



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

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

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

Members:

**MS L CASTLEY (Chair)
MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)
MR J DAVIS**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2022

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms S Milne (Ph: 620 50435)**

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

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Access Canberra | 170 |
| artsACT | 155 |
| Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | 141, 170 |
| Cultural Facilities Corporation | 155 |
| Major Projects Canberra | 155 |

Privilege statement

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 10.19 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
Kobus, Mr Jonathan, Executive Branch Manager, VisitCanberra

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2021-22. This morning the committee will be hearing evidence from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

Please be aware that proceedings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and streamed live. Please identify when you are taking a question on notice. This helps the committee and witnesses to confirm.

In the first session we are hearing from the Minister for Tourism. Welcome, Minister Barr, and your officials, today. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. When you speak, please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement.

I will kick off with the first question. It is about mountain biking. In 2018 the CBR Cycle Tourism Strategy forecast 10,000 additional visitors by 2021 for leisure cycling. No doubt COVID has been a significant interruption to this. However, I am interested in how you measure the potential additional visitors for leisure cycling. Are you actively measuring that?

Mr Barr: Thank you. Mr Kobus can assist.

Mr Kobus: I have read and understand the privilege statement. The Cycle Tourism Strategy is something that we are working with other directorates on implementing, so we have a cross-directorate approach to how we implement that strategy. There has no doubt been an impact on our capacity to do meaningful activities as part of that strategy, due to the impacts of the last couple of years. We track the purpose of visit for the visitors who come to the ACT through the contract that we have with Tourism Research Australia, via the National Visitor Survey and the International Visitor Survey, so that provides us with a breakdown of the purpose of visit.

In some instances the sample sizes are too small to get meaningful data for specific areas of interest. For the last couple of years, for example, the numbers that we got through that mechanism as a data series did not enable us to get specific data on the cycling part. But what we can do is get a reasonable estimate of what is happening from the numbers through different facilities—for example, the National Arboretum or Stromlo Park—in terms of total visitor numbers, and get a sense of the number of people coming for that specific purpose.

It is not an exact science in that respect, but there is no doubt that cycle tourism presents a great opportunity for the territory. In a buoyant domestic market people are increasingly travelling with their bikes. It is a great way of getting around Canberra as a mechanism. Our role as a marketing agency is to let people know that it is possible and then we work with the other directorates around improving the product and facilities as part of that.

As an example, to narrow that down a little bit, for the last quarter of information we had through the National Visitor Survey, about 880,000 domestic overnight visitors came to the ACT. There were 880,000 visitors to the ACT for that quarter, with the year-ending stat of about 1.8 million. So just for the last quarter we are nearly up to what the previous three quarters delivered in and of themselves. We are seeing a great return of our domestic market. I think if you look at the numberplates in the car park at Stromlo on any given Saturday, there are a lot of interstate visitors there. Absolutely, the access to that facility and other mountain biking facilities from hotels and other areas of the city is a great point of difference for the city.

THE CHAIR: Great. The same report referred to an additional economic impact of \$35 million by 2025. Can you tell me how this has been measured and what is the expected additional economic impact this financial year?

Mr Kobus: Again, that would be measured through the overnight expenditure data we get from the national and international visitor surveys. The strategy was launched pre pandemic. In 2019 our total economy was worth \$2.5 billion in terms of overnight expenditure, with about another \$500 to \$600 million in daytrip expenditure, so the total value of all that was just over \$3 billion in impact. As at the year ending June 2022, we were back to about \$1.85 billion total in terms of economic expenditure.

The objective is to bridge the gap, get us back to a point where we are competing on normal terms compared to what we were. Going back to the example I used about the last quarter and the buoyant domestic market, we are certainly progressing a long way to enabling that to happen. When we start getting some more meaningful, consistent data, that will enable us to really track and get a better sense of what is actually happening with some of the smaller segments in the market.

THE CHAIR: Great. I note that in the 2021 *Canberra Mountain Bike Report* prepared for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service there was a recommendation to build a chairlift at Stromlo. Is that something that you are thinking of, and what would be the approximate cost? I am not a mountain biker, but I believe the trek up the hill is significant.

Mr Kobus: The chairlift probably falls outside of my remit, but what I will say is that

one of the programs that we ran over the last couple of years was a program in two parts. We had the COVID Safe Tourism Co-investment Program, which is now called the Tourism Product Development Fund, which provides funding support to help develop new products and experiences. As part of that program, we provided some support to an operator who has a business at Stromlo with a bus and a trailer, and that serves to facilitate the movement of mountain bikers from the base of Mount Stromlo to the top. That does loops all day long, taking people up. So in terms of that gravity experience that people are looking for, there is a service that runs there and a really strong viable business that is delivering that for all visitors. I think that is, in part, filling the role that a chairlift would provide anyway.

THE CHAIR: If it is out of your remit, Chief Minister, is that something you would consider? Is that something you are able to speak on?

Mr Barr: It was considered, and I think this remains part of the future master plan for park.

THE CHAIR: The future master plan. Great.

MS ORR: Can you please tell us which domestic markets we can expect VisitCanberra to target over the next few years?

Mr Kobus: Our approach with domestic markets remains firmly embedded in just the eastern seaboard. For many years Canberra has been reliant on Sydney and regional New South Wales as markets. Where we are geographically is a great advantage. It gives us great access to Australia's biggest market, Sydney, and also a region that has very easy access. So that is our drive market. Canberra is a short break destination for that drive market that comes here. Where that is serving us really well at the moment is that decision-making for travellers at the moment is very short, so when the market is making decisions on a short-term basis it really does give us a great advantage being on the doorstep of Sydney.

That being said, we need to make sure that we have diversity in our domestic market. We cannot just rely on drive traffic from Sydney and regional New South Wales. An important part of what we have been doing over a number of years now is diversifying that base by making it cheaper and easier to get here by air. The progress we have made on that is that we now have 13 domestic flights that come to Canberra, as opposed to seven pre-COVID, so we are connected to more places than we have been before, both regions and capital cities.

We are connected by low cost carriers more effectively than we have been before. What that has enabled us to do is to consolidate the percentage of market share we get from Brisbane and South-East Queensland. We have Jetstar flying to Brisbane and the Gold Coast at the moment, as an example. Melbourne and regional Victoria is another really important market for us. At the moment we have four carriers doing the Melbourne to Canberra route, which is proving to be really making a difference in shifting the balance in our market share between regional Victoria, Melbourne, South-East Queensland and Brisbane and what we traditionally got from regional New South Wales and Sydney.

Over time, I think it sets the visitor economy up with a strong base to operate from. In

the future we may look further afield, but Australia's biggest population base is in that eastern corridor, so South-East Queensland down to Melbourne and everything in between is really where we are investing and trying to get the most benefit from.

MS ORR: Great. And what about international markets that you are expecting to target?

Mr Kobus: From an international market perspective, our main objective is that we are working really hard at the moment to re-establish a direct aviation connection between Canberra and Singapore. Singapore, as a gateway to the world, remains a priority market for us, not only for the Singapore market itself but for what it would give us access to. Our international market approach is largely driven by where we are most likely going to generate interest from in terms of access. So it is Singapore and then, from Singapore, onwards to Europe. From a Europe perspective, we need to narrow our focus. It is not possible for us to speak to the whole of Europe about visiting Canberra, so we have narrowed that down to the UK. So it is Singapore and the UK.

India is a significant market for the ACT. It was pre-COVID and it is continuing to come back now. The Indian market traditionally uses Singapore as a hub to get to get to Australia, so that opens that access. Malaysia is a focus to a lesser extent, but still relevant, being on the doorstep of Singapore. Then, looking east, New Zealand and then onwards to the US is our international market focus. So the US, New Zealand, Singapore, India, Malaysia and the UK are where our efforts are focused at the moment.

DR PATERSON: Great. Thank you.

MR DAVIS: How many tourists did we have in Canberra in the last financial year?

Mr Kobus: In the last financial year the total number of visitors was 5.5 million. Sorry; that is the number of bed nights. The number of domestic overnight visitors was 1.88 million.

MR DAVIS: On average, how many days, or how many nights, did they stay?

Mr Kobus: 2.7 to three nights.

MR DAVIS: Tremendous. So in terms of prioritising our tourism investment, would you say our priority is to increase the 1.88 million or increase the average nights per stay? Could we get more out of the people who are coming or do we need more people?

Mr Barr: Both. But I think, overall, what we have seen over two decades is that the average length of stay is difficult to shift beyond three nights, so there is more yield out of volume.

MR DAVIS: Okay. To what do we attribute the challenge of encouraging people to stay in Canberra longer when they make the trip? What has been our historical blockage there?

Mr Barr: Traditionally, across the different market segments, it is seen as a short break estimation. Our long stayers tend to be the visiting friends and relatives market and the education market—and, to a lesser extent, business, but that is very contingent on

federal parliamentary sittings and other activities that would have people stay for a week, for example.

We have had a lot of focus on weekend activity to try and drive Friday and Saturday night. Traditionally, pre-COVID, the market was very strong during the week but hotel occupancies were lower on Friday and Saturday nights. That has changed a little. I think our most recent data shows that—and I will ask Mr Kobus; I am sure he has got that in front of him now—that has inverted a little. We are doing exceptionally well on Fridays and Saturdays.

MR DAVIS: I did see that, which was part of why I have this line of questioning. It would appear to me, and I wonder if you share the same view, that perhaps the reputation and image of Canberra to the domestic and international market is starting to change and people are coming for, to put it bluntly, more fun on the weekends.

Mr Barr: Yes, that certainly has been the case, particularly over the last 10 years, as the diversity of the tourism product has increased and the quality of experience has improved. There is an event component to that as well: particular times of year are very popular and often we are completely full in terms of hotel occupancy, which is lending itself to a desire for more supply-side capacity in the hotel market. We are seeing the private sector responding to that, with new hotels under construction, and we are chasing some more of the nationally and internationally branded hotels, particularly to get into their membership and promotion networks. The big hotel chains have tens of millions of members. For a lot of people, one of their decision-making questions around where they stay is the hotel they stay at. If they are a loyalty member in particular that drives a lot of decision-making.

MR DAVIS: Okay. Given that we seem to agree that there appears to be a shift in how Canberra is perceived by the domestic and international tourism market, would you agree that we should be aspiring to a greater average length of stay and, as that image of Canberra changes, that could be an area targeted for investment or promotion?

Mr Barr: We have certainly examined this question over quite some time. The market is very stubborn at around that one to three-night stay. You do obviously get people who stay longer, but it is a bit of a diminishing marginal return beyond that point. Balancing the two, volume is actually preferred over length of stay at this point. I think we will struggle with the current demand environment, and there are institutional factors that favour that short break. People have only got so many weeks of leave. There are only so many long weekends. There are only so many free weekends in people's lives. Adding one extra day and then one extra night has been part of our focus, and we have also worked with the region on that, but that statistic of between two and three nights has been pretty consistent for 20 years.

Mr Kobus: Partly, it is one of the elements of Canberra as a place to visit that is a bit different to other places, in the sense that we provide great short break opportunities. The Sydney market view Canberra as a place where they can go for Friday, Saturday and Sunday night, or Friday and Saturday night, for that short break getaway, the same way that all Canberrans think about going down the coast.

MR DAVIS: I suppose the reason I ask this question is: do our markets perceive

Canberra to be a short break destination because that is how we have promoted it over a long period of time? Is this a self-fulfilling prophesy: “Come to Canberra for the weekend,” and then people do and we are perhaps not asking people to stay longer?

Mr Barr: No, I would not put it that way. There has been an extensive amount of market research nationally and locally, over decades. It is the institutional factors that I have talked about. Most Australian destinations, and Sydney destinations, are short duration destinations. There is no capital city market that would have an average length of stay that is two weeks or a week even. There are a couple of jurisdictions—Tasmania is an example—where people do tend to go for a week. But they are not staying in one place; they are touring the island. That is in the domestic market,

Internationally, people tend to come for longer. Only New Zealand would be a three-day market. If people are coming on a long haul flight, they are probably visiting more than one destination in Australia, unless they are coming for an education purpose, a business event, or they are visiting friends and relatives. Those three are very significant markets for us. The challenge with VFR is that they tend to stay with their friends and relatives, rather than spending money on commercial accommodation, so their economic contribution is lower. They are not eating out as much et cetera. You get a different return from different market segments. But if we are talking purely about the leisure traveller, who is not coming to visit friends and relatives, then that market, domestically in Australia, is a short break market.

MR DAVIS: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We had a brief discussion earlier about the stadium at Epic, but I want to chat about Summernats. It is one of the biggest annual tourism drawcards to Canberra. What impact would a stadium at Epic have on Summernats?

Mr Barr: None.

THE CHAIR: None.

Mr Barr: I mean, it might provide another event venue for them.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Barr: They could have a concert there, I guess. The live concerts that they only have in the central area could potentially be larger.

THE CHAIR: Yes; okay.

Mr Barr: That is about it; yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay. And just while we are on Epic, is there ever a thought to bring back a V8 supercar race event?

Mr Barr: I think there have been some proposals floated. Most of them have involved heavy taxpayer subsidy, as in taxpayers building the track and providing an operational subsidy. That would be, probably, ten times greater than the territory’s annual event

budget, so it is just not economic.

THE CHAIR: Okay; so that is off the table.

Mr Barr: It would mean not funding any other event in Canberra and then having to borrow to build the infrastructure, so I do not see a pathway forward unless the proponent is prepared to invest in the venue and the event.

THE CHAIR: Right. Just out of interest, with those proposals was there an idea of what income that would bring to the territory?

Mr Barr: Less than the amount of public investment.

THE CHAIR: Right.

Mr Barr: The return on the investment is terrible.

THE CHAIR: Right. Okay.

MS ORR: Can I get a bit of insight into whether Canberra typically attracts more tourists for sporting and cultural events? We have spoken a little about that short stay market, but how do sporting and cultural events impact on people coming to Canberra?

Mr Barr: The data is pretty clear on this: cultural events are significantly greater generators of economic activity and return on investment. For example, since the inception of our major events fund, we have provided around \$12 million of support and that has generated just under \$1 billion of economic activity and attracted over five million people to Canberra. There is a rough return on investment in the cultural space of 80 to 1. The return leverage through major sporting events is much, much, much lower than that. The reason principally is that cultural events tend to run for extended periods, whereas sporting events, by their nature, are more time limited—sometimes hours and occasionally days. Cultural events tend to run for weeks, if not months.

MS ORR: And when we say the “cultural events”, can you give us some examples of what we have seen and what has been driving that?

