor safety and hazard incidents that people put in, workers compensation claims and take-up of a number of the pre-injury intervention services that we offer. We can see the frequency of that both pre and post COVID. The data is inconsistent. There was a reduction in the number of workers compensation claims generally coming through in the first months of COVID. However, in the last quarter numbers increased. The experience has been lumpy. I think we need to give it a little longer to see how it ultimately plays out.

That is not surprising, and that is an experience that is visible in other jurisdictions where such a significant part of the ACT workforce—Health, Education and so forth—in those frontline roles was really nose to the grindstone in those early months. I think it is only now, after the arrangements have been continuing, that they are able to take stock and give close consideration to their own health. That is resulting in

some changes to the take-up of the services that we offer. It is something that we are continuing to monitor, but indications are more positive than expected. Certainly, the number of injuries coming through, psychological and otherwise, has remained relatively stable year on year.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. I have more questions but in the interests of time—

Mr Young: I do have those names of the executive champions.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you could send them through to the committee secretariat, in the interests of time. How many are there?

Mr Young: There are 14.

THE CHAIR: Send them through. That would be great; thank you.

MS ORR: Can you run through your performance against injury management targets?

Mr Young: Certainly.

Mr Gentleman: There are a number of indicators, Ms Orr, in this output. Three of the six indicators were not met. Those are the conduct of vocational employment programs, with 83 per cent completed out of the 85 per cent target. With the Workforce Transformation program, the targets there were met. I refer also to the ACT Fire & Rescue agreement in the Fair Work Commission and the ACT medical practitioners agreement that has been negotiated. Were they the targets you were looking for?

MS ORR: Injury management targets.

Mr Gentleman: My apologies.

Mr Young: Is there a specific target that you would like me to start with in one of the output indicators?

MS ORR: No; go for your life.

Mr Young: As the minister indicated, there are a number of targets that we have in place that are monitoring changes in injury management, or the number of workers compensation claims that occur. Probably the headline measure is the one that appears against the Public Sector Workers Compensation Fund accountability indicators, 1.1. There is a requirement there to reduce the ACT public sector incidence of serious workplace injury year on year. Those targets were selected to align with the national workplace health and safety strategy, which required a 30 per cent reduction in certain types of injury over a 10-year period.

We have been tracking the ACT public sector's performance against those targets for a number of years. Generally, the service is meeting those targets, which is a positive metric. However, as I indicated earlier, the experience of the COVID period is that it has been fluctuating quite significantly, quarter on quarter. Until we get to the end of

the current financial year, it is difficult to authoritatively say what the final outcome would be. Page 289 of the budget statements does not speculate on the year-to-date figure. However, indications are that it will be relatively stable and that we will continue to be on track to achieve that 10-year target.

That being said, there are other lower level indicators around injury prevention that we have in place—for example, in contractual arrangements with our workers compensation scheme agent, and as conditions of our licence. By way of background the ACT public sector self-insures for workers compensation purposes under a licence from the commonwealth Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission. There are a number of key performance indicators that are in place to monitor the number of claims and the number of serious injuries coming through. We do have monitoring there.

Interestingly, that target will change significantly in April this year. By way of background, for the first two years of that self-insurance licence, the targets that we were held against by the commonwealth were based on national data and required a very significant reduction in injuries in order for us to comply, in the order of about 30 per cent. We have not been able to achieve that level of reduction in injuries. That target, because it was based on national aggregate industry performance, was never really realistic for the territory. However, as of April, we will commence being benchmarked against our own year-on-year performance. When that occurs, I expect that we will be in a position to meet those targets.

MR DAVIS: On page 69 of the CMTEDD annual report it says that you “engaged with stakeholders to design a new labour hire licensing scheme for the ACT” and that “the scheme will provide better protections for workers in vulnerable or insecure employment”. Can you outline exactly what activities have been undertaken to ensure that all businesses are aware of what they need to do to be compliant under the new scheme?

Mr Young: Certainly. As you would be aware, the scheme has been legislated. However, it has not yet commenced. The legislation will commence in May this year. There will be a six-month transition period. Between now and the commencement of that legislation, I expect that there will be a series of subordinate regulations issued that provide further clarity around the scope of coverage in terms of which labour hire providers are covered and which may not be.

There will be a coordinated communication campaign that will commence targeting registered labour hire providers in the ACT once that clarity has been legislated. That will continue throughout that six-month transition period which has been allowed in the legislation for covered employers to become aware of the need to apply and receive a licence.

MR DAVIS: Would it be fair to say that we have not engaged with any businesses yet in relation to the new scheme, as we are waiting for the subordinate legislation?

Mr Young: On the contrary; there was very extensive consultation conducted in the development of the scheme. There was a public discussion paper. For example, there were workshops and meetings with particular providers. Those have been continuing

with interested providers through to very recent times. The focus of that consultation has very much informed not just the design of the legislation that has been implemented—the act—but also the regulations that I expect will be forthcoming. Yes, it is very much based on close industry consultation.

Mr Gentleman: I have met with those providers, too.

MR DAVIS: Based on your understanding of the advice that the department has received so far, are you confident that this scheme is going to achieve its aims of both more secure work and safer workplaces, based on the information you have been provided with so far, and the clarity so far?

Mr Young: In response to that, I would note that a number of other jurisdictions are somewhat ahead of the ACT and have legislated and commenced labour hire licensing schemes. We have consulted with them in the design of the work that we are doing. In that sense I think the product that we will have in place from the outset will be a more mature and nuanced one as a result of that consultation and the learnings from those other jurisdictions that have been operating for some time.

The feedback that we have had from those jurisdictions as part of that is that they have been quite effective in identifying relevant labour hire providers that perhaps they were not previously aware of. Putting through that licensing process is able to give the governments in those jurisdictions better visibility and better ability to verify that relevant workplace standards have been put in place. Based on that consultation, I am confident, but at this early stage it is difficult to definitively say what the outcome will be in the ACT.

MR DAVIS: Based on the measures of both more secure work and safer workplaces, is there a jurisdiction you could point us to that you think have got this right—or, at least, as best as they could?

Mr Young: I would rather not speculate, except to say that we have consulted with each of the jurisdictions that has one of these arrangements in place.

MR CAIN: Chair, I have a question relating to WorkSafe ACT. I do not know whether it is too soon to jump to that area.

THE CHAIR: Are there any further questions from the committee in this area?

MR DAVIS: I want to ask about the workers compensation fund; should I do that now?

THE CHAIR: Go ahead.

MR DAVIS: One of the accountability indicators for the public sector workers compensation fund is to reduce the ACT public sector incidence of serious workplace injury—naturally. The wellbeing indicators, which I understand will come in later this year, will use “lost time” data, which is collected nationally. Do you already know what the lost time targets would be for the ACT public service?

Mr Young: The wellbeing indicators that you are talking about are being applied as part of the total budget wellbeing framework. We are certainly providing input to the officials that are responsible for that work. To my knowledge, the indicators that we have been providing as part of that process are mature datasets. I expect that we will be able to provide the information that that area of government will require to report. I am not able to say what the final measure will ultimately look like until that is put in place.

MR DAVIS: Are there any directorates which have a higher rate than usual—a higher rate than average?

Mr Young: As you would expect, with a diverse organisation such as the ACT government, certain people are doing riskier work than others. That translates to workplace injury rates. As the minister indicated, frontline agencies are statistically more likely to have lost on injury claims. That is something that we monitor and about which we provide information to directorates on their performance. It also informs price signals that we have in place via the workers compensation process, so there is good visibility, across the service, of their relative performance. Generally, the trends follow the risk profile of the work.

MR DAVIS: Knowing where people are more likely to get injured, have you already identified what new or additional injury prevention activities will be put in place going forward?

Mr Young: Certainly. We are informed by that data in the development of all of our public sector intervention programs. For example, we are doing some particular work with the Education Directorate at the moment to assist with return to work for secondary school teachers. There are known issues around finding suitable duties for people that are injured in those roles. So the answer is: yes, certainly. It is a continuous improvement process whereby we are allocating resources, designing and adjusting our interventions based exactly on that information.

THE CHAIR: I have a question, on the public sector workers compensation fund, about the transfer of assets from Comcare. Why hasn't the transfer of assets been completed? It was not completed as at 31 December 2020.

Mr Young: When the territory became a self-insurer in March 2019, it took on responsibility for the management of past and future workers compensation claims. That included claims that were open and have liabilities associated. Part of the transition of workers compensation arrangements away from the commonwealth and to the territory therefore necessarily involved a transfer of the corresponding assets. However, it was always anticipated that the process for calculating the amount of those assets would require actuarial review and additional actions post exit.

At the time that we were putting that program in place, there were transitional provisions included in the licence issued to us via the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to allow for that additional calculation to be done and for assets to be transferred. The accounts, as you have picked up, include a receivable from the commonwealth to reflect what we anticipate those funds coming over will be. The current transition provision gives us until the end of this financial year to finalise

that process. We are working actively with Comcare and commonwealth agencies to facilitate that transfer.

I am informed by commonwealth officials that it has been delayed via the COVID response at the commonwealth level, which is not surprising. However, they anticipate being able to finalise by the current period.

THE CHAIR: It meant that the fund was unable to meet one of its accountability indicators about maintaining a fund asset to liability ratio greater than or equal to 100 per cent.

Mr Young: Indeed. That was an anticipated outcome of the first periods of self-insurance. However, when the current cash amounts and receivables are combined, what it shows is that there is a surplus for the scheme, \$17.2 million, which has increased year on year. That is indicative of improvements in performance that we have been able to put in place since becoming self-insured, which has then reduced the liabilities associated with those—

THE CHAIR: I might have missed it but did you agree with the statement, Mr Young?

Mr Young: Yes, I did at the beginning, Chair.

THE CHAIR: Thank you; I wanted to make sure we had that on the record. With respect to the public sector workers compensation fund operating statement, there was an 81 per cent variance in investment revenue for the 2020-21 budget compared with the 2019-20 audited outcome. Was that related to the same issue? What was the cause of that?

Mr Young: I think that reflects instability and uncertainty in the investment returns, particularly the risk-free rates. The fund legislation has been established to allow funds to be invested, and for those returns on investment to be paid into the fund and to then offset liabilities. However, because of those transitional arrangements that we were just talking about, all of the current fund assets that are under the control of the territory are currently being held in cash. They are the indicators—it is just variability associated with current market instability for the risk-free return rate.

MR CAIN: Claims expenses for the 2020-21 budget for the fund are 31 per cent higher than the 2019-20 audited outcome. What is the cause of the jump in claims expenses? The reference is page 289 of budget statements B.

Mr Young: Could you repeat which indicator you were—

MR CAIN: Claims expenses are 31 per cent higher than the 2019-20 audited outcome.

Mr Young: I am having trouble seeing the reference.

Mr Gentleman: I have CTP; it is at 289.

MR CAIN: I am looking at the page with table 2, the accountability indicators for the

public sector workers compensation fund.

THE CHAIR: Yesterday we had a little issue with the printed pages being slightly different from the online pages.

MR CAIN: I do not recall which version of the reference I have here. I am happy to put that on notice.

Mr Young: It may be that it is comparing to a prior period which was incomplete. The workers compensation fund—

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you can check and put it on notice.

MR CAIN: Put it on notice, yes.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to Mr Cain's substantive question on WorkSafe ACT.

Mr Gentleman: Can I welcome the commissioner? I think it is her first time at these hearings.

MR CAIN: First time for me, too, Mr Gentleman.

Mr Gentleman: There you go; welcome, Mr Cain.

THE CHAIR: Could I ask you to acknowledge the privilege statement?

Ms Agius: I acknowledge the privilege statement.

MR CAIN: The CMTEDD annual report 2019-20 notes that WorkSafe ACT conducted 1,621 workplace inspections across numerous industries and government agencies. It seems that only 24½ per cent were deemed compliant at the time of inspection, if I interpret that correctly. What is the cause of such low compliance?

Ms Agius: I have been very clear since I came into this position that it is important that in the ACT we create a strong safety culture. Are you referring particularly to residential construction or are you referring to safety in general?

MR CAIN: Whatever those numbers were attached to.

Ms Agius: Could you give me the reference again, Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: We may have a pagination issue between the online and the written. My record is 308-309 from the CMTEDD annual report 2019-20.

Ms Agius: In 2019 there were 1,629 workplace visits. Is that the figure you are referring to?

MR CAIN: Thank you.

Ms Agius: You are referring there to the improvement notices, prohibition notices and infringement notices. Some of those may be repeat notices. They may be in relation to the same workplace. It does not necessarily mean that they are separate notices that have been issued at every one of those sites. It could be one site that has 10 notices, for instance.

MR CAIN: Is there a way that that can be made clearer? Perhaps I will do a QON on that.

Ms Agius: I am happy to take that on notice. Part of the issue is that we have started to collate some really good data at WorkSafe because we have implemented some new ICT systems. Whilst I can say that, going forward, we can absolutely do that, I would need to check whether or not that is available to us.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Cain, what we have seen overall is very poor performance by employers across the sector, in relation to the safety of worksites across the ACT. The commissioner has identified these particular issues and has, I think, done quite an effective job in issuing a notice to those employers that they have to lift their game.

You would have seen that most recently we visited Denman Prospect. We visited a sector where there was a multi-unit development going on. There were a number of infringements notified by WorkSafe the week before, I think. Almost all were rectified—a really good result from the visit from WorkSafe. The site next door to them was a very poor site. Nobody was there. It was not secure. They issued more than 20 infringements. I got to see it personally. The work that WorkSafe are doing is incredibly important. The more we talk to the community about the importance of having safe worksites across the ACT, and having these workers be able to return home at the end of the day to their families, is very important.

MR CAIN: Obviously, it is a joint desire across the party spectrum.

Mr Gentleman: Yes.

Ms Agius: In Denman Prospect we visited 29 sites. We issued 77 notices last week.

MR CAIN: To me that sounds exceptionally high. What are the common infringements that your officers are identifying?

Ms Agius: In the residential construction space?

MR CAIN: Sure.

Ms Agius: In the residential construction space the common issues that we are coming across are fall-from-height risks. Of course, we are all very concerned about fall-from-height risks, particularly in relation to a death in Denman Prospect in February last year. Site security is a major issue. Site signage, access to amenities for the workers on the site and general housekeeping are pretty appalling in the residential construction space.

MR CAIN: Obviously, the infringement notices themselves are a strong message but

what else is WorkSafe ACT doing to make employers more informed about better practices for their employees?

Ms Agius: We have a new website. I am not sure whether you have had an opportunity to have a look at it; if you have not, I invite you to do so. On our website we put out alerts and updates. We also put out data, particularly in relation to Operation Safe Prospect, which is part of our residential construction strategy. Members of my team and I are involved in meeting with industry. We go out to a number of meetings. We are having regular discussions with stakeholders. Last year we had a strategic summit where we met with all industry in particular about residential construction and our concerns there. We are continually updating industry on the work that we are doing.

MR CAIN: Is there anything that distinguishes your approach to residential construction from commercial?

Ms Agius: We have identified some major risks in the residential construction sector. Whilst we do some compliance audit activities in commercial construction, at the moment we are targeting the residential construction sector due to the significant risks in that space.

Mr Gentleman: We have, of course, the work health and safety council; there are both employee and employer representatives on the council. They are aware of the work that WorkSafe do and are able to feed information back up to them at the same time.

The visit to Denman, to me, was a bit of an eye-opener, in that we saw the passion from the developer there in assisting WorkSafe in their operations and ensuring that we have safe outcomes for development in Denman Prospect. If we are able to get industry at that high level, having regard to the developer working with WorkSafe, we will have a good future.

MR DAVIS: Commissioner, younger people on building and construction sites disproportionately have adversarial relationships with their bosses. They are new to the workplace, they are paid less and there is less institutional knowledge about how best to conduct themselves on a construction site. What specific strategies does the commission have planned to target young workers in particular?

Ms Agius: You might note in our statement of operational intent that we have certainly referenced vulnerable workers, including young workers and older workers. In relation to the construction industry, we have a dedicated inspector who speaks with apprentices and, as part of our business as usual, our inspectors always identify apprentices on sites. Unfortunately, we have seen a number of unsupervised apprentices on sites and when that does occur, we take action.

MR DAVIS: So this dedicated inspector is one single full-time equivalent whose job it is to work exclusively with—

Ms Agius: Yes, that has been the case. Unfortunately, that inspector has taken up an opportunity in a commonwealth department and we are recruiting. We will be

reviewing our young worker program and we will be looking at how we can best resource the program and ensure that we are looking after young workers. It is something that we are quite concerned about.

MR DAVIS: Have you found that, based on the workload for that one inspector before they departed, there is a need for more dedicated inspectors to work specifically with apprentices, or have you found that one person doing that has met the demand?

Ms Agius: That person has met the demand. We also have a number of our inspectors go out to CIT and RTOs, and they speak with apprentices who are studying. They talk to them about WorkSafe and what we do and how they can contact us if they have an issue in their workplaces.

MR DAVIS: Does the Office of Work Health and Safety or that dedicated inspector's role in terms of their position description have any relationship with other youth organisations—organisations where young people would be connecting and developing pathways into industry?

Ms Agius: No; we have been focused on RTOs and CIT, but we communicate constantly with industry and we speak to them about the issues for young workers in workplaces. A couple of weeks ago I went and spoke, for instance, at the Master Plumbers. I did a couple of hours session with them and they raised a number of issues and young workers came up.

MR DAVIS: You have flagged before that you have identified a number of apprentices that have been left alone on work sites. What, in your experience, do you attribute that to? Is there a consistent reason why that sort of behaviour has been happening?

Ms Agius: I think there are many reasons why that happens. In some cases, a supervisor may send the apprentice to the site earlier to set up things and they are not actually doing work. I have experienced that, but that apprentice should not be there on their own; they should always be supervised.

MR DAVIS: Apprentices are in the greater cohort of being at risk of being on sites by themselves or being in vulnerable situations. Do you attribute that to the power imbalance perhaps because of the age difference between the young apprentice and their usually older bosses?

Ms Agius: I think there are many reasons, and one of the reasons might be that young people are less likely to come forward and speak up about the risk to their safety. Sometimes they might be lacking in confidence about those sorts of things. It is difficult to pinpoint just one reason. I think it is a variety of things.

MR DAVIS: If we or anyone else in the community was working with or knew of a young person who felt vulnerable on a work site, particularly an apprentice—and the apprentice was mostly fearful of retribution, losing their apprenticeship, losing their job—what recommendation would you give them?

Ms Agius: I would say that they should contact WorkSafe.

MR DAVIS: They can do that anonymously?

Ms Agius: They can do that anonymously. We respond. Our reactive work is responding to community and workplace complaints, and we receive a number of those. Particularly if it was a young worker, our inspectors would go out to that site.

MR DAVIS: Last question. In terms of the staffing that you have at the moment, you do not see any situation where WorkSafe could not meet the demand if there were more young people making you aware of vulnerable work conditions? You would always be able to do a site visit?

Ms Agius: Whilst we have one dedicated inspector who works in that program, all of our inspectors will conduct reactive work if a complaint is received by a young worker. Any one of our inspectors can go out, but if you are asking me if we could do with more resources—absolutely.

MR DAVIS: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: When we started off, Mr Cain asked you about the 1,629 workplace inspections and you said that some of them may be repeat notices and repeat infringements.

Ms Agius: In the same workplace. So there could be one work site that might, for instance, have improvement prohibition infringements. If you add up all the figures it looks as if we only have a 24 per cent compliance; actually, one workplace might have 10 or 20 of those notices.

In relation to repeat employers, one of the things that we have found in the residential construction strategy Operation Safe Prospect is that we are not seeing a lot of repeat non-compliance. Generally, if we revisit a site we have been to before, that site will now be compliant. We issued 77 last week. I think none of those—but I am happy to confirm that and take it on notice—were “repeat offenders”, if I can use that term.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, what was the scale? A notice, an infringement and—

Ms Agius: There are three types of enforcement tools that we have. The first is an improvement notice. We use improvement notices largely as our educative framework. So it is a notice to an officer in a workplace that they need to improve something in their workplace. In construction it may be housekeeping, for instance, where we may issue an improvement notice. If we have not issued notices on that particular employer before, we may issue an improvement notice, and it would depend on how compliant they have been historically.