Mr Barr: Well, the most successful ones have been in partnership with the national cultural institutions. I think the Australian record for attendance at a cultural event is held by the *Masterpieces from Paris* at the National Gallery, about a decade ago. But we also see that events like Floriade and Enlighten and others, because of their duration—they are running over weeks and months—it is logical that they attract more people and generate a greater economic contribution for the level of public investment in their operation.

MS ORR: So over the next 12 months, what sorts of things are you looking at driving to continue to promote these cultural events and the benefits from them?

Mr Barr: What we seek to do in the event space is to provide a balance. If every single decision was made solely on return on investment, then you would have a very narrow range of events. So, obviously, we do also support sporting events, but we do not

necessarily always do so on an economic return basis, because a lot of the time the projected economic returns are wildly overstated and the costs for a one-off event—or even participating in a tournament, for example—are incredibly expensive compared to the benchmarks for other events and activities. I do not think I have ever seen a sporting event, in 16 years, that has achieved an 80-to-one return on investment, but not every decision in the event space is made on that basis. We are particularly focused on partnerships, with our unique position that this city has—and that is the national cultural institutions. So we are regularly engaged with them with a view to their forward programming over not just the coming 12 months but 24, 36 and 48 months in advance. That is the basis for the Major Events Fund. Mr Kobus might assist further.

Mr Kobus: Thank you, Chief Minister. Yes; over the previous financial year, consistent with that approach, we supported six exhibitions across our national institutions, as cultural events, extending over a number of months. They proved to be really strong visitation drivers over that period. What we have seen in this calendar year, now, is that those cultural events provide very clear reasons for people to come to Canberra, and we see a really good upturn in visitation during the periods that they are on, in particular from some of those domestic markets that I spoke about before, that we are looking to grow.

In particular, we are seeing a really good response out of the Victorian market for those cultural events. The events themselves were drivers. There was a lot of repeat visitations for those cultural events, and the access that people now have to get to Canberra more easily is making a difference in terms of connecting them. Just by way of example, probably the most successful event in recent times was the *Botticelli to Van Gogh* exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia, which attracted over 200,000 attendees, with over 60 per cent of them coming from interstate. One of the things that we notice with Canberra as a destination for cultural events, is that all those institutions rely on interstate visitation to make their events successful. The National Gallery of Victoria, for example, being embedded in a city of five million people, can rely on the Victorian market to sustain exhibitions. What we get in Canberra is the willingness and cooperation of cultural institutions to invest cooperatively with us to market to interstate audiences, align their efforts with where we are marketing the destination through our broader destination marketing activity, and then leveraging that additional spend to bring visitation.

Again, in terms of return on investment, if we can combine efforts in that way, it makes a big difference. Outside the attractions, we have a portion of the Major Event Fund that is set aside to help support the attraction of quality theatre to the ACT as well. So, over time, we are looking to grow the number of theatre events that can be successful here. The most recent one funded out of the Major Event Fund was *SIX the Musical*. Even with a theatre of a certain capacity, about 20 per cent of the people that came to see that production were from the region or interstate.

MS ORR: Okay, thank you.

MR DAVIS: This might seem tangential—it may even be a question for Minister Rattenbury—but stay with me. With all of these global car makers moving to fully electric vehicles—Volkswagen by 2035, Volvo by 2030—I am worried about charging infrastructure in our regional market and the limitations that that might put on future

owners of electric vehicles to actually want to come to Canberra. If you cannot charge where you are, and you cannot charge here or on the way, you may not come and visit. So how much does charging infrastructure and electric vehicle policy intersect with our tourism policy more broadly? How much are we thinking about that?

Mr Barr: Sure. Obviously, it is very significant in the drive market context. We are working closely with New South Wales as it relates to the region. And, to their credit, the New South Wales government has a very significant network infrastructure program. Together with the new Australian government national program, the objective in the short to medium term is a network of superfast charging across the national highway network—essentially, every 100 kilometres.

That infrastructure is being rolled out already. Certainly between Canberra and Sydney there are a number of fast-charging locations on the Hume Highway component. Clearly, we have our own program inside the territory, and have recently announced a major expansion in charging infrastructure. Those sites are being rolled out. The other game changer here is what is happening with the traditional fossil fuel providers, the petrol stations. Ampol has a AmpCharge, and soon, across the Ampol service station network, there will be charging capabilities. They will just add that to their fuel types and presumably, over time, as the sales of petrol and diesel decline, they will need to augment and have more charging points. They have seen the future, and they are not the only existing service station brand that is looking at bringing EV fast charging into their station network.

It is definitely a legitimate issue to raise, but I am increasingly encouraged by the government policy response, the market policy response, in terms of new entrants who provide fast-charging infrastructure, and then the legacy and traditional operators who have seen that their business model is under some threat. An interesting element to all of this, which has the potential to lead to some interesting conflicts in policy priorities, Mr Davis, is that for some—not all—of the suppliers of fast-charging infrastructure, their business model has a lot of public advertising associated with it. In some instances, they are giving the electricity away for free, but you have to watch an ad.

That would be particularly appealing, I think, to a section of the market, but I know that it clashes with some other views that are held in relation to public advertising. Clearly, that model is going to roll out in New South Wales, as they have a different regulatory environment as it relates to outdoor advertising, but to the extent that that will provide either subsidised or free charging infrastructure on the New South Wales side of the border, that will assist in our tourism endeavours.

MR DAVIS: Yes, but, particularly as it pertains to tourism policy, every report or survey article that I read about why consumers are not choosing electric vehicle, it is range anxiety.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MR DAVIS: So I am thinking about all those electric vehicle purchasers in our domestic market. What are we doing in our tourism policy to provide them an assurance that getting here by electric car and getting home, is something Canberra is able to support and there is no reason why someone with an electric car should not spend their

weekends here?

Mr Barr: Yes. The other factor that is, I think, emerging, is that the hotel sector is providing free charging opportunities. That clearly is now a given in any new hotel development. I have noted, both from my travels interstate and from what I have seen in the Canberra market, that between the charging opportunities—whether that is overnight, trickle charge, or some of the faster infrastructure—we have sought to locate those within those accommodation precincts. An example is between Hotel Realm and Burbury Hotel, where there is a series of one of the first ACT government-supported fast-charging infrastructure points. Minister Rattenbury and I launched that several months ago. It is there and accessible for hotel guests at both of those hotels in that precinct.

I am aware that the Hyatt also has recharging capability, and I know a number of other hotels are doing that. Often, at the worst case, there is a power point, and if you are staying overnight then you can get 18 hours of charge, which even at three kilowatts per hour, you are going to be able to at least half fill, if not two-thirds fill, your large battery.

The other trend clearly is that the range of EVs and their performance—as in the number of kilowatt hours per 100 kilometres of travel—is improving, so a lot of the new vehicles on the market now have a range of over 500 kilometres, which gives you a comfortable journey to Sydney—even, possibly, a return journey to Sydney, if your range is 600 kilometres—without needing to recharge. But you will have that option on the highway and at your point of destination.

MR DAVIS: This is my last question. If somebody in our domestic market owns an electric vehicle and they are planning their trip to Canberra, where would they go to be assured that there are adequate charging facilities? From what I have been able to see, that seems to be in the sort of climate change and energy policy area of government, particularly online, and there does not really seem to be any of that information in the places where domestic tourists would be planning their trip.

Mr Barr: Most domestic tourists, and most EV owners, use a number of the apps that identify where fast-charging infrastructure or charging infrastructure is located. I know I do. I do not read the tourist brochure for a jurisdiction; I just go straight to my app to work out where I can charge. Obviously, depending on the location and your destinations within the ACT, you would have options at tourist attractions, at identified fast-charging sites, across 150 different locations in the ACT, plus every single power point that would be available to you. The apps that are used—certainly the ones that I use—tell you where you can publicly access a power point.

It does help to carry an extension cord in your car so that you can reach a little further at times. But at this point, given the volume of EVs, there is certainly not much of a problem in the ACT. I am aware that obviously the last month, for example, nearly one in five new cars bought in the territory were electric vehicles. Eventually that will be the share of new car sales elsewhere in Australia, and so the demand for charging infrastructure is going to increase; hence, we have a very significant program of government-supported fast-charging infrastructure. But I think you will see a lot of individual destination and tourist attraction marketing based upon the presence of that

charging infrastructure, plus the service stations.

MR DAVIS: Great, thank you.

THE CHAIR: I want to revisit the return on investment for events in the ACT. I note for the supercars it was not enough. Ms Orr said something and, Chief Minister, you said that sometimes that does not matter, depending on the event, or that the return of investment is different. Can you just explain that a bit more to me.

Mr Barr: Sure. The government supports events and, I guess, we endeavour to offer a diversity of event experiences. Not every event that the government supports has a tourism outcome as its primary objective. So there is a spectrum of events that you would say might attract some tourists, through to events that you would expect tourists, almost exclusively, to attend.

The major cultural exhibitions that Mr Kobus referenced are an example. I think *Masterpieces from Paris* had nearly half a million people. Now, most of those people were not from Canberra. So when we make our investment decisions on events, we are looking for diversity. Hence there is diversity within cultural events, and then there is diversity within sporting and other community events. I would say that most of the time we get a range of options to bid for things, or we have existing contractual arrangements where, essentially, the conversation is about when, in the annual calendar, an event will fall.

We have those sorts of contractual arrangements for most major sports. For any sport where we have a presence in a national or international competition, there tends to be a degree of engagement, because we are generally the venue owner, around when events will be scheduled, and then what our agreements entitle us to in terms of occasional one-off content. Examples of that have included women's State of Origin Rugby League, as a sort of add-on to our support for the Raiders and engagement with Rugby League. In the coming few years there will be a Rugby Union tour—the British and Irish Lions. That is once every 12 years. That has traditionally involved matches against each of the Super Rugby provincial teams. So the Brumbies would play. That would be additional content in the context of our Rugby Union content.

We have an AFL agreement, and we have cricket, basketball and netball agreements. There are a range of different sports that are supported. Diversity is a key element of that. We have had a policy focus, over the last 10 years in particular, to want to support more women's sport. Hence, we have hosted an Ashes test match in cricket between Australia and England. We are a host city for the Women's International Cricket Championship T20 tournament. We have hosted Matildas games against New Zealand in recent times.

I guess our hierarchy of investment decisions principally focuses on supporting Canberra teams in national and international competitions. Second to that, is getting the Australian national team, in whichever sport, to play in Canberra. Then ranked third, behind those first two priorities, we look at where an opportunity might arise to see an international tournament that involves non-Australian nations. But that tends to rank further down the list. We also have—probably sitting below the national teams, but above the international ones—high-quality domestic sporting content where Canberra

does not have a team in a competition but where the domestic competition is of sufficient interest. An example of that is Big Bash cricket, where the Sydney Thunder play some games in Canberra.

That is for the context for the sports decisions. If you made decisions purely on return on investment you would probably not invest anything in sport, but I think there is a legitimate community expectation that we will host sporting events. But that does not mean we will host every single sporting event, no matter what the cost. We have to balance those. We have a very clear set of criteria around our assessment of which events we will bid for. But I go back to that hierarchy—Canberra teams, high-quality Australian domestic competition, and then international competition that does not involve Australian national teams, in that order.

THE CHAIR: And in that hierarchy, how do we go? With the Canberra teams, is there a good return on investment? Do we haemorrhage money on those and make it up with the others? How does that work?

Mr Barr: Well, the government does not make any money out of the sports investments.

THE CHAIR: Return on investment—how does that look?

Mr Barr: Well, again, not particularly strong for sport—not 80 to one. We are the only state and territory government, in some instances, that provides support to sporting teams in particular sports and competitions. But in the absence of that government support there would be no team and there would be no presence for that sport in the city. That is a reflection of the size of this market, and the fact that, because of the nature of Canberra, we support more sports than other jurisdictions. Tasmania is an interesting equivalent. They have no Rugby League team, no Rugby Union team and no AFL team. Do they have a soccer team? I am not sure that they do. No. They have a team in the basketball league: the Jack Jumpers.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Barr: They do not support the diversity of sporting activity. They pay for AFL content with Hawthorn and North Melbourne. The Northern Territory would be another comparable jurisdiction. They do not have a team in the NRL, the AFL or in soccer, or, indeed, in cricket. For like size jurisdictions we have a great deal of involvement, and well ahead of Tassie and NT.

THE CHAIR: In light of the thought that we might be considering a stadium at EPIC, possibly, what other sites are on the table? Were there other sites? I know we spoke about it earlier.

Mr Barr: The AIS precinct at Bruce and EPIC.

THE CHAIR: Just those two?

Mr Barr: Yes.

MS ORR: Minister, we have just been talking quite a bit about the visitor stays and so

forth. How are we seeing hotel occupancy rates recover from COVID, and how are our numbers going?

Mr Barr: Pretty well, I think, is the short story. Mr Kobus, can help us on data.

Mr Kobus: Yes. With hotel occupancies it is interesting; we have gotten to the point, probably from the start of winter, where our occupancy levels have started to mirror 2019 levels. It is a bit frustrating having to compare everything to 2019 all the time, but it is a really good sign. Hotels are a great barometer of what is happening out there in the visitor economy, so getting occupancy back and starting to mirror those pre-pandemic levels is really encouraging.

The other thing that we are seeing is a return of people travelling for many reasons. So, yes, the domestic leisure market is buoyant, which is really good for the city—especially on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights—but conferencing in the city, as well, has returned very strongly. Our hotels, in particular, are reporting very strong bookings for conferencing perspectives, and the National Convention Centre as well is seeing a good return on conferences. The bit that hotels probably are still missing, which is the same in every jurisdiction around the country, is the independent business traveller travelling for that one overnight trip to attend a couple of meetings. That has probably been the slowest part of the market to return.

By way of example, our occupancy in July was 80 per cent. We cracked the 80 per cent mark in terms of the city and then it remained in the high-70s, low-80s since that time, in terms of occupancy. Where those figures are a little bit misleading, if we do the 2019 comparison, is that a lot of properties are still operating at a little bit below full capacity just because of the ability to service a full hotel based on staff availability. That is playing into that. In some instances, 80 per cent occupancy is actually full. They count it as full at 80 per cent.

But the trend that has changed quite significantly since 2019 is that the average daily room rate, and the revenue being generated per available room by hotels, is significantly greater. So hotels are yielding at a much higher level than they were in 2019. That is not happening everywhere. When we look across other jurisdictions of like size—Adelaide, Hobart, Newcastle—Canberra is tracking at 20 to 30 per cent higher on those metrics than those locations. That is a great signal when we are looking at opportunities to attract new investment, for example. If Canberra is a destination where visitation is strong but, more importantly, an investor can see strong returns, then that gives us a bit more of a competitive edge than other jurisdictions when we are looking to attract that investment.

MS ORR: Are there any indicators as to what is driving that additional spend and that higher yield?

Mr Kobus: I think it is, in part, that one of our market strengths is diversity of our market. A number of destinations in Australia rely, and have relied since the start of this year, heavily on domestic leisure. We are doing really well in domestic leisure, but the return of other things—such as conferencing, business traffic, business of government; all of those things—helps with demand across a range of areas, and yields that are higher than average. There is also nothing like demand to create that pressure

as well. Our occupancy levels have been higher than those of other, comparable cities—Adelaide, Newcastle and Hobart—so, if your occupancies are high, as well, you can start to charge more for your rooms at the same time.

MS ORR: Great, thank you.

MS ORR: Can you, in the remaining time, tell us how the 2030 ACT tourism strategy is proceeding, and just how it is linking up with the national strategy?

Mr Kobus: The 2030 tourism strategy is at a stage now where we are close to having a completed draft of that strategy. We are looking to progress it and take it forward in this calendar year. We have gone through an extensive process of consultation and development of the strategy. So earlier this year we held a Destination Canberra conference, which was, I guess, the first part of the development of that strategy in earnest.

We ran a workshop at that conference. We also launched a discussion paper that invited written responses from the industry to provide a contribution to the strategy. We had nine written responses from individuals and industry bodies as part of that call for written responses. We then went through a process of engaging one on one with a number of key stakeholders across the industry. We did over 30 one-on-one interviews of up to an hour with people about the vision for the visitor economy for the rest of this decade. And, finally, we held a workshop where we invited up to 100 people to participate in consolidating and rounding-out the ideas that came through in the one-on-one interviews to try to give us a really good steer on where we are going.

As part of the work we have been doing, in the consultation and in parallel, we have also looked at some economic modelling about where we think the visitor economy could be by 2030—doing some projections in terms of both the growth of contribution to the economy and the types of things that we will need to be able to do that. For example, if we have a visitor economy of a certain size, we need to know how many additional hotel rooms we need and how many additional seats on planes we need to fulfil an ambition to deliver a certain amount to the economy over that period.

Taking all of that into account, we have tried to align and connect with what is happening at a national level as best as possible. There is no doubt that for us to deliver what we need to do for the rest of this decade, leveraging off the investment of the commonwealth and the cooperation of other states and territories is a really important part of that. When the THRIVE 2030 strategy was developed, there was extensive consultation done nationally, including here in the ACT. We have looked at incorporating into the development of our plan the input that the industry here made to THRIVE, as well as taking into account the things that were provided nationally that are relevant to us.

THE CHAIR: Fantastic. We draw the session to a close. On behalf of the committee, thank you, Minister Barr, and the officials, for coming today. We appreciate that. No questions were taken on notice so we will now adjourn, and this committee will reconvene at two o'clock.

Hearing suspended from 11.11 am to 2.01 pm.

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

Cultural Facilities Corporation

Ramsay, Mr Gordon, Chief Executive Officer
Budd, Mr Alex, Director, Canberra Theatre Centre

artsACT

Fulton, Ms Caroline, Executive Branch Manager

Major Projects Canberra

Little, Mr Martin, Deputy Chief Projects Officer
Piani, Mr Adrian, ACT Chief Engineer, Project Director, Canberra Theatre Redevelopment and Executive Group Manager, Infrastructure Delivery Partners

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality inquiry into annual and financial reports 2021-22. This afternoon the committee will be hearing evidence from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, Major Projects Canberra and the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to welcome and acknowledge any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us this afternoon.

Witnesses, please be aware that proceedings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. If any questions are taken on notice, please clearly articulate that. This helps the committee.

In this second session we will hear from the Minister for the Arts. Welcome, Minister Cheyne, and your officials, this afternoon. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Before you speak, please state that you accept the privilege implications of the statement.

I will kick off this afternoon. I have a question about the Cultural Facilities Corporation and a couple of questions with regard to the use of venues. I know there are a number of historic venues that you have that are available for hire. I am just wondering if staff are able to take advantage of hiring those at a discounted rate?

Mr Ramsay: Thank you, Chair. I have read and I understand the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Ramsay: Yes, you are right, Chair. There are a number of facilities that are used across the Cultural Facilities Corporation, specifically ACT historic places. The building up of the profile of ACT historic places as hiring spaces and venues is something that we are seeking to continue to build on.

I draw to your attention page 56 of the annual report, the “At a glance” infographic that is there, which indicates that over the 12 months of this particular period there were seven weddings, there was one baptism, there was a memorial service and there were numerous other events and occasions held there. I am aware that there have been some weddings at different venues this year.

They are available for hire by members of the public, and that includes members of staff. There are no discounted rates available for staff. If a staff member chooses to hire, we would certainly encourage that, as one of the ways that we are building up this ongoing development with the Cultural Facilities Corporation. We are pleased to offer the same rates and the same conditions for members of staff as for every other member of the public.

THE CHAIR: Right. So you are not aware of it being discounted for members of staff for particular functions at all in the last 12 months?

Mr Ramsay: No, noting that I have had conversations over the last couple of days to confirm that with the Director of ACT Historic Places and the person who is currently acting in the role of Director of CMAG. Her substantive role is Director of ACT Historic Places. They confirmed to me that there is no policy or practice of offering discounted rates or different conditions for staff members for any of the events. We are particularly confident that, with the services that are provided by our wonderful bookings team, our functions staff, our visitor services officers and others, we have a really great range of venues. We would encourage people to use them. We believe that the rates and the conditions, which are fully available on the website, are great conditions for every member of the Canberra community and beyond.

THE CHAIR: You are not aware of a chief of staff getting a discounted rate for a venue function this year?

Mr Ramsay: I can confirm, specifically in relation to the event on 1 October, that it was an absolutely standard arrangement with the same circumstances and the same booking arrangement. The venue was hired at the standard rates that appear on the website, and they were paid at that rate.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I appreciate that. With regard to the asset register, how often does that get updated?

Mr Ramsay: I will take on notice the details of it, but that is ongoing work right across the organisation. Asset management across the organisation is something that is taken very seriously by our chief financial officer and the directors of each of the various arms of the organisation, and through to the audit committee of the board and then signed off by the board. There is a rolling practice with it, but I will take that on notice and get back to the committee on the specific detail in relation to the updating of that register.

THE CHAIR: Could you also provide a bit of detail about what is on the register. I assume property use is the same—borrowing by staff and the public. Is there a policy around that or are they separate? Staff cannot borrow property assets, bits and pieces from historical sites, can they?

Mr Ramsay: Because of the specific sites and because of the importance of the assets that are on the sites, as you can imagine, it is not ongoing practice for there to be borrowing of any of the objects that are under the careful governance of the organisation. Borrowing those would be something that would be extremely carefully considered, and rare. There would not be a matter of it being more readily useable by any members of staff.

THE CHAIR: So it is rare but not a no?

Mr Ramsay: It depends on the governance and the curation of any particular asset, but certainly any particular asset that comes with a historical curatorial link is not available for hire. If there are any modifications to that, I will certainly update the committee.

Ms Cheyne: Chair, would it be helpful if we provided you with the links to the venue hire that is on the CFC website?

THE CHAIR: Yes. I am sure that would be helpful, if you could.

Ms Cheyne: Okay. We can do that.

MS ORR: Minister, now that the guidelines for public art have been revised to include diversity, equality and inclusion principles as part of the criteria when considering acquisitions and new commissions, can you advise us, roughly, when we can expect that artsACT will deliver new public art commissioned by female or non-binary artists that recognises significant women?

Ms Cheyne: Thank you, Ms Orr. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Apologies for not doing that before. You may be aware that in the previous budget \$200,000 was allocated to commission a figurative artwork that realistically depicts a known woman and also that would be created by a woman or a non-binary person. A few months ago we announced that the late Hon Susan Ryan AO would be the subject of that artwork. I am sure members are aware that Susan had an extraordinary and distinguished career: the first senator for the ACT, the first woman appointed to a Labor frontbench, the first Age Discrimination Commissioner and, of course, her creation of the Sex Discrimination Act.

A national request for expression of interest has recently been undertaken to find a female or non-binary artist who demonstrates excellence in contemporary art practice to undertake this commission. That request for expression of interest opened on 13 October and closed this month, on 3 November. A request for tender is scheduled to be issued to a short list of artists, ideally by the end of the year, as we are working to determine a suitable location for the artwork as well. That work is underway, with us engaging with Susan's daughter, Justine, who visited Canberra on 2 September to view some available sites.

Where that takes us to in a bit of a time line, going to the nub of your question, is that we expect that that request for tender will be issued towards the end of this year, ideally this month, as we work to lock in that location. The artist will then be engaged by, ideally, January, and the model of the artwork will be approved by artsACT, in consultation with the family, in April 2023, then for the bronze casting to be completed by June and the artwork installed by July next year.

MS ORR: That all sounds very promising. With the guidelines having been updated now, what consideration will be given beyond the Susan Ryan statue for seeing more women in our art projects across Canberra?

Ms Cheyne: We certainly are very conscious—and as you yourself, Ms Orr, have brought to very public attention—that the public art collection does not in any way fully reflect the diversity of our community. While we have updated our public art guidelines, we will be working on a public art strategy that will be all about ensuring that that diversity is reflected. Future acquisitions by the ACT government are subject to budget funding, but we have certainly both noted and appreciated previous recommendations by this committee that future works be funded. That has been very much acknowledged by us.

MS ORR: Is it fair to say that, with the guidelines being updated, any decisions that were made previously that, for whatever reason, led to this discrepancy—probably unconsciously, more than anything—will now be not going forward because we will have this policy in place? Is that a fair assessment of how it will work?

Ms Cheyne: It is difficult to be that definitive because it may depend on the location and the type and so on. Certainly, the guidelines not only reflect the ACT government's public art collection but also are intended to be used as a guide for private organisations who regularly commission artwork as well. But we do have a very firm priority to rectify the lack of diversity in our collection, both in figure and in creation.

MS ORR: Just clarifying: those guidelines would apply beyond the artsACT commissions? For example, we have seen art commissioned through other parts of government. They would apply to those commissions as well?

Ms Cheyne: Absolutely, and we work right across the ACT public service on that. Canberra Health Services or ACT Health, with the new hospital, will have a considerable amount of art associated with that, so we are engaging with them on those commissions and acquisitions.

MS CLAY: Minister, I was listening to the *Guilty Feminist* podcast recently and Deborah Frances-White was horrified when one of the listeners said that we do not have a statue of Marion Mahony Griffin. I was thinking, and I could not think of a statute of Marion Mahony Griffin either. Have we got one in Canberra?

Ms Cheyne: I am being told no.

MS CLAY: Do you think we might get one? Would that be in the forward program somewhere, do you think?

Ms Cheyne: It is difficult to answer a hypothetical, as there is no ongoing budget funding at this stage. As Ms Orr has very clearly noted in her representations as well, there are a lot of very worthy women and non-binary persons who should be celebrated in a variety of ways. If it has not come already, I believe the response to the inquiry into the memorialisation of women is coming.

MS ORR: Can I just add that we have a bust of Marion Mahony Griffin on top of Mount Ainslie, but that was put in by the National Capital Authority, so it would not be in the artsACT portfolio. Sorry—town planner; a bit of a personal hero of mine, she is.

Ms Cheyne: Thank you. So let me correct the record: yes, there is a bust in the ACT.

MS CLAY: Minister, we were very excited when you brought out your statement of ambition, which sets the ACT up to be Australia's arts capital. I think it is a great and worthy goal, but I have ongoing concerns that the research at the moment is showing that our ACT funding level is about average per capita, when you compare it across Australia. So we are not under, we are not doing badly, but if we have a statement of ambition that says we want to be the leader for the nation and we want to be Australia's arts capital, logic tells me that we would probably want to be funding more per capita than other jurisdictions, not be in the middle of the pack. Is the funding that we currently have for our entire arts program—buildings, people, everything—sufficient to deliver on the goal of that statement of ambition to be Australia's arts capital?

Ms Cheyne: Thanks, Ms Clay. I think there are a number of different elements to your question. To start with, I acknowledge that there have been successive, very large injections of funding, including ongoing funding, to arts in the ACT. It is not a simple answer to your question. As a smaller jurisdiction, the ACT does not necessarily have the same economies of scale as somewhere like Sydney or Brisbane or Melbourne, so when we seek to invest in our funding or our infrastructure, the cost for us is greater because we do not have those economies of scale.

There is a second element to that in terms of the funding pool overall, and the funding that we attract overall. The ACT, Tasmania and the Northern Territory—especially the ACT—have a very high rate of artists and arts participation as a percentage of our population. However, traditionally, how the national bodies have engaged with the territories and Tasmania has been about the percentage of art funding that we get as a population. Therefore, you would appreciate that Tasmania, the ACT and the Northern Territory overall have been getting a much smaller proportion of what is available.

We are doing our bit here in the ACT to set the ambition to appropriately fund and to provide certainty to our arts organisations, going forward, which then gives them the opportunity to diversify and seek further funding—from ticket sales, applying to things like Ausco, or other federal funding. Of course, we are looking forward to the national cultural policy and the opportunities that that may present.

I have been very actively engaging with our arts colleagues on a more national level, and particularly with Minister Burke, about the ACT's fair share. There have been two meetings so far of cultural ministers, including one just last week, where that case was firmly made. In addition, I attended the Aus-UK cultural exchange at the beginning of October, again to make the ACT's case.

I think the ACT has been overlooked for what it produces and what we have achieved, and for how many artists we have here and the quality of the work that is produced here. So we have a role in promoting that. A firm strategy in the statement of ambition, as well as ensuring that we have got that support locally, is to attract more attention both from the private sector and from the federal government.

MS CLAY: I am pleased to hear about that federal lobbying and I hope that pays off. We will have to wait and see on that.

I did notice in the annual report, at 3.4, that 29 per cent of people said that they were not satisfied with the management of grants. The notes in the report suggested that that satisfaction was below target. You are obviously not going to get 100 per cent, but there was more dissatisfaction than expected. The annual report notes suggested that those who were dissatisfied were dissatisfied not with the management of the grants but because they missed out on grants, which sounds like a reasonable supposition. I am sure they had good reason to say that. If we have a lot of people applying for grants who are noting that they are dissatisfied because they have fallen short, and if we have more people saying that they are dissatisfied at missing out than we expected, does that mean we are not funding those grants enough?