A prohibition notice is either to stop work of a particular activity, or we may prohibit the entire workplace. You may have seen some of the media reports saying that we have closed down sites. That is where we have issued prohibition notices because the risk to the workers is so high that we may close down the whole site, or we may use an infringement notice to cease a particular activity. So we may prohibit, for instance,

someone from accessing level 2 of a two-storey house. And an infringement notice is an on-the-spot fine.

THE CHAIR: For the 1,629 inspections, are you able to provide to the committee how many notices of each type there were, by number of locations Is that 600 locations that had this many of a certain infringement type?

Ms Agius: I can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Gentleman: Can I just respond to Mr Davis's earlier queries about young workers?

THE CHAIR: Please.

Mr Gentleman: We do fund the Young Workers Advice Service to help vulnerable workers. So there is another resource there that we can use to help those young people. It is a focus for me, Mr Davis, as minister—and as a young apprentice in an earlier life. We want to make sure that we can provide young people with a strong career and a safe career into the future. The early interventions, I think, can give them the knowledge to assure that in the future too.

MR DAVIS: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Members, do you have any further questions about WorkSafe? If we could move on, we do not have a lot of time left. Does anyone have questions for the Long Service Leave Authority?

MR CAIN: Yes, I do, Chair.

MS ORR: Yes, I have one too.

THE CHAIR: We will go to the Long Service Leave Authority.

MR DAVIS: On page 37 of the Long Service Leave Authority's annual report, the operating statement says that the authority earned almost \$7 million in investment income and an operating surplus of \$4 million. Can you explain what this income was used for?

Ms Savage: I acknowledge the privilege statement. Page 37 of the annual report?

MR DAVIS: That is right, although I note Mr Cain's comments that we might be having a slight difference between digital and physical. I understand it to be page 37.

Ms Savage: In terms of what the authority earns, that is revenue that comes in from either investment returns or employer levy. That is then reinvested because it pays for the future liabilities of the schemes. So it is not as if there is a profit that is then spent on other things. It actually pays for the administration of the authority, but everything is then reinvested for the future benefit entitlement payments.

MR DAVIS: Has that always been how the Long Service Leave Authority has used the investment income?

Ms Savage: Yes. It is reinvested for future liabilities. It pays for salaries and wages of the authority's staff and the normal operating costs that you would see associated with the authority as well—consultancies, IT systems and that type of thing. That has always been the case.

MR DAVIS: Forgive me; as a new member I know I am trudging over what must be ancient history, but I am curious. Do you know how that decision was originally determined? It sounds like that is how the Long Service Leave Authority has always been using this money.

Ms Savage: Yes.

MR DAVIS: Are you aware of how that decision originally came to be?

Ms Savage: That would be a decision from 40 years ago when the building and construction industry was first implemented. That was a particular model that I assume was picked up at that particular point in time.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you could google that, Mr Davis, while you are still allowed to.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Davis, I think the adage is that it needs to wash its own face. That is the terminology for receiving some revenue to actually run the authority and then provide the income stream for those who are accessing long service leave later on.

MR DAVIS: That is clear; thank you.

MR CAIN: This question is to the minister. I believe it will be on a topic that is extremely fresh in both our minds. It relates to exemption requests under the portable long service leave legislation. Minister, how many such requests have been received in the 2020-21 financial year?

Mr Gentleman: I have to seek authority for that. Exemption requests—

Ms Savage: There is certainly one that I am aware of. I believe there may have been two but I will have to double-check that number.

MR CAIN: But they are obviously not numerous by any means, by the sound of it.

Ms Savage: No.

MR CAIN: In terms of the delegate reaching a decision, whether it is the minister or a delegate, are there policy guidelines as to the exercise of that discretion to exempt an organisation?

Ms Savage: It may be easier if I say that the authority does not actually have a lot to

do with that particular process.

MR CAIN: Yes, I do believe that it comes from the minister.

Mr Gentleman: Yes, it is up to me. Not-for-profit organisations, for example, would seek exemption. I will ask Mr Young. He has most of the information on the decision-making process and the advice that comes up to me as minister.

MR CAIN: In particular, are there written guidelines that can be provided?

Mr Young: I think the provision that you are referring to, Mr Cain, is a ministerial discretion to determine specific employers to be outside the operation of the scheme where, minus the application of that discretion, they would be covered. There is an associated section that requires the minister, in exercising that delegation, to do so only where it would be consistent with the intention of the legislation.

MR CAIN: So a reasonableness test. Are there written guidelines to guide the minister on reaching his decision?

Mr Young: No—

Mr Gentleman: There is written advice from the directorate to me.

MR CAIN: What review rights exist for someone who receives a negative decision—their request is for the exemption and that is denied?

Mr Gentleman: They would have to join the scheme.

Mr Young: There would be none.

MR CAIN: There are no review rights?

Mr Young: It is up to ministerial discretion.

MR CAIN: What about under the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act?

Mr Young: I do not believe that that would apply.

MR CAIN: It is something I will be doing a QON on, but the AD(JR) Act does provide a right to review a government decision, absent a specified review path within the legislation itself. That is my understanding, but I will get some clarity from you on that.

Mr Gentleman: I will take that on notice.

Mr Young: I am able to respond to the question taken on notice earlier about the difference in the claims expenses. In the printed version of budget paper B, page 291, there is a listed figure for claims expenses: the audited result in 2019-20 of \$36.7 million, as compared to the budget for 2020-21, a much higher figure of \$48.189 million. The reason for that difference is that the 2019-20 audited outcome is

based on the actual experience of that year, which was a better than expected year, so claims expenses were somewhat lower, and there were some beneficial timing issues also. In the 2020-21 budget, that figure is based on an estimate of expected costs in the year and takes into account uncertainty, actuarial input and so forth. That is the reason for that difference.

As to the earlier discussion, I note that we have taken it on notice, but the advice I have from officials is that the AD(JR) review would be applicable for an error of law in the reviewable decision, so we do not believe that it would apply in that circumstance, given that it is a ministerial discretion.

MR CAIN: But an error of law could be found. That is another question.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister and officials, for appearing today.

Hearing suspended from 3.00 to 3.14 pm.

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directory

Miners, Mr Stephen, Acting Under Treasurer

Konti, Ms Bettina, Deputy Director-General and Chief Digital Officer, Digital, Data and Technology Solutions

Bain, Mr Glenn, Executive Group Manager, Procurement ACT, Commercial Services and Infrastructure Group

Bailey, Mr Daniel, Executive Group Manager, Property and Venues, Commercial Services and Infrastructure Group

Elkins, Mr Matthew, Executive Branch Manager, Venues, Commercial Services and Infrastructure Group

Clarke, Mrs Liz, Executive Branch Manager, ACT Property Group, Commercial Services and Infrastructure Group

Shields, Mrs Penny, General Manager, ACT Insurance Authority, Commercial Services and Infrastructure Group

Holmes, Ms Lisa, MAI Commissioner, LTCS Commissioner and Executive Branch Manager, Economic and Financial, Economic Budget and Industrial Relations

THE CHAIR: The committee is examining the annual reports and budget outputs relating to the Special Minister of State portfolio. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Minister Steel, for appearing today in your capacity as Special Minister of State, and I thank your accompanying officials from CMTEDD and other government entities for attending today. When you speak for the first time, please ensure that you confirm out loud for the record that you understand the implications of the privilege statement.

MS ORR: Minister, reducing insurance premiums? The motor accident industry's commission report? Is that now? Where would you like to start?

Mr Steel: I am in your hands.

MS ORR: Let us start with that, because it is top of my list. Can you provide an update on the implementation of the new Motor Accident Injuries Scheme, particularly the impact it has had on insurance premiums?

Mr Steel: I acknowledge and have read the privilege statement. I will hand over to Lisa Holmes shortly to talk more about the scheme, which is in its first year of operation, particularly during the reporting period of the annual report. What we have seen since the new scheme came into force is that there has been a reduction in the average premiums under the MAI Scheme. There has been a reduction of, on average, 14.7 per cent that has been seen, on the commencement of the scheme, from 1 February last year to 1 July during the reporting period. That equates to an average reduction of about \$78, so quite a substantial decrease as a result of the new scheme coming into force.

Ms Holmes: I acknowledge that I have read the privilege statement. In relation to the premiums, we had reductions in the premiums immediately in the lead-up to the scheme, in anticipation of the new scheme starting, as well as when the new scheme actually commenced on 1 February 2020. Since then we have had more reductions which have gone through. We have seen a further reduction from 1 February 2020 up to 1 February 2021 of \$18.30, and there is another reduction which is about to come into place from 1 April. So we saw the reductions occur when the scheme came in and we are continuing at the moment to see reductions in the premiums.

MR DAVIS: I want to talk about the charter of procurement values, which was developed under the previous government. It does not seem as though, under the goods and services procurement document, there was any reference to that charter of procurement values. I am wondering why that was the case.

Mr Steel: This is a new charter that has been implemented in the ACT government. There are a range of ways in which Procurement ACT has been working across government to embed the charter during the first period of its operation. This sets out the values that we will be looking at with regard to procurement. There is a stream of work underway for each of those values as well, and how they can be embedded and further refined.

One example is the environmental responsibility value under the charter. Further work will be undertaken there, particularly around the circular economy and how we can better procure recycled goods, particularly in infrastructure projects. There is a whole range of work that is underway in that regard as well. I will hand over to Glenn Bain to talk further about the specific matter that you have raised.

Mr Bain: I acknowledge having read the privilege statement. I think the key, two-second answer is that it is probably a function of timing inasmuch as the procurement values are a creature of the ministerial direction made in September. That is why the 2019-20 period might not have been as reflective of that. We were certainly in the development phase by the end of that year, but it was not anything that we could really announce or talk to.

MR DAVIS: That is okay. Minister, you referenced that there is a time frame. Is there a publicly available time frame that we can expect to see some movement on?

Mr Steel: I do not think I mentioned a time frame.

MR DAVIS: A time frame exists, by the very nature of the fact that we only agreed to it in September, so no doubt there will need to be some sort of process put in place to develop and subsequently implement the charter. I am wondering if you want to outline some key milestones or key dates for that.

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Glenn to talk through that. There have been a whole range of things associated with the charter, including the delivery of training across agencies, updating procurement templates and systems to support the ministerial direction and working on simplifying processes for agencies to embed those procurement values in their procurement processes that they are undertaking. There is

also reporting against the direction that commenced on 1 January this year for notifiable contracts with regard to the values.

Mr Bain: As the minister said, the implementation and the rollout of the policy, and the information and education awareness program attached to it, is ongoing. We have had 200-plus members of a community of practice fully engaged in that implementation, training and rollout so that the directorates are being better informed on what assistance the charter of values can give in their procurements, in seeking the best bang for their buck in terms of procurement outcomes. There is an internal work program to develop further, as needs are identified, stronger guidance material and new initiatives to assist in getting better value according to each of the values.

You would be aware of some of the early work that has been done on this. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy, for example, is called out specifically as one of the values within the charter. There was a fair bit of work involved in getting a policy up that would lend itself to the broader application of the charter. There will be further initiatives, whether they be specific policies or simply one-off initiatives and assistance provided to help the directorates meet the other values.

MR DAVIS: I suppose the core of my question, the core of my point, is—and I appreciate that Rome was not built in a day—are you working to at least internal time frames as to when you can expect to see the charter fully implemented rather than, as we are at the moment, just talking about policy frameworks? And when are we going to see targets? That is what I am asking.

Mr Bain: I cannot comment on whether there will ever be targets imposed against any of those particular elements. That is a matter of policy that has not yet been discussed or raised. The idea of the charter itself is to allow—to give permission for—procurement practitioners and delegates to understand that these are the values of government that we are looking for in our seeking value for money out of our procurements.

I think, to be perfectly frank, in a policy sense it is probably too immature in our data collection, our understanding of how we are travelling—our baseline, if you like—against some of these values, and of the need for and appropriate levels of any such targets. It is too embryonic to really look at that, I suggest.

MR DAVIS: If it is a policy question, I will put it to the minister. Minister, would you hope that this program would have targets inevitably?

Mr Steel: As Mr Bain mentioned, there is an internal work program that is looking at further detailed development under each of the values. One of those has been the environmental responsibility value in the work that we are doing to try to build a circular economy. There is a range of work that is happening in that space. That may look at specific targets within that particular value that go towards the use of recycled material in infrastructure projects or in other types of procurements. That work is happening nationally under the national waste policy as well. We will certainly be working closely with the commonwealth in that regard to try to build the protocols and standards with regard to the use of recycling.

So there are work streams that have been committed to under the work program, and that gives us a sense of what the priorities are and the timing on those. But these are ongoing pieces of work. The values are in place, though. It is an ongoing matter of embedding those continuously and improving how we go about embedding those values in each of our procurement processes. That is going to change over time. They morph over time as standards change, particularly in the environment space but also once we have finished our review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy, which is underway and has been out for consultation over the past month.

MR DAVIS: If I understand your answer correctly, when it comes to at least the implementation of environmental policy as it pertains to the charter, we are a bit at the mercy of the body of work we are contributing to at the federal level. That does not necessarily stop us from being quite open about the time frames we are putting on the implementation of other parts of the charter, in particular around social procurement, on which I understand there is quite an appetite to get some clear time lines within the community. I am really struggling to get dates, so I wonder if anyone feels comfortable being specific about when the community could expect to see some key milestones, even if they are just the next phase of a consultation process, when some of the key stakeholders can expect to see the needle moving on this issue beyond broad values.

Mr Steel: I think we have been clear that this is an ongoing process of embedding the values. The streams of work under each of these values will be prioritised. I have clearly put forward the circular economy side as being something that I think is a priority to work on.

In terms of social procurement, and the work that is going under the Secure Local Jobs Code as well, we will certainly be prioritising that in response to reviews that have been undertaken in that regard. Those will be priorities in terms of the work streams and embedding the values—also, of course, responding to the recommendations of the review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy. They are the priorities at the moment and we look forward to updating the Assembly as we progress.

MR DAVIS: To be clear, Minister, and then I will stop, you have not given any direction on specific dates for these work plans to be completed by?

THE CHAIR: I think that has been asked and answered. We will move on.

MS ORR: On the procurement charter and the various aspects of it such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy, which is a part of that broader social procurement aspect, the report mentions that the proportion of goods and services contracts awarded to Indigenous suppliers or social suppliers exceeded the target. Can you please tell me more about that outcome and how that policy has enabled that outcome?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Glenn Bain to provide an update on the procurement policy and the outcomes that we are achieving there.

Mr Bain: It is not just anecdotal; there is a growing body of evidence that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy is making significant changes to the culture and behaviour across the ACT public service with regard to how they are approaching suitable procurement methodologies. To be perfectly fair to them, they are less worried about the target than they are about the overall outcome, and I think that is a positive step.

With the numbers themselves, it is a little bit confused in terms of the way they are reported at the moment. We have a reporting figure of some three per cent. I think there were 26 separate contractors engaged. That might be—this is confusing—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other social providers. That is the only place that you will find those sorts of numbers. Twenty-six out of 814 contractors engaged were either Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises or identified as social enterprises.

The evidence to which I am pointing, though, is the growing body of data that suggests we are looking at opportunities whereby an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprise can supply all or part of a procurement outcome. We are seeing it in the goods and services space, particularly. We are seeing certain methodologies being adapted to that purpose, whether it be a break-up of a larger need, and specifically to identify an element of that need that can be addressed through such a supplier; and, where appropriate and under the guidance that we have provided on appropriate use of exemptions, we are seeing those sorts of opportunities being actively followed up.

MS ORR: You mentioned in your answer, Mr Bain, that you got a sense that people were really committed to the outcome as much as anything else. Can you elaborate on what you meant by that?

Mr Bain: Certainly. As you would be aware, probably better than most, the outcome is part of that greater picture of the economic participation of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. With any target, or indeed any indicator, that should be taken as a full suite, before you get a true picture.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy targets are a classic example of that. We have one target which goes to the percentage or proportion of spend. Two large contracts from a particular entity could skew that quite significantly and give a false impression, if you like, of being better off or further forward on our targets than we really are. The full suite, when taken as a complete set, though, gives us that more rounded view of where we are going.

As we see improvements in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises that are invited to tender, and we see the number of distinct enterprises that are then engaged through those processes combined with that third headline-grabbing number of the proportion of dollars, I think that is a better indicator of where we are going, and we are seeing progress against all three of those.

MS ORR: Can you remind the committee—because there is at least one newbie here—what the goal of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy was for the ACT government?

Mr Bain: The goal was essentially to remove, as far as possible, the barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises engaging with the ACT government in their procurement processes. It was not so much a positive as a “removing any negatives” approach. That is why I say that the cultural and behavioural change is as deeply needed as reporting against a number.

Mr Miners: I will add to Mr Bain’s answer. I have read the privilege statement. That cultural thing is a very important point, and we are certainly seeing that across the ACTPS. A large part of that has just been the way that the policy has been rolled out. A lot of work has been done by the team in promoting that, talking to agencies, making sure that everyone is aware of the policy, and running workshops to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander companies who can contract for work.

That whole change in looking at this and being very proactive in the way we do it really is changing the policy. Now people automatically think, “Okay, where am I in this space? What can I do? What other companies do I need to be looking at?” That is where you really get the change. As Mr Bain said, it is about the culture in the organisation, actually wanting to go out, and making sure that we are looking at these companies for procurement options.

MR CAIN: Minister, what role do you play in coordinating advice on infrastructure projects within the capital framework?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Glenn Bain to talk further about our role in relation to infrastructure and the work that Procurement ACT does in working with each of the agencies, and particularly with MPC. It provides advice on construction procurement.

Mr Bain: It is a very interesting question to ask because we are doing a fair bit of work with Major Projects Canberra and with our colleagues in the infrastructure finance area to try and provide some clarity internally as to who is who in the zoo in that space. It is fair to say, as the minister alluded to, that we have a role in that. We have the overarching policy and procurement framework responsibilities within Procurement ACT, but the day-to-day or practical application, particularly when it comes to the capital or infrastructure spend, sits largely with the Major Projects Canberra team, in consultation with Mr Asteraki and his team within the broader CSI group for infrastructure finance. That is where the capital framework responsibility sits, most specifically.

MR CAIN: Minister, how many unsolicited proposals have come in to government since your appointment as Special Minister of State? What is a typical unsolicited proposal, without giving details of actual applicants or proposals?

Mr Steel: I will pass over to Glenn Bain or Stephen Miners to provide some detail about the unsolicited proposals, in terms of how many have been received. There are relatively few that come through and they are obviously assessed at arm’s length from me and the cabinet, but we are informed about their progress from time to time. Typically, some of those proposals often involve asking the government for land, which can be somewhat challenging. The process that is involved looks at a range of

different things, but particularly whether the proposal is genuinely innovative and whether it requires the support of government as a single source procurement or whether it would be better dealt with by way of an open tender by government, if government has an interest in that particular area.

MR CAIN: Are you talking about community organisations or commercial developers?

Mr Steel: It could be a range of proponents, yes.

Mr Miners: Proposals can be received from a wide range of organisations who feel they have a different way or a unique offering to do something. I will have to chase up the exact number we have received. I do not have that to hand, but I am sure that will come through during these hearings and I will be able to get that to you.

MR CAIN: The annual report advises that assessments of unsolicited proposals did not meet the prescribed time scales. What, if any, financial repercussions were there for not meeting responses to unsolicited proposals?

Mr Miners: I am not quite sure that I followed the last part of that question.

MR CAIN: The premise was that assessments of unsolicited proposals did not meet the prescribed time scales.

Mr Miners: The time frame we have around unsolicited bids is an average and it is a target that we try to meet, but it will vary very much, based on the type of proposal. Some unsolicited proposals may be very simple and can be processed very quickly. Others will require much more analysis in depth and the time frame target is never going to be met for those types of ones. It really depends on the type of proposal that comes in.