Ms Cheyne: Not necessarily. I certainly understand the point that you are making. To give a bit of background—I will try and answer your question as much as I can, and then I might get Ms Fulton to explain a bit more about how that survey runs—you are right in the supposition you are making that it is a voluntary survey. It is not mandatory to complete that survey, so you might expect that people who have missed out may be more inclined to complete it. It does include those who are successful and unsuccessful.

I think that our funding is significant in terms of the opportunities that we present here. It is important to note that, for grant opportunities that we have available, in arts alone, not including screen, we have the ongoing all-year-round up to \$5,000 grant round. People can apply at any point for projects up to \$5,000 through artsACT. We have two major rounds of \$5,000 to \$50,000, which totals in the hundreds and hundreds of dollars—I will pull that up in a second. As well, we have the opportunities that we provide and have provided through HOMEFRONT and through Amp It Up! These are not a merit-based process.

That is not to say that there are not people who have missed out who, if the funding pool was larger, would have been successful. There are some people, of course, who might not necessarily demonstrate the merit when that is assessed. It is something that we do keep an eye on. It is why I have also been very focused, with the ambition and our strategy and our policies and our actions, on collaboration. Why? Because we want more organisations working together to help amplify the achievements of artists, again so that funding sources are diversified. Ms Fulton can go back to the survey.

Ms Fulton: Certainly. I have read and understood the privilege statement. Going back to the question on the survey, it is a voluntary survey, so not all people who apply to the program actually fill out the survey. We did, in the last survey, get a high proportion of respondents who had not been successful to those who had been successful. Sixty-five per cent of respondents to the survey were not successful. Seventy-nine per cent,

as you indicated, were satisfied with the process itself. However, there was less satisfaction, about 50 per cent, with the assessment process or the peer process, which probably reflects disappointment at not being successful with a grant application.

In the ACT, in comparison with many other jurisdictions and nationally, we have a higher success rate than those who have applied. It varies, of course, from round to round. Yes, there is always an element of unfunded excellence, but there is also a proportion that would be not recommended for funding by the peers because they do not strongly meet the guidelines or the criteria that come in. What I am getting to is that there are a lot of issues in terms of why people may or may not be satisfied with the process.

MS LAWDER: Minister, you have released a number of policy documents in this arts space, including the statement of ambition that we have talked a little bit about. Can you tell me what data relating to the economic impact of the arts the documents are based on?

Ms Cheyne: Yes. I think you asked this as a question on notice last time, which we responded to and can pull out. I believe most of the documents, particularly the policy, reference within them what data they have been drawn from. In particular, page 7 of the arts, culture and creative policy does so.

MS LAWDER: In September you answered a question on notice about some research being conducted by the University of Canberra. You said you were expecting that to be completed by the end of the year. Has that been completed? Have you received that research?

Ms Cheyne: I do not believe so, not yet.

MS LAWDER: Are you still expecting it by the end of the year?

Ms Fulton: Yes, we are expecting it by the end of the year. The contract has been extended. This was to allow the University of Canberra to use data that had just been released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in October, so it enables more up-to-date statistics to be used.

MS LAWDER: When you receive that document, will that become publicly available?

Ms Fulton: I would probably have to take that on notice. I think the expectation is that it will be, or at least in terms of a component, in terms of sharing critical data. Most of the data that is drawn from it is publicly available, but another area is actually looking at it, so in terms of a public release, I would need to take that on notice.

Ms Cheyne: It probably depends on the contract that we have with UC as well, given that it will be their research. Often there are some conditions put on. We will check and come back.

MS LAWDER: Their research, our money?

Ms Cheyne: That is generally how it works.

MS LAWDER: We have an ambition to become the national capital of the arts. Will there be ongoing, more regular collection of economic data?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, certainly. It is an action that is committed to in our action plan. We want to collect that. It is a good policy to do that. The exact plan for how we will do that is still in embryonic stages. We have also stressed to the commonwealth government, including, I believe, in our submission on the national cultural policy, that we want the commonwealth also to be doing more there. We are not alone in requesting that of the commonwealth.

MS LAWDER: Will it be the directorate undertaking that economic research on collection of the data or will it again belong to someone else?

Ms Cheyne: I think it is too early to say, Ms Lawder.

MS CLAY: Minister, earlier this week you released a funding announcement of \$9 million for the arts organisations, which was great to see. I know you have a really strong, ongoing commitment to increasing transparency on that, which is great. What has the reception been to that announcement so far?

Ms Cheyne: From organisations, they very much welcomed the certainty that this funding has provided. You would be aware that the broader context is that it has been a long time since organisations have had an increase, in addition to being a long time since new organisations have been invited to apply.

In terms of some broader context, we were very clear that this was an increase to the funding pool of 10 per cent. We invited organisations, both existing and new, to apply for a share of that funding pool. That 10 per cent increase was appreciated at the time, and still is, as being significant. I appreciate that there are inflation pressures at the moment, but in the context of the very real budget pressures that we have, 10 per cent for the arts is very welcome. Certainly, that has been the feedback I have had wherever I have flagged that.

We did seek those applications. It was a merit-based process. It is fair to say that the vast majority of the applications were very ambitious, and that is not something that we did not want to see. In fact, we very much wanted to see what organisations wanted to do and what they believed they were capable of. We did encourage organisations to apply for what they wanted—potentially, not to hold back in doing so. We also flagged and made very clear that we had funding guidelines against which they would be assessed, that this would be meritorious and that, overall, the funding pool, as with all funding, has a limit.

We have seen that some organisations have been very ambitious. Again, the funding pool increase is 10 per cent. Some organisations applied for hundreds of per cent over what they had previously been funded for—not all, but that certainly did occur in some instances.

There were some applications that were not successful. However, all organisations that have been funded are still funded and none has gone backwards from where they were

funded. Again, as I flagged before, this is an important element of providing certainty going forward. In the days since organisations have received those letters regarding their funding application, it is now a matter of this being the funding that they have, and they are working through that.

Of course, we have stressed throughout, and I think I flagged to you earlier, that arts funding is best utilised when it is leveraged—leveraged to explore, and securing a diversity of revenue streams, as well as things like venue hire, ticket sales, sponsorships and so forth. The next process is that artsACT is actively engaging with organisations and working on getting those deeds signed before the existing funding concludes at the end of this year. Very pleasingly, with the new entries, we have three new entrants to our overall arts organisations that are funded by the ACT government, which, again, that broader funding pool allowed us to do.

MS CLAY: There is some good news and some mixed news there. Have any of the arts organisations told you that they are in real financial trouble, and that they will actually find it difficult to continue, with the funding package?

Ms Cheyne: Some organisations, regarding what they have ambitions to do and would like to do, and putting that against what they had applied for, would find it not as easy to do, with the funding that they have received through this meritorious process.

THE CHAIR: I would like to head back to the Cultural Facilities Corporation. I have done a bit of a google search on venue hire. I notice that Lanyon has costs for weddings but some of the other venues do not. Can you provide the committee with the costs for each venue for functions, and things like that? I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr Ramsay: The standard hiring rate for a wedding or a function at Mugga-Mugga, which is also available online, is \$300 for the hire and, if it is extending beyond 4 o'clock, so an out of hours one, there is an additional \$150.

THE CHAIR: Can you table for the committee a register of the people that have booked those venues and aligning the costs?

Mr Ramsay: I will take that on notice to make sure that, for issues of privacy—

THE CHAIR: Just the figures.

Mr Ramsay: I can certainly follow that one through. We can certainly do the figures.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a policy for gifts, a gift register and things like that, with your team—a declaration policy?

Mr Ramsay: In terms of gifts?

THE CHAIR: You or your team receiving gifts, if you have done trips and things like that.

Mr Ramsay: Yes. In terms of gifts, with the policy that we have, we have recently been working on an updated range of policies across the organisation. We have aligned

ourselves with the broader ACT government and CMTEDD gifts policy.

THE CHAIR: What about a travel budget for yourself and your staff? I could not see that; can you let me know what the budget is?

Mr Ramsay: Yes, there is a travel budget that works across different parts of the organisation for different areas. Obviously, most specifically, the area of the organisation that probably involves the most travel is in terms of the Canberra Theatre Centre. The director is online and can speak to the nature of the travel that happens with that more broadly across the organisation. I can take on notice details of the budget for that.

I am also happy to provide the response to the earlier question in relation to the borrowing of items. The advice that I have received from the director of ACT Historic Places is that no borrowing of items from sites is permitted in policy or practice from the ACT Historic Places. There can be loan agreements made for matters of curatorial or heritage issues. If there is an exhibition, and that is often what happens across different organisations, obviously, in the same way that CMAG arranges for loans to come in for exhibitions at CMAG, it may well be from time to time that there is a specific loan agreement. If there was, for example, a staff member who had a professional association for an exhibition, this same loan agreement would be entered into with them or with that association as with any other loan agreement or exhibition space.

THE CHAIR: Great. Going back to the budget with regard to travel, what is your budget, as CEO?

Mr Ramsay: I will take on notice the detail of the budget. I do very little; I have done no interstate or international travel to date in my role. I have had one matter cancelled because of COVID—

THE CHAIR: Just the budget.

Mr Ramsay: I will arrange the budget to come through for you.

THE CHAIR: When you send through the detail of the costs with regard to the venue hire, could you send through the costs and the date? Thank you.

MS ORR: The Canberra Theatre, I understand, has just received additional funding in the budget. There has been some reporting about an EOI process on the Canberra Theatre. Are you able to expand on this and what it means in practical terms for the project?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, thank you, Ms Orr. We devoted close to \$30 million in the most recent budget to the development of the design for the Canberra Theatre—getting it design shovel ready, I suppose, for construction to begin, ideally in 2024. There was what we are calling the Canberra Theatre redevelopment project. It issued a request for expressions of interest in September to find a design and technical partner, and that has now closed. We have had 21 submissions received, from both national and international consortia. That is a very pleasing response.

The intention from here is that up to three of those who have applied or expressed interest will be shortlisted for the next phase of the procurement process. That will include concept designs for the redevelopment and the expansion of the theatre. Those are a new 2,000-seat theatre building, including a bigger stage, for some of those major performances. That is a completely new element in addition to what we know as the current theatre.

There will be a major refurbishment of what we know now as the Playhouse. The existing Canberra Theatre space would be adapted to be a more flexible space—what I think we call a black box, so that it can have collapsible seating, and it can hold things like concerns and events. The Courtyard Studio will be significantly expanded for a wider range of uses, and there will be some other rehearsal and experimental places. The team from Major Projects Canberra are here. I am sure they are keen to tell you more about it, as well as Alex Budd, the Director of the Canberra Theatre, who can go into some more detail.

Mr Little: To follow up what the minister said, yes, the project has issued a request for expression of interest out to the market to find a design and technical consultant. We received a good response from the market. There were 21 submissions received. That is currently still working its way through the procurement process, and we will finalise it very shortly. That is the first stage of a two-stage procurement process. We will then move through to shortlisting three respondents. We will then go through a stage where they prepare their concepts and submit to the territory for review and consideration.

MS ORR: You mentioned the Courtyard Studio and making amendments to it. What sorts of things are you looking at doing and what sorts of things will be enabled by that? We have not heard so much about that particular part of the project.

Ms Cheyne: There are two elements here. We might go to Mr Budd. We have some funding in the budget immediately for the Courtyard Studio and for the improvements in the experience there. Perhaps we can then go back to Major Projects to talk a little bit more, and Mr Budd as well, about what the overall theatre development will look like.

Mr Budd: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. There is capital works funding in the budget for the current year to do some minor upgrades to the Courtyard Studio, so that the current 100-seat facility makes it through to when the south end of the Canberra Theatre Centre is redeveloped. That includes WHS issues around access, and the seating, as well as making sure that the air conditioning works for a whole performance, not half a performance.

That covers off what we need to do to keep that studio operating. It will be the second venue during the redevelopment of the Theatre Centre. We have anticipated that the Playhouse goes offline early in the redevelopment, so we will only have the main 1,200-seat theatre and the Courtyard Studio operating for a large period of the development.

What is envisaged in the final project, in studio spaces or in total—and this has been touched on—is that we will end up with the new 2,000-seat facility, the Playhouse, with a major enhancement to the Playhouse at 600 seats, and the current 1,200-seat venue

adapted into a flexible space. What is envisaged in the concept designs is that where the Courtyard Studio and administration of the building are at the moment is where a 300-seat flexible black-box venue is envisaged. That venue will enable a higher level of commerciality for smaller scale, intimate productions than we can do in the Courtyard Studio at the moment, with 100 seats.

The Courtyard Studio was initially built in the 80s as a rehearsal venue for the Canberra Theatre, and bringing seats into it and turning it into a working theatre was a more recent change. The economics, at 100 seats, do not stack up very often. With the concept design that went on in the early development of this project, with approximately 300 seats for the venue, it will enable collaboration with some of the smaller local arts organisations and there will be different kinds of productions that we can present to Canberra audiences.

Ms Cheyne: That probably covers what Major Projects would have to say.

MS ORR: When will the community start to have input on the project? When will you be going out and seeking feedback from them?

Mr Little: I will hand over to Adrian Piani, our project director for the project.

Mr Piani: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. As mentioned previously, we went through the procurement process. We would not be holding direct stakeholder engagement at that stage of the procurement process. That is planned to be completed by March-April next year; once we have selected the preferred tenderer, we will launch into a fairly detailed and exhaustive communications and engagement process. It is that engagement that will help us through the design process.

In that respect, it is probably worth noting that, when we talk about scope of the design process, it is an exploration, and we expect our designers, in harmony with artsACT, ourselves, CTC and other stakeholders, to refine that scope and come up with the best complex we can for the future. I can clarify the time lines more broadly. We expect that the design process will take all of 2023 and probably all of 2024, and we will then be in a position to look towards construction after that.

MS LAWDER: I know it is very early days. Are you already thinking about more female toilets, given the long lines that I am sure you have all seen at the Canberra Theatre?

Ms Cheyne: That might be one for Mr Budd.

Mr Budd: Public consultation, in my mind, has started. I get regular emails from a wide variety of our existing female clientele about the number of toilets in the new venue. It is very much in our minds. There is no upper limit.

MS CLAY: Minister, the government is going through a pretty major planning review at the moment, with district strategies and a draft Territory Plan being released. Obviously, you are not the planning minister, but I am wondering how, as arts minister, you have engaged in that process, given that there is so much development going on in the arts scene, we have major developments happening right now, and I do not know

whether there are other arts facilities planned for the future. Have you been involved in that process?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, absolutely. The whole community is involved while these are draft district strategies. We are very much looking forward to hearing how the community responds to the opportunities that are identified within those. There is broader work underway about infrastructure. The Chief Minister delivered a major speech during the last sitting about our infrastructure priorities. That included what had been flagged in the 2019 infrastructure plan about something similar to the Hordern Pavilion. That is on the cards.