There are no financial implications for not meeting them because it is a process that we would have to run through with proponents of proposals. We will try and work through the proposal and decide whether it gets taken to government and whether they will consider that as something to proceed with. I am not sure what you mean about when there is a penalty or a cost for not meeting the time frame. The time frame is something that is set out to help us push them through as quickly as we can, but it will vary widely across the different sorts of proposals we receive.

MR CAIN: I guess it is implicit that the longer a public service agency takes to process something, that is a cost in itself.

Mr Steel: There is no guarantee that the government will accept a proposal. I think that is the point. It is an unsolicited proposal; it is not something that is supported by government. It is coming to us and asking us to do something. That could be wide ranging. Often they are not proposals that can be supported by government, for a range of reasons, or they would be better dealt with by way of a tender process, if government had an interest in doing that.

MR CAIN: Obviously, there is a process to help you reach that decision, one way or another.

Mr Miners: There is also a cost in proceeding too quickly on these things. If you are putting up advice and do not fully understand the nature of the proposal then that also has a cost attached to it. Certainly, the approach we take is to move as quickly as we can on them, to make sure ministers have all of the information they need to make a decision, and to do that as quickly as possible but not to rush it through, to make sure that we understand the proposals before they go up. That may involve just taking up the proposal or it may be something where we need to meet with the proponents several times to work through exactly what is being proposed.

MR CAIN: Or review the time scales that you are imposing upon yourself.

Mr Miners: Or trying to meet them as best we can.

THE CHAIR: Where did the concept of the role of Special Minister of State come from?

Mr Steel: The role is in the administrative arrangements instrument and it encompasses a whole range of areas we are covering today, particularly those areas based in CMTEDD, but it also crosses into the JACS area, including racing.

The role provides support to the Chief Minister and his portfolio in the areas of procurement, the ACT Insurance Authority in particular, electoral reform and a range of different areas. It is perhaps a new concept in the ACT government but certainly not in relation to other state governments and also commonwealth. It is probably the best title to describe a very broad ranging set of portfolio areas.

THE CHAIR: We did not have it before; why is it needed now?

Mr Steel: That is a matter for the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister determines the administrative arrangements. I think you may have asked him about that in the Assembly just recently.

THE CHAIR: And why is it not the Special Minister for Territory?

Mr Steel: These are state functions, so it suggests the small “s” form of the word.

MR CAIN: How many staff are assigned to help you fulfil this special role?

Mr Steel: The usual ministerial staff allocations. That has not changed in that regard.

MR CAIN: Could you be more explicit?

Mr Steel: I do not have a specific extra allocation for undertaking this particular portfolio.

THE CHAIR: There is no additional staffed person for the Special Minister of State?

Mr Steel: No, but I have allocated one of my existing staff members to support me in relation to this.

MR CAIN: Is there a separate budget for this line of work?

Mr Steel: No, not that I am aware of. It comes out of the executive support budget, as do all other ministerial staff.

THE CHAIR: What particular KPIs have been assigned to you in the role of Special Minister of State?

Mr Steel: The output classes that have been identified by government are all important areas. There are no specific issues other than the commitments we committed to at the election in each of these areas and those that have been identified in the parliamentary and governing agreement.

THE CHAIR: Previously, for example, where would responsibility for the digital strategy have sat?

Mr Steel: I understand it was with the Chief Minister.

MR CAIN: You wonder if a special position for an ACT government minister with no budget line and no extra staff actually accomplishes anything.

THE CHAIR: Is that a statement or a question?

MR CAIN: I am happy for the minister to comment on that.

Mr Steel: Multiple ministers have taken responsibility for CMTEDD portfolios in the past, and this would be no different.

MR CAIN: But no resources to do whatever the tasks are?

Mr Steel: We have existing resources which we use to perform these functions. These were performed in the past by other ministers, including those in addition to the Chief Minister. But they have been now brought together under one portfolio, which is very good.

MS ORR: My question goes to the Property Group's community group support at page 79. Could you provide more information on Property Group's role as part of the ACT government's economic stimulus and survival packages?

Mr Steel: I will invite Daniel Bailey to talk further about the role of Property Group during the COVID-19 pandemic and specifically in relation to the community groups. We know that many of the community groups that tenant ACT government properties have been affected during the pandemic and the reporting period of the annual report. We have been able to provide them with around \$8 million worth of rental relief over the period. That has meant that those organisations have been supported. Often they have been on JobKeeper. So they have seen a significant decline in revenue commensurate with the requirements under JobKeeper and we have been able to provide them with some relief during the period.

Mr Bailey: I acknowledge the privilege statement. As the minister has outlined, ACT Property Group was the central coordination point for the community support program, given that ACT Property Group have the majority of community tenants for government. To date—this is very fresh data—we have supported over 230 tenants. Of that number, 186 are community groups, 43 are commercial groups and one is a residential group. That funding has been for a total, as the minister said, of \$8.9 million.

ACT Property Group supports that and coordinates that for a number of other directorates because Health, Arts, the Community Services Directorate, the Facilities Corporation, and Transport Canberra and City Services all have different tenancies.

MS ORR: How many community groups were provided with rent relief?

Mr Steel: Around 230 different groups were provided with rental relief, so a significant number. There was \$8 million in rent waivers over the period which began on 1 April last year.

MS ORR: I believe as part of that program upgrades were undertaken to community facilities as well?

Mr Steel: Yes. As part of the screwdriver-ready stimulus project, a number of properties tenanted by community groups have been upgraded, and that has been across the city. It has been quite a wide variety of work. The whole idea of the screwdriver-ready packages and the subsequent fast-track programs was to try and provide a variety of different work, particularly labour-intensive work, to create employment during the period in which there was great uncertainty.

Upgrades have ranged from disability access upgrades through to solar panel installation to help bring down energy costs in certain properties, electrical upgrades, audiovisual upgrades, HVAC upgrades and painting. This basically enabled us to bring forward a whole range of different maintenance works which would have taken place over a longer period of time and to get those done much more quickly. I will hand over to Daniel Bailey to talk in further detail about those.

Mr Bailey: As the minister said, we took advantage of the opportunity of COVID, where a lot of these buildings were vacant as well as providing stimulus. So we had a number of screwdriver-ready projects that we were able to do, as the minister mentioned. There were some disability compliance works in a number of the community facilities, which may have been as simple as door openers we were able to roll out in a number of properties—little items that mean quite a lot to community groups. There was painting and carpeting and things like that.

I can be specific if you would like, but we generally were able to work across most of the portfolio. As you know, our portfolio is fairly varied. It is a fairly ageing portfolio, so it was a good opportunity to get in and provide those works. I am not sure if you are after any specifics for different properties?

MS ORR: Could you run us through some of the works that were done?

Mr Bailey: We were able to go into the Griffin Centre, where there are a couple of tenancies where the tenants had varying abilities. The doors were old-school turn-key style which were difficult to open and we were able to get fully automatic doors, so as they walk up to the entrance way the door will open. We have rolled out that at a couple of different places.

Mr Steel: In your electorate, Ms Orr, Gungahlin Community Centre had the carpet replaced. Further down south there was work at the Tuggeranong Community Centre which included painting, carpeting and floor repairs. Quite a wide variety of much-needed works have been undertaken and have been appreciated by those community groups. Some of the infrastructure is ageing at some of these properties, particularly the old school sites, for example, so some works were undertaken there.

MS ORR: What feedback have you have received from the tenants on the works that have been undertaken?

Mr Bailey: That has been really positive. Some of the works we are able to do for these groups; they just do not have the budget. Anything they have to spend on their properties is money they cannot use for their other duties. So for us to be able to take on some of these works has been well received. We have toured around, post completion of the projects, and the praise has been quite high, really appreciating what we have done. It makes their lives a lot easier when things they normally have to fund themselves we have been able to go in there and do.

THE CHAIR: Mr Bailey, you mentioned organisations that were getting JobKeeper and the rental relief waiver. Was that an eligibility requirement for the rental relief?

Mr Bailey: Yes, that is how we have been able to categorise the groups. If they were eligible for JobKeeper then they were eligible to get the rental assistance. It has been the simplest and easiest way. Whilst we think JobKeeper may finish in March, we have been using it up to this point. The ACT government have the program running until the end of June, so it will be more difficult then, obviously, as JobKeeper will not be around, so there might not be that threshold, but they will individually apply. Some of the groups are getting back full strength now and they may not need it post March, but there is still the avenue that, even when JobKeeper finishes, they can actually apply for it and continue on.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you mentioned carpet and floor upgrades at the Tuggeranong Community Centre. Do you know how much was spent on that?

Mr Steel: We will take that on notice.

Mr Bailey: We will have it here; I will be able to get that for you.

THE CHAIR: Did the ACT government pay for all of that? I thought the federal government was putting some money towards carpet?

Mr Steel: There have been a range of different stimulus packages. The ACT government undertook the fast-track programs. There was also the Look and Feel program and also round 1 of the local roads and community infrastructure funding.

Some community property upgrades were put through that process to use that federal government funding which was made available during the pandemic.

THE CHAIR: Would you be able to provide the breakdown of how much was spent at Tuggeranong, and would you know what the federal component was?

Mr Steel: The LRCI projects were 100 per cent federal government funded.

THE CHAIR: But you do not know what the contribution to carpet at the Tuggeranong Community centre was?

Mr Steel: We can take on notice the specific costs, but if it was funded under that program it was 100 per cent federal government funding under the LRCI. The rest of the stimulus programs were mostly funded in this space by the territory government.

Ms Clarke: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The Tuggeranong work was part of the LRCI project and it included \$30,000 for the timber floor replacement, \$30,000 for the carpet, \$80,000 for the external paint, \$50,000 for the handrails upgrade, and around \$60,000 for the fire system.

THE CHAIR: What was the ACT government contribution to Tuggeranong Community Centre?

Mr Steel: It was funded under the LRCI project. The ACT government had the role of allocating that funding, and we allocated that federal funding, as Ms Clarke has mentioned, to that project.

THE CHAIR: There is no co-contribution?

Mr Steel: Not with that scheme. There has been with other projects, mainly in the roads portfolio.

THE CHAIR: So it was actually federal funding?

Mr Steel: Federal funding allocated by the ACT government. We chose to allocate it to upgrade government properties. But ACT government fast-track funding has been also provided to support this.

Ms Clarke: Absolutely. There have been a lot of works done with the fast-track projects that have been funded by the ACT government.

MR CAIN: Minister, you are responsible for venues infrastructure upgrades, excluding Venues Canberra. What venues are you responsible for?

Mr Steel: There are a variety of different venues, and I will ask Daniel Bailey to provide some advice on the numbers. The key venues have already been discussed earlier in the hearings—the National Arboretum, GIO Stadium, Manuka Oval. There are a range of venues they cover.

Mr Bailey: Venues Canberra, as the minister said, has GIO Stadium, Manuka Oval,

and Exhibition Park in Canberra and we have the Arboretum and Stromlo Forest Park. It is two branches. Venues Canberra itself specifically looks after GIO, Manuka and Exhibition Park and there is another branch that looks after the National Arboretum and Stromlo Forest Park.

THE CHAIR: Can you give a couple of examples of what you manage the infrastructure upgrades for?

Mr Bailey: The reason this hearing is excluding the infrastructure part is that that was the hearing earlier this morning with the Chief Minister, who is responsible for those infrastructure projects.

THE CHAIR: I understand that; we are excluding Venues Canberra. But can you give me a few examples of the ones you do look after?

Mr Miners: The difference is that there is a ministerial split, not a departmental split. So different ministers are responsible for different parts of it, but Mr Bailey and his team are responsible for all of it.

Mr Steel: The ongoing management of these venues is in my area of portfolio responsibility, but I would not be responsible for the new stadium that was discussed earlier or anything like that that.

MR CAIN: What are the most significant works going on in those venues at the moment?

Mr Steel: I will start and then hand over to Mr Bailey. Work is being undertaken looking at the future of Exhibition Park, particularly in light of the election commitment to a new multi-purpose, multicultural events centre. The Arboretum, of course, has a very active program of works. I think you discussed the hotel works earlier in the hearings, but obviously the development of the Arboretum according to the master plan. Stromlo Forest Park has a master plan, and the future development of that is something that will be worked on over the next few years as Molonglo continues to grow and that becomes an even more important recreational precinct as well.

There has been a lot of ongoing work, particularly over the COVID-19 pandemic, in managing various events that unfortunately had to be cancelled. Some were able to be held but in quite innovative ways, including the venues at Manuka Oval and Exhibition Park.

Mr Bailey: There are always works going on in all of the venues. These venues hold numerous functions and lots of people go there, so we are always looking at a works program. That is why there will always be a BIF program or things like that so that we are keeping the buildings up to a current standard.

We host international games at Manuka and even GIO Stadium, so we want to make sure that we keep the amenity up to a level that not only houses that but where we actually draw the content. As we mentioned in the hearing earlier today, our relationship with Cricket Australia, and also because of the amenity we have at the

oval and the recently completed broadcast media centre, meant that we hosted 15 cricket games over the summer period when normally we might host two or three games. There were a lot of COVID restrictions but we had the facilities; we had the capability. So we have lots of projects on the go all the time.

MR CAIN: There were unexpected greater number of cricket games over the last month or so. How was that accommodated for financially?

Mr Bailey: It was actually a good outcome for Venues. Normally to get international games or anything like that you would be bidding to get them or we would be paying to get this content. In these instances we actually got a standard venue hire. So we did not pay anything out; we actually got venue hire for hiring out the facility.

THE CHAIR: We did cover this in some detail in the previous session with the Minister for Economic Development.

MR CAIN: I beg your pardon.

THE CHAIR: With Exhibition Park, I wondered about the accommodation. Presumably the budget position is much lower than you expected? They would be barely used, is that correct?

Mr Steel: Certainly it has seen a dip—I was out there on site earlier in the year—and the camping areas as well. Hopefully that will come back over time as people undertake more domestic travel.

Mr Bailey: Exhibition Park, with COVID unfortunately everything pretty much stopped. As we mentioned this morning, we were able to transition to the COVID testing centre and the food bank. We were able to get some works done. Events are happening again there now. They are much smaller, but we have been able to host a number of things under COVID.

Mr Elkins: I acknowledge the privilege statement. Over the period of COVID we have had dramatically reduced capacity to host events. That gave us the opportunity to support community through things such as the Canberra Relief Network and also by standing up the testing centre. What we have been able to do over the period is that, in reviewing the COVID-safe regulations, we have started to build back into hosting events at EPIC and across the whole Venues Canberra network. We developed protocols that allowed us to bring back smaller events and they have led to progression events. We hosted the boxing out at EPIC in December and it saw us progress. Those skill sets that we have brought to EPIC also have been used across the whole Venues Canberra suite.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you mentioned options of relocating and the future of Exhibition Park. Would that include getting rid of that accommodation facility?

Mr Steel: Are you referring to the privately operated accommodation facility north of Exhibition Park or are you referring to the camping facilities?

THE CHAIR: The privately operated facilities there. They were built by the

government, were they not?

Mr Elkins: There is no position at the moment to move the camping grounds, either ours or the privately run accommodation.

Mr Bailey: We actually have a lease in place with Free Spirit for 30 years. They have invested quite a lot of money and infrastructure and they are only part way through a three-stage process. I think they are getting into the camping and cabin part of it down the back of it now. So they are there for the long term.

THE CHAIR: I am thinking of the school accommodation.

Mr Bailey: Yes, that is Free Spirit accommodation. It is just north of EPIC as you are heading out of town. We are in a long-term lease with that.

THE CHAIR: But it is owned by the government?

Mr Bailey: The land, yes. So we get land rent but the infrastructure is owned by Free Spirit.

THE CHAIR: What options are you looking at?

Mr Steel: The option we are looking at is the delivery of the election commitment in regard to the 10,000-square-metre multi-purpose indoor venue for the multicultural community to have weddings and large-scale events. Obviously when we look at that we are looking more broadly at the whole site. Some of the existing pavilions are ageing, and we are looking at the suitability of a particular location within the footprint to locate that facility. That sort of early planning work is going on at the moment to look at where that might be situated.

Obviously the light rail stop at EPIC has been utilised very heavily when there have been various events at EPIC, including music festivals and the like. So if we build a facility there for the multicultural community we are looking at how best we can provide transport access. That goes to where the gates are and the key entrance points for the venue. This project has caused us to look at a more holistic view of Exhibition Park and the future of the venue.

THE CHAIR: Are you considering moving the whole footprint, Exhibition Park, somewhere else?

Mr Steel: Not at this time, no. It is quite well located. It has very good public transport access and that makes it easier for everyone in Canberra to access.

THE CHAIR: With consultation in respect to the footprint of Exhibition Park, will there be any impact on public transport as a result of the recently released Canberra Racing Club redevelopment?

Mr Steel: Certainly we are in discussions with the racing club to better understand their proposal in relation to potential residential or commercial development on their site, which is across the other side of Flemington Road. Discussion is happening to

understand that, and that will be ongoing, obviously, with a view to not wanting to have events at Exhibition Park stopped as a result of residential development that might occur close by.

THE CHAIR: A pre-existing tenant, if you like.

Mr Steel: Yes, exactly. We need a space in Canberra where we can do some of those louder events. Exhibition Park is not really close to much residential apart from the other side of the Federal Highway. It is important to have those spaces, and from what I understand the residential is not directly located on Flemington Road; it is further down to the south of the racing club site.

I think they have taken that into account, but there need to be further discussions going forward about what they are proposing and how it may impact on Exhibition Park and in relation to harness racing and what the future of harness racing is. There is the harness racing training track and the racing track in Exhibition Park and discussions are needed on what synergies are there between the proposal that has been put forward by the racing club in that regard as well.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain has an ACTIA question.

MR CAIN: Subject to what seems to be a bit of fluidity on page numbers, I will do my best; when I say the page number, it will be thereabouts. At page 136 of budget statements B, the authority outlined that it was unable to provide briefing material to the minister in 2019-20 on the agency annual insurance premiums and on the authority's capital management plan. I am happy to be corrected on any of the premises that I have just presented. What were the causes of the authority's inability to meet these indicators and provide a ministerial briefing?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Penny Shields to provide some detail there.

Ms Shields: I acknowledge the privilege statement. We have three accountability indicators related to briefing the minister on relevant aspects of the authority's reinsurance program and premiums for the directorates.

In the 2019-20 year, as you are aware, we had the COVID situation hit us not long after significant storms and bushfires in the territory and nationally. In the reinsurance space there was a global situation in the insurance market, particularly around COVID. That meant that any strategy that ACTIA had in its reinsurance program space at the time when we would normally brief the minister changed rapidly, and it changed rapidly in the market, so we were unable to react as quickly as we had hoped through our negotiations.

The ACT Insurance Authority is a self-insured entity. We are an authority that insures all territory insurable risks. On top of that, we purchase reinsurance above and beyond our self-insured retention. That is when we engage in the global insurance market, above and beyond. Our ability to brief the minister was pushed back for those reasons.

MR CAIN: Obviously COVID has affected just about everything that we have been possibly involved in, across the board.

Ms Shields: Absolutely.

MR CAIN: But further on in the briefing to the minister in regard to the authority's capital management plan, it states that this was in part due to uncertainty in the investment and reinsurance markets. I recognise that there is a COVID element to that, but can you further elaborate on this uncertainty?

Ms Shields: Sure. Part of our investment strategy is linked to our capital management plan. It is also linked to the budget statements and our statement of intent, which was delayed as well because of the government's decision to do so. That was also delayed until the current budget was delivered.

What has that meant in terms of the uncertainty in the investment market? We work on a funding ratio. The capital management plan determines our funding ratio, which you will see in the budget papers, and that in turn obviously impacts through from our investment strategy.

MR CAIN: Obviously COVID has an incredible degree of uncertainty and unpredictability about it, but what other means do you have to predict fluctuations in the market?

Ms Shields: That would be as in any investment market. We do work on that uncertainty, and the premise of insurance is that you are looking at forward estimates. That would be the same for all the government's investment strategies, I would imagine.