There is work underway at the moment about what other infrastructure may be required—noting, of course, that there are synergies with things like a convention centre. In addition we do have a funding component in the most recent budget for an arts facilities strategy, including the ongoing maintenance of our facilities. I think all members here would know that our facilities are wide and varied in their age and overall feel and experience. What Mr Budd was talking about with the Courtyard Studio is only one example of some of the things that we have been working through.

The district strategies are certainly a way of engaging the community. I have been engaged with those district strategies, with all of my ministerial hats on, through the cabinet process. This is also part of other work within government that has intersections with that.

MS CLAY: That is great to hear. I often hear, and you would hear even more frequently, that people want new arts facilities in places where we do not have them, I am really pleased with the Belco arts facility, but I often hear calls from west Belconnen for more community and arts space. Woden seems to be particularly vocal about a community and arts space. If people want more arts spaces, community spaces or entertainment spaces in their district, can they engage in the district strategy and ask for it?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, of course.

MS LAWDER: Minister, according to the Your Say website, the final place brief for the Kingston arts precinct was expected in October. Has it been completed?

Ms Cheyne: It is really close; that is my latest update. With the most recent information I have, we talked last time about a major survey. It was open, and it was concluded in September. I think it had more than 400 responses, which is a fantastic result. I understand that that work is just being finalised. It is awaiting the conclusion of some engagement with our Ngunnawal and broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. I would say that it is imminent. I will see whether Ms Fulton has anything further to add.

Ms Fulton: That is absolutely correct, Minister. It is in its final draft stages and it is awaiting some final input that may be added, in terms of wanting to get as much input as we can from our traditional custodians into the place brief. I have certainly done a read-through, looking at it in terms of how it is written. That is how close it is to being put out. SLA are managing that process and they hope to have it out shortly.

MS LAWDER: When that place brief is finalised, what are the next steps? What will the time line be?

Ms Cheyne: It ties in broadly to the other work that is underway. A number of creative consultancies and community consultancies have been underway. There have been three major consultancies that have been open, led by the Suburban Land Agency. Those procurements are the project management consultant, the principal design consultant and the quantity surveyor.

Again, similar to what we were talking about with the Canberra Theatre project and the commission for public art, there was a request for expression of interest. That closed; from there, there was a request for tender. That was issued to shortlisted suppliers on 20 October, and responses are due, I believe, this month. I expect contracts to be in place in early January. That will dovetail neatly with the finalisation of the place brief because that is what these major procurements will be working from to bring the brief to life.

MS LAWDER: Will the place brief be publicly available?

Ms Cheyne: I believe so, yes.

Ms Fulton: Yes, it will be.

MS LAWDER: I was looking at the CMAG info in your annual report. Sixty per cent of visitors to the *Canberra Raiders* exhibition were first-time visitors to CMAG. That is an excellent response. How did that happen? How did you reach those people and bring those new people in?

Mr Ramsay: It is probably a long answer, because there is a very broad piece of work going on across CMAG to be able to engage new audiences and diversify audiences—grow the numbers and build on that. That worked largely by engaging with the Raiders themselves. There was also more general promotion. There was the media that we picked up and deliberately targeted for that exhibition, and that reached a different audience. Part of it is about thinking through the particular media channels that we are working with, and the social media targeting for particular exhibitions.

We are trying to make sure that, with the exhibitions that happen in CMAG, there is a more nuanced marketing approach for each of the various exhibitions. We are working, as you are probably aware, on expanded space in what used to be a restaurant at the front of CMAG. That is well developed at the moment. We would hope that the first exhibition in that space will be held early next year. We have an exhibition in the Nolan Gallery at the moment that is based on photos and costumes out of the *True History of the Kelly Gang* movie. Again, that is trying to broaden our audience base.

With the Back to the Boombox Party that we held earlier this year, that was about working in conjunction with the *Boombox* exhibition that we had. The way that we were targeting that was to try and create new and external events. We had a 1980s party and worked in partnership with Project Beats. Again my expectation is that most of the people who were at that party were new to the CMAG space as well. That was an excellent way of working. Most recently we had a wonderful concert, with the Canberra

Symphony Orchestra in galleries 2 and 3, as part of the *Search for Paradise* exhibition.

There is a very broad range of ways in which we are trying to diversify the audience. We think CMAG is such an excellent asset for Canberra that the more we can broaden that audience, and the more we can engage with new and diverse audiences, clearly the better we will be.

Ms Cheyne: And please visit the design hub shop, if you have not already done so.

THE CHAIR: We will close the session now. On behalf of the committee, thank you, Minister Cheyne, and your officials. There have been a couple of questions taken on notice, so please get those to the committee secretary within five days. The hearing is suspended.

Hearing suspended from 3.01 to 4.33 pm.

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
Engele, Mr Sam, Head of the Better Regulation Taskforce, Better Regulation Taskforce, Policy and Cabinet

Access Canberra

McKinnon, Ms Margaret, Acting Deputy Director-General
Rynehart, Mr Josh, Acting Chief Operating Officer
Mangeruca, Mr Giuseppe, Acting Executive Branch Manager, Fair Trading and Compliance
Cubin, Ms Derise, Executive Branch Manager, Licensing and Registrations
Springett, Ms Emily, Executive Branch Manager, Engagement, Compliance and COVID-19 Response

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality inquiry into annual and financial reports 2021-22. This afternoon the committee will be hearing evidence from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and Access Canberra.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

The proceedings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and streamed live. Please let us know clearly if you plan on taking a question on notice. This helps the committee and witnesses to confirm.

In this session we are hearing from the Minister for Business and Better Regulation. Welcome, Minister Cheyne, and all of your officials. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. When you speak for the first time, please acknowledge the statement at that point. Thank you very much.

Minister, I have questions about the Northbourne speed cameras and the impact that these may have had on business. According to page 95 of the CMTEDD annual report, volume 2.1, under "Traffic and other fines", there was more than a \$36 million increase. The footnote explains that this was largely due to the 40-kilometre zones in the city. Can you tell me, since this zone was introduced, how many business vehicles have been fined and what the total amounts of those fines for businesses are?

Ms Cheyne: Thank you, Ms Castley. I will just see if we have that breakdown. Perhaps Mr Rynehart can assist in the first instance.

Mr Rynehart: I think we may need to take that level of detail on notice, but there certainly is a difference in offences between an individually registered vehicle and a vehicle registered under a company.

THE CHAIR: Can I ask why that is?

Mr Rynehart: General offence provisions are generally different for individuals versus companies. It is a standard provision across multiple pieces of legislation. Do we have any more detail on that?

Mr Mangeruca: I have read and understood the privilege statement. In relation to vehicles that are registered to businesses, we would need to take that particular aspect on notice in order to be able to unpack that information. There is a degree of complexity, as Mr Rynehart has noted, in being able to identify a vehicle as being registered to a business because in many cases they are registered to individuals or corporations. In the case of corporations, it is easy to identify who they are, but more often than not there are leasing arrangements that individuals enter into and they may use that vehicle for their business. That would be hard to articulate, so we will take that question on notice.

THE CHAIR: I am just interested in understanding what the impact is for a business that has their vehicle registered to that business, corporation or whatever it is—how many fines they have had. It is obviously more expensive. Is that what you said, Mr Rynehart?

Mr Rynehart: Yes. We will take that on notice about the breakdown between the two.

THE CHAIR: If you have received any complaints from business about this, I would appreciate that information as well. Thank you.

MR PARTON: Regarding the speed camera zone in the inner city, can I ask, Minister: how much revenue has been generated from speeding fines that have been issued over the most recent 12-month period and how does that compare to the next highest grossing speed camera and the total amount of speeding fines in the ACT?

Ms Cheyne: Thank you, Mr Parton. I think we will have that detail somewhere. Do you have it, Mr Mangeruca?

Mr Mangeruca: I do. In relation to the 40-kilometre-an-hour zone, which encompasses multiple cameras—

MR PARTON: True.

Mr Mangeruca: in the previous financial year, noting that fines only commenced being issued on 5 July 2021, there was a total penalty payable of \$40,605,151. Could I get you to clarify the aspect in relation to the next highest camera?

MR PARTON: I guess I am trying to get a handle on what was the next highest grossing location in the ACT and what that amount was. That is what I am trying to get to. I am assuming it would be Hume.

Mr Mangeruca: In relation to the next highest grossing camera, I would need to take that aspect on notice if you want a specific camera location.

MR PARTON: Okay. You know what it is like in the COVID period: time has not quite lined up with the way that we want it to in our heads. That \$40 million is not for the complete financial year or is it for a complete financial year?

Mr Mangeruca: The fines commenced being issued on 5 July, so it is just short of a complete financial year.

MR PARTON: Then can I ask: over the last 12 months how much of the revenue generated from the speed camera on Northbourne Avenue has been deemed not required to be paid? How long does it take for a person who requests not to pay their fine to be notified of that outcome? I understand that there has been a backlog.

Ms Cheyne: Mr Parton, that is correct. As I think you are getting to, it is understood that the number of infringements has been much higher than the usual total infringements and has affected the processing of those. It is something that Access Canberra, as an organisation, is incredibly alive to. There is a backlog. What you are talking about is a request to withdraw. At the moment I believe it is around 12 months for that to be processed. It is important to note that people do have a period within which they can seek to have their infringement withdrawn. That is the request. There is no impact to them financially, or demerit points or otherwise, while that is then being processed by Access Canberra. Increasingly, there have been resources dedicated to that processing team.

MR PARTON: I do not even know if you have got this detail, which I am assuming would have to be taken on notice. What I would like to know is: what percentage of fines at this particular zone, including the three cameras there on Northbourne Avenue, have gone to interstate registrations, as compared to the ACT? How does that breakdown compare with other camera locations across the ACT?

Ms Cheyne: I can certainly give you the answer for that location. We will have to take on notice how that compares to other locations. It may well be that to calculate it for all the other locations, Mr Parton, is an unreasonable diversion of resources, but we will see. We will do our very best. The information that I have—and this is not the financial year, so can I just be clear that the dates are from 5 July 2021 to 16 October 2022—is that 54.95 per cent were issued to ACT drivers and 45.05 per cent were issued to non-ACT drivers.

I note as well that we have seen the speeds at which people from interstate and the ACT are travelling through there come down. That has been commensurate with fines and infringement notices. In the last quarter, from 1 July to 30 September, around 99 per cent of vehicles travelling through the intersections were doing so within the signposted limit.

MR PARTON: Thank you. And you have taken on notice that detail, if possible.

Ms Cheyne: I have, yes. We will do what we can.

MR PARTON: I have faith in Mr Mangeruca. I have enormous faith.

THE CHAIR: Can I hit back with another one to take on notice? How many businesses were waived? If there were any fines for businesses and they were waived, can I get that number? Thank you.

Ms Cheyne: Can we just clarify that? Waiving has a very particular meaning in infringement notices.

Ms McKinnon: Ms Castley, I think there is going to be a manual process, so can we do the last six months or just pick six months? That would help us to figure out whether we could do it.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Sure.

Ms McKinnon: There is a withdrawal and there is a waiving, so we will give you the various categories that applied to commercial vehicles.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Please point me in the direction for the explanation as to why the cost is different between personal and commercial.

Ms Cheyne: Sure; we can do that. As Mr Rynehart said, it is across multiple bits of legislation, so we will pull that out. We will provide that. No problem.

MS ORR: I note that you waived fees for hawker permits permanently, earlier this year. Can you just run me through what that actually means and how the hawker permits are going to be working?

Ms Cheyne: Yes; absolutely. Thank you, Ms Orr. We do have a modest but thriving hawker cohort. Micro businesses are an area that we are looking to grow. Some feedback that we had had was that the fee for a hawker permit to be issued was seen as a barrier for some of those micro businesses. In May, when we made the announcement, there were 43 hawker permits that were active all year round, as well as 10 that were seasonal. I believe we are at 59 total, but Ms Cubin is there and will be able to help me out in a second.

What it means in practice is that these permits are still required but there is not a fee associated with them. It is because there are hawkers operating on what is public land, so there needs to be that permit issued. Being free, they can apply for it and it allows for trade for anything, from coffee to alcohol, food, flowers, arts, bric-a-brac, jewellery and Christmas trees. When you see those Christmas tree trucks by the side of the road, that is probably going to be a hawker permit. What the breakdown is for us now, I believe, is 48 full-time hawker permits and 11 periodic permits—those ones that are seasonal like Christmas trees. They range from bicycle repairs and bakery goods to three mobile alcohol businesses and 34 food and coffee vans, as well as one charity

selling hand-made knitted items.

MS ORR: Just out of interest, they are saying that this is a small section of the micro business economy or footprint. You noted that you are keen to grow it. What things are you looking at doing and where would you like to see hawker businesses and the opportunities there that can be realised?

Ms Cheyne: I think there are a lot of opportunities in areas where there might be new suburbs, and even some established suburbs that have local shops that may have not been as well tenanted as they perhaps could have been, like Giralang, for example, and Scullin until recently. A really good example of a business that I think has worked in that scenario quite well is Husk Bakery. They are a hawker. They let people know that they are coming to their suburb. I think they have a live tracker, so you can see where their baked goods are and if they are coming to your street. That is an example.

I would particularly like to see it extended to things like arts and crafts. We have a lot of smaller arts businesses that can use this as an opportunity to sell their wares without having to be associated with a broader small business market. They could set up, perhaps, at Yerrabi Pond or Lake Ginninderra and sell their goods that way, just like many of our coffee vans already do.

MS ORR: Thank you.

MR COCKS: Minister, I have heard some concerns from businesses with brick and mortar stores about competition from hawkers who may not have a licence, or who may have a licence, and do not have the same level of costs that those businesses need to pay, through different licences and things, to the government. Have you considered that differential when looking at this scheme?

Ms Cheyne: Yes; absolutely. Hawkers need to operate a certain distance from those brick and mortar businesses, unless the hawker is operating on leased land and has the approval of the leaseholder of the land. I am just guessing, Mr Cocks, but it may be in some of those situations that a business has identified what they think is a hawker operating on public unleased land, but they may be operating quite close to a business on leased land and, hopefully, they would have the approval of that leaseholder. If businesses have any concerns they should be getting in touch with Access Canberra, and Ms Cubin's team would be able to assist. Do you have the detail, Ms Cubin, on what the distance is that hawkers need to be from a business if they are on unleased land?

Ms Cubin: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for your question. I am just having a look. From my understanding, it is 180 metres from a business, but I will have to confirm that for you, Mr Cocks.