MR CAIN: Have briefings been provided since the release of the budget? If not, when is it planned to provide them?

Ms Shields: Specifically in relation to the capital management plan? Yes. Minister Steel has been briefed on the current capital management plan.

MR CAIN: I have another substantive line of questioning, but I leave it to the committee.

THE CHAIR: Is your substantive question in this area? I have a question about digital strategy, which would require a changeover. Is yours in the ACTIA area?

MR CAIN: It is, yes.

THE CHAIR: Off you go.

MR CAIN: Thank you, Chair. In table 5, being the authority's operating statement, and again at page 139 of budget statements B, the authority is projecting—and I want to say this really slowly—a 437 per cent gain on investment compared to the 2019-20 audited outcome. I have to say that again: 437 per cent. What is the cause of such a significant variance?

Ms Shields: We have had an extraordinary investment return in our investments in the

past 12 months, and that is projected to continue.

MR CAIN: Could you be more explicit? What was the nature of that return?

Ms Shields: I will need to take that question on notice.

Mr Miners: Can I just add to that? Investments for all these entities are made through the platforms under the territory bank account. In looking at those sorts of gains and the percentages that you are talking about, you also need to look at the 2019-20 outcome, which has fluctuated down. We are picking up both sides of the market when you are looking at this; it will look much wider than it is. But it will reflect conditions in the market, and in time this is a line that will vary from year to year, simply because returns will vary from year to year.

MR CAIN: But obviously a 400-plus per cent variation in any index in any reporting regime is extremely significant and there must be some sort of extraordinary reason behind it.

Mr Miners: I think you will find that COVID was pretty extraordinary.

MR CAIN: I accept that.

THE CHAIR: How does it trend, though, perhaps over 10 years? What sort of percentage gain are we talking about?

Mr Miners: I will have to just do this in my head. We do look at long-term trends with the objective that we are trying to achieve through a lot of our investments. I will have to check the funds. Normally just under seven per cent is what we are trying to achieve in the long run. It is those sorts of runs. I will have to check that and come back on the exact number; I will take that on notice. We will look at long-term returns, look through those sorts of returns.

When we do look at returns, though—if you look at this year, for example, we are sitting at about a 12 per cent return this year to date. They have been achieved and they have been returns on the previous year. Yes, we would have suffered some losses as the market went into downturn as a result of COVID; that will just flow through and balance out over time.

MR CAIN: Mr Miners, you may have answered this, but just to be specific, what methodology and data were used to formulate this 437 per cent projected increase?

Mr Steel: We will come back on notice in relation to that, as well as giving some further detail behind the number.

MR CAIN: The authority's operating result for 2019-20 is a deficit of approximately \$3.2 million, being about \$7 million lower than the original budget surplus of about \$3.8 million. The reason given for the variance is primarily lower gains on re-measurement of investments offset by higher net incurred claims. That is a paraphrase of what is in the actual report. Can you provide an outline of the factors behind higher net incurred claims?

Ms Shields: To confirm, this was 2020-21? For the 2020-21 claims year, in terms of claims expenses, we are continuing to see the impact of storm damage and additional property damage claims roll through into the claims liability space in our operating capacity, and that will be offsetting any gains.

MR CAIN: Nothing further to add on that?

Ms Shields: No, not at this time.

MR CAIN: I have one final question to ACTIA. In budget statements B, the authority lists one of its 2020-21 priorities as:

... developing a change management plan to facilitate the Authority's move to an activity-based work environment ...

Ms Shields: Yes.

MR CAIN: Can you provide further details on this plan?

Ms Shields: Certainly. Prior to COVID happening globally, ACTIA was a heavily paper-based authority. We did not work online; we worked a hundred per cent paper based. What we have done during that period, and very swiftly, is move to an online claims management system. We are now digital for almost all of our claims management situations. We manage three different companies. We have ACTIA, which looks after the territory's insured risks; we are also the Nominal Defendant for the Office of the Nominal Defendant and the Default Insurance Fund.

As it currently stands, all of ACTIA's claims management system is online. The Default Insurance Fund and the Nominal Defendant will move online in the first half of this year. That is part of our move to an activity-based working arrangement so that we are not paper based. In addition, along with the government's move to an activity-based working environment, ACTIA will be moving also to an activity-based working environment, with new fit-outs to support such.

MR CAIN: How much funding is allocated for this?

Ms Shields: For the activity-based plan?

MR CAIN: Yes.

Ms Shields: It is encompassed in our administrative arrangements as it currently stands. ACTIA holds a line for its function, I suppose, to put it bluntly, including laptops for its staff, which have already been rolled out. The procurement of the claims management system has also been funded ahead of that.

THE CHAIR: I have a question relating to output 1.4, digital strategy—possibly more than one.

Mr Miners: Chair, can I just correct two things. The general investment return that

we are seeking is CPI plus 4.75. That is the standard return. In working that out forward, in terms of what we are looking at, basically the amount of funds under investment plus that return is how we estimate into the future.

THE CHAIR: That was instead of the seven per cent you mentioned?

Mr Miners: Instead of seven, yes. So it is 4.75 plus CPI. Typically, in a normal year, that gets you to around seven, which is why the seven was in my head. The other question that we did not quite answer was around the number of unsolicited bids that we received. We received one in the last financial year, and that was processed. It took us just over three months to process that one. It was a complicated one in two parts, but that was processed in around the target time frame.

THE CHAIR: So 100 per cent over time?

Mr Miners: It was 100 per cent over time by a small amount.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, earlier we spoke with Minister Cheyne about Fix My Street and the feedback loop, fixing that up with Access Canberra and TCCS being one of the major players in Fix My Street.

Mr Steel: Yes.

THE CHAIR: She indicated that you had had a meeting and you were talking about it. Is that in the digital strategy area or is that in your capacity as Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services?

Mr Steel: That was both. Transport Canberra and City Services and the CDO are working together on moving Fix My Street over to a new platform.

THE CHAIR: Is that Salesforce?

Mr Steel: Salesforce, yes. This is an opportunity to rethink and plan for how Fix My Street could be used in the future and to provide a more customer-focused user interface. It is also to ensure that the back end of the system works, to ensure that issues that are raised are fixed quickly but also that there are automated work flows as much as possible.

The current system appears to be smart from the front, but it still could do with some redesigning and further user testing. The back end is not as automated as it could be, so there is some work happening to map out what the new system looks like, ahead of going down the path of transitioning that to the new platform. I will hand over to Bettina to talk further about this, but it is an opportunity to improve the current Fix My Street system and make sure it is better for the public and also for the people who are doing the maintenance and fixing the issues that are raised.

Ms Konti: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The Fix My Street initiative is a Transport Canberra and City Services initiative. The role that we play in the Office of the Chief Digital Officer is to provide guidance around the design and delivery of digital services.

One of the things that we are promoting right across ACT government is the introduction of community-centred design. There are two elements to that. Firstly, there is the design part itself. The simplest way to describe this is to say that we accept that buildings and construction need design and design approval processes before we start to construct, and computer or technology systems that are meant to deliver or drive an outcome need similar design, review and approval processes in order to make sure they work and deliver the outcomes they are intended to deliver.

The community services aspect is also very much about putting ourselves in the shoes of the people who are using our service and looking to ensure that we engage and listen and then test our services with members of the community to make sure that we are hitting the mark.

In terms of the role that OCDO plays, we have a program called ACT Digital, which is very much where the foundation of the Salesforce system comes from. The ACT digital account sits on that system. In addition to providing directorates with advice and guidance about how to build and configure that system, there are also the design and community-facing services elements. So we are engaged with both Transport Canberra and City Services and Access Canberra to help design or redesign the Fix My Street processes from the perspective of the community end to end.

I might just add one more element to that. The minister mentioned that the system is not really that integrated at the back end and there is more that could be done. We know that at any point in time a person from the community could be calling Access Canberra to ask where their job on Fix My Street is up to, when it will be finished. Equally, they could be calling Transport Canberra and City Services. We need to make sure that we implement a solution that allows both Access Canberra and Transport Canberra and City Services staff to see the current status of a job so that they can provide the advice or the status information in addition to, ideally, allowing people in the community to look that up themselves and understand where the work is up to.

THE CHAIR: Is either Access Canberra or TCCS currently using Salesforce?

Ms Konti: Both.

Mr Steel: For different things.

THE CHAIR: Is there a particular module within Salesforce that will manage this, such as a complaints management module? How does it work?

Ms Konti: Salesforce is a platform upon which you can develop lots of different functions. When we take a community-centred view of a system build or solution, it starts with how people find the information they need to be able to report something, make a Fix My Street request, which will often start its life in the website or some kind of search mechanism.

Then you move into how a member of the community tells you that there is something that needs to be fixed. There is what we call a form—but it is a process—where I give

you information as a member of the community. That would then go into a workflow. That is another function, another solution object. Then there would be prioritisation: sending the job out to people in the field who might be qualified to fix streets—in that example; I know it does more than that. Then there is monitoring, case management, management information and management reporting that allows people who are responsible for monitoring the function to get alerts when things might be over time or might be due to be completed. It is quite an end-to-end system.

THE CHAIR: Are you saying that you map the business process and build to suit or is there a vanilla, off-the-shelf version that you get and then customise according to the business process that you have?

Ms Konti: The Salesforce platform has a lot of functionality out of the box that does not really require coding per se, but it is often about configuration. Depending on the design of what we need to create, there might be some build elements. One of the things we are trying to do is make sure that we identify the build elements. We identify the build elements like workflow. If someone needs to identify who they are and we need to have confidence in their identity before we do anything for them, we would ask that they use the digital account to sign on, and that would be something that we would re-use. Does that answer your question?

THE CHAIR: Do you think that is likely? For example, if you want to ring up and get a pothole outside your house fixed, will someone have to identify who they are?

Ms Konti: Not necessarily, no. Access Canberra are using new Salesforce functionality for working with vulnerable people registrations, for example, at the moment. For that, we do really need to know who you are.

THE CHAIR: I want to go to working with vulnerable people; I am glad you mentioned that. The annual report says:

Delivering the digital services that reflect reforms to the Working with Vulnerable People scheme ...