MR COCKS: Okay. Is the contact for businesses that are concerned just the normal Access Canberra line or is there something quicker that they can use?

Ms Cheyne: Yes. There is a direct line to Ms Cubin's team, which is 6207 2343.

MR COCKS: Thank you very much.

MR DAVIS: Minister, this committee is currently conducting an inquiry into housing and rental affordability. The terms of reference for that inquiry say that we want to inquire into and report on the causes of vacancies in residential and commercial properties. The government provided a submission to that inquiry in which they said, at point 4:

Due to time constraints and the impact of the ACT budget due to be released on 2 August 2022, the Submission does not include consideration of commercial vacancies.

Have you had small business operators in Canberra raise with you a concern about the rate of commercial property vacancy?

Ms Cheyne: I do not think so, not recently.

MR DAVIS: Do you have a concern or is anyone in your directorate working on any policy or response to the growing rate of commercial property vacancy in the ACT? I ask this on the basis that, for most businesses, the rent that they pay for their premises is second only to their wage bill in terms of their expenses. In my electorate in particular there is a surprisingly high amount of vacant commercial property advertised at rates well in excess of what the market is prepared to pay. I wonder if that has crossed your desk.

Ms Cheyne: This might, perhaps, touch on some of the work during the pandemic. Sam, do you know?

Mr Engele: We have not heard any concerns from business. During the pandemic the Commercial Tenancies Code was implemented, which was essentially a requirement for landlords to reach good faith negotiations with their tenants. They were limited in terminating a tenant's tenancy. We have not had anything after the pandemic or as part of that process in relation to vacant properties or the rates that landlords are putting on properties.

MR DAVIS: Do you have a view, then, about how it affects the profitability and sustainability of small business more broadly when some commercial landlords in the ACT purposely withhold their commercial property from market and distort the market price that businesses are paying for commercial real estate?

Ms Cheyne: That is a difficult question for me to answer, Mr Davis, simply because I think we are making an assumption that that is their purpose in doing that. I would be really quite surprised if commercial landlords would be doing that purposely, quite simply because commercial landlords themselves are businesses. Many commercial landlords, as we heard during the pandemic, are those mum and dad businesses who are relying on rent for their own income. I appreciate the view that you are taking here, but I do not think I can answer that.

MR DAVIS: That is all right. Have you had it raised with you, as I have had it raised with me, that there are some commercial property owners in Canberra who are purposely keeping their property from market and vacant for the purposes of offsetting

a tax bill and profitable business ventures in other places?

Ms Cheyne: No, I have not had it raised with me directly, Mr Davis, but I certainly am very happy to engage with you on it.

MR DAVIS: That sounds great. Thank you.

MR COCKS: During those consultations with businesses over the concessions that you were negotiating through COVID, did any of those landlords that you engaged with raise the issue of commercial rates as a barrier to lowering their rental rates?

Mr Engele: Firstly, I will acknowledge the privileges statement. Chair, sorry for missing that. As part of that process, the role of the Better Regulation Taskforce was to put in place the framework and the legislation that enabled that. The small business commissioner, Brendan Smyth, was the mediator between landlords and their tenants, so we did not have a direct engagement with business as part of that process, but he was at that level. I have not heard that from him. I know that we had a policy in place to provide rates rebates for those landlords that offered their tenants a similar rebate, but I have not received that from him.

MR COCKS: What I would like to come to is that there was some media reporting earlier this year around a Canberra nightclub that was fined \$7,000 for failing to keep CCTV footage for the period required under the Liquor Act, which I understand outlines requirements for security footage and the requirement for those images to be stored for 30 days. What compliance education and activities did you undertake previously to make sure licensees were aware of and understood those requirements?

Ms Cheyne: Certainly, Mr Cocks, we will be able to get to the detail with Mr Mangeruca. Access Canberra undertakes a very big engagement agenda with businesses to discuss with them what their compliance responsibilities are—again, with the accountability framework of “engage, educate and enforce”. That is what is undertaken with all of the business interactions that are had, so it is very rare with any business to go straight to enforcement.

RAMPs—risk-assessment management plans—are a requirement, I believe, under the Liquor Act, for businesses to have, and within those are requirements for the minimum CCTV that businesses will have available at their premises, depending on the type of business they are. Generally, what Access Canberra would do when they engage with businesses is look to see their RAMP and to see if what is in their RAMP matches what is occurring generally. Mr Mangeruca will be able to correct me if I have said anything wrong there and to explain what the engagement looks like on the ground.

Mr Mangeruca: Thank you. As outlined by the Minister, Access Canberra utilises an engage, educate and enforce model. In the last financial year we had two proactive programs, the major events program and the controlled sports program, which at least in part spoke to conducting proactive compliance action in relation to, effectively, reviewing people’s understanding of their requirements under their RAMP. It is also a condition on people’s liquor licences that they are aware that their staff are aware of the requirements under their RAMP. Before we conduct these programs, we send out some proactive engagement material. As part of that material, we generally outline what we

will be looking for during these particular engagements, and more often than not, compliance with a RAMP, and having an awareness of what is in the RAMP, is part of that.

We also from time to time send out educational material where we point out what the licensee obligations are more broadly than just the RAMP and in relation to responsible service of alcohol and the requirement to keep CCTV footage. When we do have a successful action, we also use it as an opportunity to promote both general and specific deterrence. So, for example, we will inform the industry what the outcomes of a particular ACAT matter may be, and what they should look for and do in order to meet their obligations under the Liquor Act.

MR COCKS: Can you tell me how many licensed premises have been fined for not storing footage or images for that 30 days?

Mr Mangeruca: Whilst it would not be appropriate to talk about specific licensees, what I would say is—

MR COCKS: Just a number.

Mr Mangeruca: we would not issue fines under the Liquor Act for this particular contravention. It would necessitate us to undertake occupational discipline. Under the occupational discipline provisions of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act, ACAT can issue a financial penalty, which occurred with this particular occupation discipline. In that financial year, that licensee was the only one that fell foul that we took specific enforcement action against for those contraventions.

MR COCKS: We have only got one business that has been subject to this particular fine. Do you undertake any investigations proactively in nightclubs to see what is happening around this sort of storage as a routine action?

Mr Mangeruca: Compliance with a licensee's RAMP is routinely tested. The requirement to hold CCTV footage is a specific requirement under RAMPs.

MR COCKS: Yes, I understand that.

Mr Mangeruca: So it would be captured from time to time.

MR COCKS: Thank you.

Ms Cheyne: Certainly it has been publicly reported, Mr Cocks, that the licensee had a number of other issues, not just the RAMP.

MR COCKS: I was particularly interested in this one, thank you.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, and I think you would be aware of the experience—

MR COCKS: Absolutely.

Ms Cheyne: I, perhaps, will not go into more detail.

THE CHAIR: I have a question on output class 3. A report from the federal parliament to the library was released last month showing that the ACT has the worst “business conditions” in the country—that was the title of the section. Between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, business investment by the ACT fell by 11.5 per cent, compared to 1.4 per cent as the fall nationally. The ACT is also the worst performing jurisdiction for value of retail sales between 2021 and 2022. Value of retail sales reduced in the ACT by 1.3 per cent despite the national average increasing by 5.9 per cent.

Page 84 of the CMTEDD annual report outlines the future direction for business in the 2022-2023 financial year, but I am failing to see what major investment there was in business. Given that our survival rates show we are the worst in the country over the last couple of years, I am wondering why businesses are being underfunded again, even though the stats show they are performing poorly? I would like your thoughts on that.

Ms Cheyne: There is a lot in that.

THE CHAIR: There are a lot of stats.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, Ms Castley, and I do not have a copy of that report that you are referring to, so I cannot speak to that, unfortunately. First, I reiterate what we discussed in the last hearing about business exit rates. Again, it is non-employing businesses that made up the largest proportion of total non-surviving businesses in the ACT every year for the four years to 2021.

So, the ACT is skewed in that we have a large number of non-employing businesses, and those businesses also have the lowest rate of survival while having the large proportion of the business exit figure. Again, a few things can be pointed to in that, but we do have a lot of sole trader consultancies that may then get work elsewhere as part of a broader business or—

THE CHAIR: Yes, I understand that. The point of this question is about the investment. It has dropped by 11.5 per cent.

Ms Cheyne: Sure. I guess what I am getting to with that part of the question is: what funding to businesses are you looking for here?

THE CHAIR: Why are we 11.5 per cent less? Why do we spend that amount less on business in the ACT than the rest of the country?

Ms Cheyne: I need to see exactly what the context is of that figure, Ms Castley. Perhaps I could take that on notice. If you could share that through the committee secretary, I can respond to that in more detail. Without the broader context of what that figure is for investment, I cannot go to any level of detail.

THE CHAIR: We talk about retail sales being up in the ACT but this report—and I will get it shared with the secretary—says that we have reduced by 1.3 per cent, which does seem different to what we have been hearing in the chamber. So I am just wondering if you have heard from businesses that this cohort is still struggling, and that retail spending is not up like we expected it to be? It was up in the year of COVID, and

now it is 1.3 per cent.

Ms Cheyne: My understanding, and the latest information I have, Ms Castley, was that retail spending was still very strong in the ACT, so I will need to check what that figure is being drawn from and compare that against the information that I have. I will give you a fulsome response on notice. We will take it on notice.

THE CHAIR: Alright, thank you.

MS ORR: What are some of the changes at Access Canberra's service centres, over the past year?

Ms Cheyne: Thank you, Ms Orr. There is a lot which is good news. Our service centres in this last financial year have had everything thrown at them, I would say—not least that the service centres were not open while we were in lockdown. That meant that those staff were doing different activities, including operating through our contact centre, which is, essentially, where people are calling through, and other roles as well.

You might be aware that with the reopening of service centres we did then have a long average wait time in January. That peaked at a little over two hours then, but very pleasingly the peak came right down. The average then was one hour 37 minutes and it peaked at over 2 hours, but it came right down and by March had really started to normalise. Since May, and consistently every month, it has been around about a seven-minute wait, which is very pleasing.

Interestingly, and I think importantly, our service centres have processed approximately 25 per cent more transactions in the first six months of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021, so the efficiency of our service centres is very high as well. The mobile queuing feature was implemented soon after our service centres reopened, so that allows those attending a service centre to scan a QR code on arrival and virtually join a queue. Then they can leave that queue to go and wait, perhaps in a shady space or they can get a coffee, if they can see or they are otherwise advised that the wait time is longer, for whatever reason.

In addition to that, the Belconnen service centre opened “softly” in January and properly in February, and it has seen some very high customer satisfaction. With the design of the service centre, it has also been deliberately designed in a COVID-safe way so there is a lot of space to move around.

There is also a concierge focus at our service centres ensuring that when people arrive they are greeted and, before they sit down, a customer service officer will check they have the right information or things that they may need, such as their licence, before they engage with that transaction. I think all of those things have really contributed to a very effective service centre that went from levels in January that I do not think we had seen before to a very high level of proficiency and productivity. Given all those teams are trained in over 450 transactions, I think it is a remarkable achievement.

MS ORR: Have there been any changes to staffing over this period, given there has been so many changes to the operation of the centres?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, so the particular large change has been the additional concierge staff. In the budget we increased the presence of our concierge staff members at each of our service centres, I believe, by five. Providing that knowledgeable first point of contact is, as I said, improving the customer experience, information dissemination and providing that positive first point of contact.

MS ORR: Are all the centres back up, operational, open and operating?

Ms Cheyne: Yes. So you may recall we have talked about Dickson service centre which remained closed except for some limited transactions, for some time. All services at the Dickson service centre have been resumed but through a bookable appointment model. That began on 10 October, with a soft launch with our partners, like through the Council of the Aging. That has been in response to people who might have sensory needs or again, might be elderly and just require a bit of extra support. We have had a very strong support and engagement with the bookable appointments model. Within the first 10 days the service centre handled 137 bookings. Bookings can be made through the Access Canberra website.

MR DAVIS: I want to talk about drones because I think Ms Clay was keen for some answers on that but we were in the wrong session last time. Can I get some advice on how many complaints Access Canberra has received related to drone activity in the last financial year?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, Ms Springett will have that. Just for your awareness Mr Davis and I informed Ms Clay in the previous hearing as well, the responsibility for drones has officially transferred to Minister Steel. However, we have agreed that for annual report hearings today we will take questions so we will certainly answer those. But broader questions about drones in the future have transferred to Minister Steel as Transport Minister because at a commonwealth level where the engagement is and where the progression of that policy work is, is through transport ministers. I am not, so that is why there has been the transfer.

MR DAVIS: That makes sense.

Ms Cheyne: But certainly, from an Access Canberra perspective, Ms Springett is—

MR DAVIS: Before Ms Springett does because I do want to hear those, just to inform my questions, Minister, would it be fair to say that I can ask you today questions related to data as it pertains to Access Canberra but some other questions I have about broader ACT government policy around drones?

Ms Cheyne: I can tell you where it is at, up to the point where the policy transferred. So it may be out of date but should be pretty right.

MR DAVIS: That is okay, that sounds great. Sorry, Ms Springett.

Ms Springett: Thank you, minister. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. In terms of complaints received to Access Canberra, I can advise there have been 10 complaints in the last 12 months. We also did a scan across government in case any came into other directorates and I can advise that the only other directorate to advise

of complaints was three through EPSDD. In terms of complaint management when it comes to drones in Access Canberra, when members of the community access our smart form through the Access Canberra website they receive information about drones including what the best avenue for their complaint may be. An example would be if they have a concern about privacy and drones, they would be directed to the relevant commonwealth agency which manages that complaint. Similar to referrals to CASA or other agencies, noting from a regulatory perspective across government around drones we often do not have the capability, the capacity or indeed, the responsibility to be addressing those.

MR DAVIS: Of course. And to be clear, I understand and accept that it is not a regulatory area in which the ACT is able to make any decisions but we are collecting the data and complaints so I am interested in a bit of a breakdown of that. The 10 you said came through Access Canberra and the three through EPSDD so is that 13 in total?

Ms Springett: That is correct, so 13 total over the last 12 months.

MR DAVIS: Great. Do you have a breakdown of the areas of Canberra, even the suburbs, from where the complainants reside? So we can get some read on where our pressure points are.

Ms Springett: Yes, so I would have to look into that one for you. What we are doing is capturing so we can see the quantum of complaints coming in but noting we are not addressing them at the ACT level, they are being diverted to the relevant agencies so there is not a double touching for the customer when it comes to their complaint.

Ms Cheyne: Mr Davis, given there are such low numbers of complaints on a privacy level, we have been asked this question before, I think we have said no. Just because where some drones are and where the complaints are, might immediately indicate the person's address.

Ms McKinnon: Yes, if we can look at post codes, we might do that because that aggregates it a bit more. But 13 with a suburb.

MR DAVIS: Post codes would be fine. Having said that, I assume the person calling to complain is complaining because there is a drone overhead and so they would self-declare an address. I am just looking for a suburb but I take your point.

When you say there is not a double touch point then for the Canberran making the complaint, Access Canberra is not recording the nature of their complaint, simply referring on? Or are you taking on board, having a conversation with them on the phone, getting a detailed email and then also making a submission on their behalf to the national regulator? Is that how it is working?

Ms Springett: It would depend on what channel they are coming through when it comes to Access Canberra. So certainly, if somebody was to call our contact centre, there would be a conversation and we would provide a warm referral. We are providing essentially, a warm referral as well in an online sense if people are going through our smart form in terms of a complaint as it has really clear information so people are aware where the jurisdiction for their level of complaint sits. That is really to manage their

customer journey and to support them to get the information they need and require. It is important to note the 13 may not necessarily be complaints. They may also be members of the community seeking additional information or indeed providing feedback.

MR DAVIS: Okay, great, that sounds good. Based on that, my next follow up is for you Minister. Based on the government having that data and that information, is that feeding up to you and I suppose from now on Minister Steel? And how is that informing conversations you are having with the commonwealth in this space?

Ms Cheyne: I might hand to Sam on this.

Mr Engele: The number of complaints is quite low so they have not really been coming to us in detail because the nature of the conversation with the commonwealth is on the legislative frameworks. So they are working on a drone rules management system and they are also receiving the complaints as outlined by Access Canberra. We have not been engaging with that level of detail. We have been focusing on how the decision making would work in the ACT for those rules as they are applied.

MR DAVIS: Okay.

Ms Cheyne: If I think about the expansion of Wing, there are drones, there are privately operated drones and then there is Wing company. In CASA's role in approving Wing's expansion CASA takes into account feedback from the community which includes complaints. So that is one way there is interaction with the commonwealth in terms of the business element of the regulation.

MR DAVIS: Now that makes sense. I assume, with a change of government there are a lot of things which have not changed or at least a changed policy approach or at least a different perspective to a policy challenge. Are you aware, or have you been a part of, since the election of a new federal government, any appetite to take this space in a different direction? Are they relying on our experience and information? Are they coming to us for some of these data points to inform some of that policy direction?

Ms Cheyne: I would say it is early days, Mr Davis, with the federal government not being in place yet for six months but the fact we you already know this is going into the Transport Minister's space is suggestive of, perhaps, at least a more engaged federal government on this, but Sam.

Mr Engele: I think the progress from what we see at officials level is maintain the same pace. I think there is a recognition that this is a new technology that needs some regulatory framework around it. I think they are on track for what they originally propose in relation to the drone rules management system.

THE CHAIR: I have some questions about the spending output 3.1 on some of the costs on page 140. It says it is approximately \$347,464 million. The footnote explains it is due to COVID support payments.

Ms Cheyne: Sorry, sorry, sorry. Can we just slow down, what page?

THE CHAIR: 140.

Ms Cheyne: Of what?

THE CHAIR: The output 3.1.

Ms Cheyne: Of the CMTEDD annual report?

THE CHAIR: CMTEDD. Volume 2.1.

Ms Cheyne: Volume 2.1, thank you. Okay, one second.

THE CHAIR: I will also need you to then find page 45 of the CMTEDD.

Ms Cheyne: So volume 2.1.

THE CHAIR: 2.1, yes. Page 140. It says in the accountability indicators 2021-22, the result, the total cost and there is a list of things in there, were \$347,464 million. The footnote explains this money is due to COVID payments. Some of it is due to COVID payments. So if I am correct, then on page 45 it talks about the amount specific to COVID. So \$347 million is, if I am correct, the total spend for business and innovation.

Now when I look at page 45, the COVID amount provided by the ACT government for grants was \$313 million for business support grants. So I am now on page 45 to get this breakdown; \$13 million for the Small Business Hardship Scheme, approximately, \$13,360,000 and \$14 million for the tourism and accommodation provider fund. So those three payments, \$313, \$13 and \$14 million; if we take that away from \$347 million, it leaves us around about \$7.4 million that has not been spent on COVID grants. Is that correct? I am just wondering if you could tell me what the remaining \$7.4 million was spent on in the year?

Ms Cheyne: I think that is for Ms Arthy. But just give us a second, jumping around the pages is—

Ms Arthy: I have read and understood the privileges statement. Ms Castley, I am just trying to reconcile with the different pages here in terms of how they interact. I am only talking generally because I may need to take the detail on notice to come back in terms of the \$7.4 million. However, the output for 3.1, as well as the business support grants and all the COVID measures that were there for 2021-22, is also our broader business support and business innovation team. What I will need to do, and probably take on notice, is just reconcile exactly what that adds up to.

So some of the elements within that would be the work we do with the Canberra Innovation Network. It would also be the work that we do around business, like the work with Cyber Hub, things like that. That is all captured under this output. I am just doing this very quickly as I am looking here, so I might need to take it on notice to give you a more accurate answer.

THE CHAIR: Yes, please.

Ms Arthy: Unless my team can send me an answer before the estimates close today.

THE CHAIR: Yes, thank you. I am keen to understand, if when we take COVID out of the budget for business, if \$7.4 million was what was left and then the line items it went for. I know the Canberra business chamber have said they would like to see a bit more. We have heard it from everybody. So I am just keen to understand is \$7.4 million enough and where did it go throughout the year? Also and I am sure—

Ms Cheyne: Just drawing your attention to that page 140 Ms Castley. The result was an expenditure over what the target was. So there was more expenditure in that space than what the original target was that is reflected there. So when we talk about underspends, it was already over the target.

THE CHAIR: Can you tell me what over the target it was?

Ms Cheyne: So page 140, where you are. There is a column that says target and a column that says result.

THE CHAIR: Yes, so 47—

Ms Cheyne: Yes, so then there is the variance which is presented as a percentage and you can see that the target and the result are different.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Cheyne: And that is explained on the following page in the notes four and five.

THE CHAIR: Okay. My understanding is the support grants though were the large part of that, the business support grants. However, the federal government gave half of that money. I need a calculator.

Ms Arthy: Yes, for the business support grants the commonwealth government did pay half. Again, I will confirm all this but can I also draw to your attention, in terms of what is available for business on page 45, if you go down other grants, there is also innovation trade and investment which has a \$7.3 million. What I will do is confirm, either before the end of this or I will take it on notice, is to give you the accurate information about how the tables fit together.

THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Ms Cheyne: Before we go to the next question, could I just respond to a previous question taken on notice that Mr Parton asked.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Cheyne: I appreciate you asked a range of questions that were taken on notice and this is not the complete answer. The location that has the largest number of infringements for the financial year 2021-22 outside the city 40 kilometre an hour zone, was the Barton Highway between Gungahlin Drive and Ellenborough Street with 2,748 infringements issued.

THE CHAIR: That is my neck of the woods.

MS ORR: I know that camera too.

THE CHAIR: Yes, me too.

Ms Cheyne: I know that one too.

MS ORR: I cannot say I have ever been caught by it.

THE CHAIR: No, me neither.

Ms Cheyne: I have been caught twice.

MS ORR: Going to some of the new certificates that have come up, the organ donation recognition and the early pregnancy loss certificates being newer certificates that are available to people, can we get a bit of an idea of what the statistics are showing of what the uptake of those programs has been like?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, so these have been really important for us to offer. They are both new initiatives for us in this term of government and again, my big thanks to both Access Canberra and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate for their work and collaboration in being able to provide these ways of recognition to our community.

Importantly, both of them are optional and they are not time limited or time sensitive, so people can apply for these acknowledgements at any point in time. You might be aware we were the first jurisdiction in the country to offer recognition for those persons who have died and donated their organs or tissue. The commencement date was 6 May 2021 and to the end of the financial year, so a bit longer than a financial year, there were 10 certificates issued. As of today, 11 have been issued that have that acknowledgement on the death certificate. People who apply for that recognition can also optionally apply for a letter from the Chief Minister acknowledging the donation as well. It does not correlate; they can have one or the other, or both. Just last week South Australia, through a private members bill there in their legislative council, has introduced a bill to do the same. So they will, if that passes, become the second jurisdiction in Australia to do this. Certainly, there has been calls from families across Australia for this to be replicated nationally but it is governed by each state and territory's legislation.

For early pregnancy loss certificates, we were the last jurisdiction in Australia to offer this, but we certainly do now. They are available for all ACT families who experienced early pregnancy loss where the loss was before 20 weeks. If the loss is after 20 weeks, there is a certificate that is associated with that formally through the act. What we have done is enabled a certificate of acknowledgement for those less than 20 weeks. So like the organ and tissue donation recognition, this is about commemoration and aiming to support parents and families through grief following their loss. Again, not time limited or sensitive, whether parents have experienced a loss that is recent or historical, they are eligible to apply online. It is issued at no cost and there are four different designs that can be chosen from, so they can be personalised. The information that is included

on the certificate is up to the family. Again, optional entirely up to the family if they wish to do so. In the ACT it was introduced in October 2021. The year to date for the annual reporting year to 30 June, was 214 and as at today's date it is 240.

MS ORR: Great, thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: I have a question about new business initiatives and we have touched on this a couple of times. On pages 84 and 85 of the CMTEDD annual report, the future direction—

Ms Cheyne: Which one, which volume, please?

THE CHAIR: Volume 1, sorry.

Ms Cheyne: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: 2023 has got some things listed. Future direction, there is a couple of—

Ms Cheyne: Sorry, what page again, Ms Castley?

THE CHAIR: Page 84.

Ms Cheyne: Yes.

THE CHAIR: In dot point 3; 2 and 3, I note that it is to create a more centralised approach to business communications, that seems a new initiative and to continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business services. These initiatives are included in the budget. Other than these, what new initiatives are you, as a business minister, bringing for businesses in the ACT?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, so I certainly would not under sell these as initiatives, Ms Castley. There are three ways we are already supporting and want to further enhance our support to businesses. I say this in general terms and then I think we can speak about the initiatives that are underway, under each of them. It is about, again, drawing from the feedback that we have heard through conversations directly with businesses through the taskforce and so on. So certainly, informed by businesses telling us what they want. I think the broad ways I would term it are access to clear information, making it easier to start, run and grow a business and promoting and showcasing our local businesses.

Better access to clear information, as you flagged, is a new initiative about updating our business hub website in a way that it is redesigned. You might recall the business hub website was established in the pandemic. It had a lot of information added to it very, very quickly to detail the supports. But it has become a portal and for a wider range of relevant business information. So we want to build on that and make it easier for businesses to find how to improve their sustainability, opportunities to supply to government, grants and information on starting a business. It will also eventually connect in really well with the Access Canberra website and the business regulatory settings and licensing information.

That ties in, I think quite neatly with the second area that we are trying to enhance about

starting, operating and growing a business. There are a range of initiatives across our areas we touched on a lot in my and the Chief Minister's previous hearings in economic development about those areas of key industry capability where there is a lot of growth. It is also about the Canberra business advice and support service which has, again, started during the pandemic. We extended it. It was due to finish at the end of June and we extended it to the end of December while we are undertaking a review. That review is imminent.

The fourth dot point you flagged was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people starting a business. That was certainly a commitment from us and it is about accessing mentoring and coaching and getting connected with other support services through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business support program known as BADJI, run by Coolamon Advisors. Services are delivered in a culturally appropriate way. It is a new initiative that has just been formally announced last month.

Then finally, showcasing and promoting our local businesses. You might have seen we have a very strong 'support local' focus through our Canberra newsletters, on our ACT government social media, through Visit Canberra, through Amp It Up! and through the public events, festivals and activities we are undertaking. As well as at some of the major conferences or industry get-togethers like for space and cyber, we have a Team Canberra stand. Those are investments from government where we dedicate funding to support branding that businesses can then have stalls associated with Team Canberra that connect to businesses and to broader suppliers. That is probably a good overview of what we are doing in each of those.

What we are going to do next is subject to some future decisions of government. But what I am looking to do is a small business strategy that sets this out in a clear way and also really connects in a way that is easy to understand the work the Better Regulation Taskforce is doing, as well as other work Access Canberra does. But what is our agenda going forward?

THE CHAIR: I understand. I know it sounds like a few of these have been on the boil for a while and adjusting communication methods and things like that seem to be ongoing processes you would undertake as government. I was keen to know what new initiatives, but you did touch on the BRT and needing a more centralised approach. So I am wondering, has there been issues with business not getting the right information? I note that sounds similar to something highlighted in the BRT output class 2.1, to improve communication under 'is it easy doing business in the ACT'? Which output is working on that section?

Ms Cheyne: I would say all across Access Canberra, the business and innovation team and the Better Regulation Taskforce, all have a focus on that and are approaching it in a different way due to their different functions. But Sam might be able to expand on what the taskforce has heard and what we are doing about it.

Mr Engele: Thank you, Minister. So that is right. The Taskforce has been working with the comms team on how can information be conveyed quite clearly and concisely. So in a number of areas in order to be precise, extracts from legislation have been used to describe things and in that case it can be quite technical. So we have looked at ways to rewrite it so it still remains accurate but it is really clear for businesses as to what the

requirements are. The procurement space is another example where we wrote, with the Procurement ACT team, a guide to procurement. Essentially rather than having businesses having to try and find the right sections on different websites there is just a PDF document where they can see the whole process end to end. That was once again, trying to use those clear language techniques so it is easy to understand for businesses that do not have a background in government.

THE CHAIR: What are you hearing from business? Are they feeling that the BRT is giving them what they need? Do you have the funds to get your task force off and running with a bang, to get this done for businesses quickly?

Mr Engele: We got really good feedback from business in relation to the work we did on procurement and we continue to engage with individual businesses and also the peaks and get feedback from them on those processes. We also get out to different business events where we have the opportunity to engage with those businesses. So all the feedback has been good.

We have a program of work, which we have spoken about before in a number of these sessions. We are now in that delivery phase of those and we have a number of those underway.

THE CHAIR: So you are happy with your funding. That is good.

MS ORR: You mentioned the BADJI Program. How long has that one been operating?

Ms Cheyne: For a short while. The services agreement with Coolamon Advisors was executed on 1 June 2022 and will run for a year, with an option to extend those services for an additional year.