I note that has moved to the access policy area rather than being with you guys. And has it moved from three years to five years registration?

Ms Konti: That is an element of the policy and legislative change, but yes, it has moved from three years to five years.

THE CHAIR: I am wondering how that enhances protections, but I guess that is a policy question?

Ms Konti: We have introduced continuous monitoring of the registrations. If a registration is valid for five years, there is a regular check against the criminal charge data to ensure that—

THE CHAIR: That is automatic?

Ms Konti: Yes. It is part of the new function.

THE CHAIR: So it is no longer up to the holder of a Working with Vulnerable People registration to advise?

Ms Konti: There is still an obligation to advise, but that is probably something that you should check. I am in a policy context.

Mr Steel: But the bill did require legislative change, and in implementing that change it should go through the Assembly.

THE CHAIR: Page 37 of the annual report, under the digital strategy output, talks about how the area met two of their accountability indicators but did not meet indicator 1.4a, ACT Data Analytics Centre.

Ms Konti: Yes.

THE CHAIR: A report was to be published in 2020-21. Has that report been published now?

Ms Konti: Yes, it has. It was published before Christmas.

THE CHAIR: Is that available?

Ms Konti: It is available on our website.

THE CHAIR: It says it was delayed by COVID, but why? Were staff who were working on it moved to other areas? What happened there?

Ms Konti: As you have heard throughout this estimates hearing, quite a lot of the priorities that we thought we had for this financial year shifted and other priorities became more important. A number of requests had come from various areas across government for the ACT Data Analytics Centre to crunch some data and get some information out to help us understand various parts of COVID.

For example, our ACT Data Analytics Centre did the reporting on Jobs for Canberrans. That is just one example. That led to a delay in the finalisation of the whole-of-government data, governance and management framework documents. They were ready by the end of July last year; they needed to then go through an approval process before we could publish them. The delay was only small.

THE CHAIR: Was your area also involved in the CBR app?

Ms Konti: The Check In CBR app? That is ACT Health.

MR CAIN: I have a question on the lifetime care and support fund.

Mr Steel: I will welcome Ms Holmes.

MR CAIN: For the sake of abbreviation, I will refer to the lifetime care and support fund as the fund. The fund reflects the operation of the scheme to provide ongoing

treatment and care to people who have been catastrophically injured as a result of a motor accident. Considering that—and please correct anything that is in that premise if necessary—how many individuals does the scheme currently provide support for?

Ms Holmes: To the end of December we had 21 participants in the scheme.

MR CAIN: On average, how much has each recipient received from the scheme?

Ms Holmes: The scheme provides treatment and care for the participants' lifetime. We talk about the lifetime costs of participants rather than individual costs per year. It can vary substantially among participants, depending on the type of injury they have and how severe their injuries are. For example, if you get someone who is a quadriplegic who needs 24/7 care, the lifetime costs can be over \$10 million.

MR CAIN: Roughly speaking, what is the minimum amount at the moment for a recipient and what is the maximum?

Ms Holmes: I need to be careful because of the low scheme numbers. I can say that on average it is about \$3 million or \$3½ million, but it can substantially vary due to not only severity but also the age of a participant. We have had a participant who came into the scheme when they were less than five years of age. That participant is going to be in the scheme potentially for 80-odd years. There are a lot of factors, which can mean that you have substantial variations on what the costs can be.

MR CAIN: Page 244 of budget statements B notes:

... the decrease of \$15.145 million in the 2020-21 Budget from the 2019-20 audited outcome is due to the reclassification of ... levies from taxes to other revenue ... to better reflect the nature of these levies.

Can you please outline why this decision was made and how it better reflects the nature of these levies?

Ms Holmes: This is to do with the GFS—government finance statistics—classifications. Previously it was classified as taxes, fees and fines. It was felt that it is not in the nature of a tax in the normal sense so, based on the definitions and conversations with the ABS, the decision was made to reclassify.

MR CAIN: I have some questions on the Motor Accident Injuries Commission. Noting the commencement of the MAI scheme on 1 February 2020, and noting the need for a new ICT system to incorporate data from the new scheme and the previous CTP scheme, what have been the challenges in transitioning from CTP to MAI?

Ms Holmes: Is that question specifically in relation to data?

MR CAIN: Yes.

Ms Holmes: With the amount of data and what we needed to collect for the new scheme, being a defined benefits scheme, it was very different from the data that we were collecting for a common-law scheme. In relation to common law, it was more

about the number of claims as they were coming through—some timing, but largely about what were the estimates, what were the final payments and what were the splits.

When you get into a defined benefits scheme, the fields of data that you need to collect substantially multiply. You are interested in a lot more information to be able to assess the compliance of the insurers, particularly in terms of the payments and the timing of those defined benefits which an individual can get, as well as the other sorts of benefits—does someone go under common law? The range of data that you are collecting substantially increases.

MR CAIN: Was the extra complexity of data required anticipated in setting up the MAI scheme or was it something that became apparent as you were redesigning your systems?

Ms Holmes: We knew that for a defined benefit hybrid scheme the role of the regulator substantially changes from what the CTP regulator needed to do. CTP is largely negotiation for a lump sum. A defined benefit scheme is vastly different, and the role of the regulator is vastly different; hence we knew the ICT was always going to have to reflect that changed role.

MR CAIN: When you say the regulator, you mean—

Ms Holmes: The MAI Commission is the regulator for the MAI scheme.

MR CAIN: Thank you. How many full-time equivalents does the commission employ?

Ms Holmes: We have a team which is a blend across both lifetime care and the MAI scheme. The MAI Commission does not directly employ staff. The staff for the insurance branch are within CMTEDD; we then do reimbursements back against the lifetime care and against the MAI Commission. In terms of the actual number of FTE for the MAI commission, I am going to have to take that on notice.

MR CAIN: Thank you very much. How was the \$16 levy determined?

Ms Holmes: The levy was determined prior to the commencement of the scheme. It is one of these things where you make your best estimate in terms of what the costs are going to be for the scheme. It will play out over time in terms of what those costs look like and how the levy might evolve and change. It was our best estimate on what a mature scheme cost would be.

MR CAIN: What is the quantum of levies, approximately? Again, this can be on notice, if you like.

Ms Holmes: Sorry?

MR CAIN: How many individual levy payments are there?

Ms Holmes: The levy payment is \$16 for all vehicle classes except the vintage historic class, where it is \$4. Anybody who has an MAI policy—you have to have one

when you renew your registration—automatically pays that levy; it is one of the figures that appears on the registration renewal certificate. There are approximately 300,000-plus registrations which occur in a year at the moment.

MR CAIN: The MAI Commission annual report notes that the national transport commission is leading several work streams in relation to the legislative, regulatory, and policy environment in which autonomous vehicles can be safely deployed in Australia. One of these streams includes the potential for using existing motor accident injury insurance. Has the ACT commission done any work in this regard to do with autonomous vehicles?

Ms Holmes: This is a policy question, so it is ultimately going to be a question for cabinet and the government as to whether or not they choose to change the legislation and the scheme to allow people to come into the MAI scheme. The issue is that the current legislation talks about someone needing to be in control of a vehicle. If you have an AV with that particular module turned on, a driver is not in control of the vehicle, so it would require legislative change.

The motor accident injury schemes across Australia have been looking at what that might look like if a government chose to make that change to legislation. The key issue is that there is advantage in bringing these people in so that they are not relying on product liability. It means that everyone who is injured on the road is treated in the same way; you are getting that immediate assistance through a scheme, which product liability is not set up to do. However, if the manufacturers of the ADSC, which is the driving module, is at fault, you need to have some mechanism by which a scheme can turn to that ADSC to get the money back. That is the issue that the schemes are looking at: how that particular mechanism might work if it is the decision of the government to bring those types of vehicles into the scheme.

MR CAIN: So there is some work being done on dealing with these vehicles?

Ms Holmes: Yes. It is being collectively done by the motor accident injury schemes in order to provide advice to the policy areas of government when they make that decision.

Mr Steel: In relation to the broader issues around autonomous vehicles outside the insurance scheme, that matter is being dealt with nationally through officials, through working groups associated with the transport ministers' council. They are looking at the road rules and so forth that may be required to support the introduction of autonomous vehicles in Australia.

MR CAIN: Given that some work has been done, are premiums estimated to increase for drivers?

Ms Holmes: If a decision was made to bring autonomous vehicles in?

MR CAIN: No. Given that there is activity at the moment on this as part of the insurance approach to automated vehicles, are current premiums likely to increase because of this current other activity?

Ms Holmes: We have legislation at the moment which says that a driver has to be in control of a vehicle. There are rules—which the minister probably knows more about than me—about what a driver of an AV car at the moment has to do. They have to still be able to have control of the vehicle.

MR CAIN: I mean premiums on existing drivers.

Mr Steel: This is at a very early stage in terms of looking at the policy. I would not imagine there would be any impact other than for existing resources, looking at the policy issues that may be considered. I do not think there is any additional budget measure required in order to fund that work.

THE CHAIR: We will now conclude. Before closing, I have a few administrative matters to highlight. In relation to today's proceedings, I would like to advise members and witnesses that answers to questions taken on notice should be provided to the committee secretariat within five business days after receipt of the proof *Hansard*, day 1 being the first business day after the proof *Hansard* is sent to the ministers by the committee office.

All non-executive members may lodge questions on notice, which should be received by the committee secretariat within five business days of this hearing. Responses to questions on notice should be provided to the committee office within five business days of receipt of the question, day 1 being the first business day after the questions are sent to ministers and equivalents by the committee secretariat.

When available, a proof transcript will be forwarded to witnesses to provide an opportunity to check the transcript and suggest any corrections.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the Special Minister of State; the ministers for business and better regulation, the arts, economic development, tourism, industrial relations and workplace safety; and the officials from CMTEDD, the Cultural Facilities Corporation, ACT Gambling, the Racing Commission and all other government entities who attended today.

I thank Laura for keeping us COVID safe with her cleaning and I thank the secretary, Dr Cullen. I now close the hearing.

The committee adjourned at 4.47 pm.