They had a very busy first quarter. I think in a previous hearing I said that by this time we would be able to talk about what they have done. They have established their program staffing and a refurbished office space, so they can have bookable appointments. There has been extensive networking with referral partners and website development promoting their program. They have supported seven businesses to date across a range of industries, including copyright training, arts and cultural consulting and women's education and health care. The main supports that have been requested have related to recruitment, funding grants assistance and referring businesses to ecosystem support providers as well as providing evaluation plans to track businesses as they move through the referrals so that the program can develop a meaningful evaluation of its effectiveness.

You might be interested that the name BADJI was gifted by Dr Caroline Hughes, a Ngunnawal elder. It means "arise". There has also been supporting artwork developed by Kristie Peters as well.

All is going well with that so far. There was going to be an event at Boomanulla Oval, and part of that event was to formally launch BADJI. But, regrettably, that had to be postponed due to the oval being damp—as ovals have been.

MS ORR: Great. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple of other questions on BRT. I note that stream 1 was to develop options to improve existing regulatory arrangements, and it looked at some new initiatives, like night-time economy and business licences. I am wondering what legislation the task force has identified, other than these, that is causing red tape. Which ones are you looking at bringing to the Assembly to make those regulatory changes?

Mr Engele: I can talk about the work that we are reviewing. Whether they end up in legislative changes will be a decision for government. We are working with the procurement reform team and we have a local industry participation policy review. That is being undertaken at the moment. The focus of that is to look at how that policy is being operationalised within the procurement framework and whether that is the most appropriate way of supporting local businesses in the procurement process.

We have also got the night-time economy review, which you mentioned. The current phase of that work is where we have got user mapping with 20 businesses that have been enrolled in that. We are working with them to understand the key concerns and also the regulatory processes and to see where there are opportunities to modify that. There are a number of businesses in the entertainment sector—food vans, gyms, bars and night clubs. That work will then be used next year when we do the full night-time economy review. We are also working with Planning, who are doing the night-time entertainment precinct work. That is likely to eventuate into some sort of territory plan amendment.

So those are the key areas that we are working on at the moment. We are also reviewing short-term rental accommodation for the government as well.

MS ORR: I have a question which goes a little bit to the better evaluation task. It was more around the stuff that I was reading on the automatic mutual recognition. What are the benefits of that?

Ms Cheyne: Automatic mutual recognition is something that most states have signed up for. This was a major area of reform that has not had a lot of attention—for how much work it has been—around the benefits that it is going to provide and is providing.

Many occupations across Australia are licensed, but the licence occurs in a particular state and does not necessarily transfer or get recognised if you go to work in another jurisdiction in Australia. Automatic mutual recognition is about making it simpler, quicker and less expensive for people to work across jurisdictions. So a person who is licensed, say, in Victoria for a particular occupation will then be considered registered to perform the same activities in another jurisdiction without having to go through another application process and get another licence and pay another set of fees. In terms of supporting businesses and mobility, this has been huge.

The ACT is, by its very definition, a cross-border community. Automatic recognition of occupational licences for workers in New South Wales reduces barriers for ACT businesses and interstate workers can quickly and easily be onboarded. For us in the ACT, 43 occupations have now been brought into AMR in the territory. As at the start of this month, there had been 165 notices of intent to work lodgements, and 126 of these have been deemed or are pending assessment by the relevant regulator. So, essentially,

people are wanting to come and work here, which is great, and do not have to get an additional licence and do not have to pay an additional fee.

Of interest, the top five occupations coming to work in the ACT so far have been security, real estate agents, architects, dealing with the regulated radiation source and an assistant real estate agent or sales person. The majority of workers have been coming from New South Wales, followed by Victoria and South Australia.

What is important to know as part of this broader body of work is that there are some occupations that have a significant risk exemption at the moment. They are not part of the scheme yet but will become part of the scheme in the future. Some have this exemption for a year and some for five years. There is work underway for those at the moment. The ones that are subject to a significant risk exemption at the moment in the ACT are casino employees, construction occupations, dangerous substances, labour hire providers, conveyancers, firearms dealers and teachers.

MS ORR: Can you run me through the exemption and how that works and what you are looking at?

Ms Cheyne: Essentially, what it means is that, if you are a teacher, for example, and you are registered and licensed to be a teacher in Victoria and you wanted to come to the ACT, then traditional model of licensing and fees for that jurisdiction apply. So your licence and recognition in the other state is not automatically recognised yet.

THE CHAIR: You will probably be aware that we did an FOI on a couple of things. One of them said that there were 80-plus occupational licences that would be ready to participate, and, as you mentioned, 43 have. Can we get the full list of the 43? What is happening with the gap?

Mr Engele: I would have to confirm that reference to 80 in the FOI, because I am not aware of that number. There was quite a lot of work undertaken. For each one of these occupations significant weight had to go into understanding whether it was within the scope of automatic mutual recognition. That required quite a lot of legal analysis, just because the definition is set by the commonwealth and so we needed to understand whether it applied in the ACT. The 43 plus the seven were the ones that were deemed to be within the scope of the scheme. So it may be that the original analysis that had 80 may have included a number that were subsequently found to be outside of the scope of the scheme. But I would have to confirm against these documents to confirm that.

THE CHAIR: Can we get a list of the licences—the 50?

Ms Cheyne: Are you able to provide what you have? Then we will be able to tell you what we can.

THE CHAIR: That question was about the ones that are part of the scheme now.

Ms Cheyne: Oh, that are part? Yes, we can get that.

Mr Engele: Yes, they should be online.

Ms Cheyne: Yes; no problem.

THE CHAIR: The FOI also said that there was additional funding for nine months to continue with the AMR. Was that for a staff member?

Mr Engele: That is correct; that was for one staff member.

THE CHAIR: One staff member?

Mr Engele: Yes.

THE CHAIR: On page 138 of the CMTEDD annual report, volume 2.1, it says: “Doing business in the ACT is easy” and gave the “percentage of the Canberra community satisfied with the ease of interacting with Access Canberra”. And there was a note saying that it failed that indicator.

Ms Cheyne: Well, no, but go on.

THE CHAIR: The footnote says: “Access Canberra failed this indicator because of COVID and challenges with staffing reopening Access Canberra.” Access Canberra reopened on 3 November 2021, but the footnote says that this data was collected in March 2022. Was the data only measured during March, as opposed to the whole financial year?

Ms Cheyne: I am happy to go into that and then I might hand over to Ms McKinnon, who can talk about that. This really goes to the heart of what I was discussing in response to some of Ms Orr’s questions before. With Access Canberra, like everywhere, with the reopening after the pandemic, there were still challenges associated with that due to staffing, absences and the number of people that could be inside a service centre at any point in time.

Overall, that meant that people’s experiences in dealing with Access Canberra were affected. That may have been due to the changes in the public health directions. Again, Access Canberra was essentially the one-stop shop for explaining those to people, but it might have been through wait times or things and so on.

So, while the target was not met—which is evidence and we accept that—I would not say that it was a failure by any means. I would more draw attention to the fact of how high that target is and that Access Canberra, despite everything and all that had been experienced due to the pandemic, still achieved a very high result. In terms of how that is calculated and any further colour to that experience, Ms McKinnon can assist.

Ms McKinnon: The minister is exactly right. I think the survey is done in March.

THE CHAIR: Not all year long?

Ms McKinnon: It is not a rolling survey; it is done in a particular period in March. Putting that into context, where we did 25 per cent more business in the first six months of the year, we did have the long queues when the service centre reopened. So you can see that there is a tail effect of people being dissatisfied with their experience. Though

the 95 per cent is very high, we do not resile away from that, and that is what we should try for.

In terms of what is happening in the service centres now, for example, we have the wait times down under 10 minutes. It is the wait times and the expertise of the staff assisting, both in the context and in the service centre, which make a difference to people's experience. We got 97 per cent of people at the pedestals, at the service centres, saying that they got their business sorted and that they found it was simple and that they were happy with their experience. So, if you look at it right now today when we are in a little bit more steady state, I think we are kind of reaching back into achieving that target, which we had done in previous years.

THE CHAIR: Great. Why March?

Ms McKinnon: It is not a fixed time each year, as I understand, it but it aims to be as late as possible given the coverage of the financial year being measured. So we are doing it financial year to financial year.

THE CHAIR: Can we see the questions? What sort of things do you ask?

Ms Cheyne: Yes; we provided that in a previous question on notice.

Ms McKinnon: I think they are actually publicly available at the end of the report. So we will provide that.

THE CHAIR: I will flick through the rest then.

Ms Cheyne: I can give you a response to Mr Davis's question before about drone complaints by postcode. Of the 10 received by Access Canberra, two were in 2913, one in 2914, two in 2617, two in 2911 and three were anonymous.

MR DAVIS: Great. Thank you so much.

MS ORR: The annual report notes that paid parking was free during lockdown. Paid parking is now back. What did Access Canberra do to ensure there was a smooth transition back to paid parking and everyone knew about the change?

Ms Cheyne: I think Ms Springett can detail that. You are right: during the pandemic we essentially turned off all of the paid parking meters to support the community at large and then, as we came out of lockdown, there was a three-week transition period back to paid parking. Ms Springett can go through the detail of how we ensured that was a genuine transition period for the community.

Ms Springett: Thank you, Minister. That is correct. We worked to support the community through a transition period when paid parking came back on line after COVID, and we did have a three-week warning period as well cross our paid parking areas across the territory. During that period we gave 886 warning notices. That was to ease our community into paying for parking again. It was an important support that was given to the community during what was a very challenging time.

Warning periods are something we often look at to support our community during parking of car park changes. Other examples include if we were to do a major car park reconfiguration—it could be for any various reasons, such as construction work—we would look to do a warning period. When we transitioned to a new mobile phone app provider for our parking, we also did a warning period as well. It is bringing our community on through an engage and educate approach so that they are aware of the change and they have a chance to adapt their behaviour to support compliance.

MS ORR: Great. Thank you.

Ms Cheyne: Ms Castley, we have a clarification on the significant risk exemptions for AMR.

THE CHAIR: Great.

Mr Engele: I have just been given some information from my team, and I want to correct the record. Originally I said that there were 43 occupations and seven others that had significant risk exemptions. That is seven different categories. Within that there are 28 occupations that sit within those categories. As an example, for teachers there are three registrations and dangerous substances has 12. We can get you that full list as part of our information to you.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, and construction has several.

Mr Engele: That is correct; construction has 10 licences. It does not quite add up to that 80 that you mentioned previously but it might get closer to that number.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Thank you. I have a couple more questions about BRT staffing. There were four staff members in BRT but the extra for AMR. Is that correct?

Mr Engele: That is correct, yes.

THE CHAIR: The BRT is a big initiative that is going on. I tried to get there before, but is it enough to speed up the process to get it to where we need to so that business have the changes they need quickly?

Ms Cheyne: Let us talk about what BRT is for the nth time. The task force is a conduit for progressing an agenda. The substance of some of that work or the policy owner or the operational owner may exist elsewhere. For example, with the work that we are doing with Access Canberra over website redesign and making information easier to access and some of those elements that are detailed within the stream about business experience, the task force is kind of the enabler or the driver of progressing some of those elements of work. Especially where there is a cross-over between different policy areas or different operational areas, having both the time and the expertise of the task force can assist in pulling this together.

In terms of what the task force is funded for its work program, it is funded up to a point in time and it is delivering on that agenda that is set out in the report. But in terms of what is needed to get things done, that is partly a question for the task force but also about whether we have the resources for the outcomes that the task force is achieving

in other areas of government.

THE CHAIR: So, although the task force is going to identify things, there still might not be any tangible outcome? Is that what you mean?

Ms Cheyne: No, not at all.

THE CHAIR: Okay; I will move on. I know Gordon Ramsay, a former minister for regulation, talked about a red tape reduction agenda. He had his regulatory reform program and some of those staff were re-prioritised. What was the handover between the two and what have you identified that is different from what he found? I know he was all about reducing red tape. So how is it different now?

Mr Engele: I can answer that. The resources from that reg reform team were moved into the Better Regulation Taskforce. The key difference was that that work program was focused on new technologies that were coming into the ACT and their impact. Quite a considerable amount of work over multiple years was related to ride share reforms. That team took the lead on that, and that was largely 100 per cent of the work for, I think, two years. That was a useful reform that needed to be undertaken.

The Better Regulation Taskforce has a slightly different focus in that it is more focussed on traditional businesses. Bricks-and-mortar businesses and small businesses have been the key direction. Whilst it is not 100 per cent of that, it has been trying to work with those businesses. The first step was the discovery report, which was intended to be a broad series of inputs so we could understand and restart the conversation with business rather than being so narrowly focused on those specific areas. This has allowed us to identify those various things that are in the report and then set our work program.

In terms of the question around the pace, that blue sky open thinking is sort of complex. When businesses are indicating there is an issue, you are doing the validation and trying to understand what the counter-narrative is for that, and it can be quite difficult to pull those together. Now that we have got that work program locked in, we have been able to actually get started and progress a number of things.

Some things have already been done. Where it is really straightforward, we have been able to do it. Recently we resolved some interjurisdictional issues with RSA, Responsible Service of Alcohol, because it was a relatively straightforward thing that we could do with Access Canberra. AMR is quite a big reform, and that required quite a lot of legal advice and legal analysis. Whilst it is only sort of one line of reform, it took a considerable amount of resources. That one extra FTE was used but other staff from the BRT were involved in that reform as well.

THE CHAIR: My understanding is that the reg reform team did liquor licensing and things like that—so not just those new initiatives. Can you table the handover that you sort of received when you changed from regulatory reform to BRT? I am failing to see the difference between the two groups.

Mr Engele: Sure. I think it was really the restarting of the agenda rather than continuing to progress those existing reforms. There had been some work on liquor licensing. I think there had been a survey of the different licence classes that had been undertaken.

Certainly that was provided to us as part of that work. We will use that as part of the night-time economy review.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS ORR: The concierge role that Access Canberra has come up a couple of times in this hearing. Can you give me a better idea of how that role is helping new businesses or businesses wanting to undertake activities and events?

Ms Cheyne: Sure. There are two concierge elements. There is the concierge element where we have our service centres that we discussed, but then there is the kind of no-wrong-door approach that Access Canberra takes for businesses, particularly businesses that are wanting to hold events—how they go about that; how they get their permits; and how they take up extra space. The outdoor activation task force was a great example of some of that work on a very concentrated element that is undertaken there. They also really assist with things like how to apply for a liquor licence, for example. Ms Springett can talk through exactly how that team works and assists our businesses?

Ms Springett: Thank you, Minister. Access Canberra supports both new and existing businesses in the ACT to establish, to diversify and to expand. We do that through the Event Coordination and Business Assist Team. Indeed, in the reporting period, we supported 73 businesses at various stages of their life cycle to do just those things.

We do provide a concierge-type service for local businesses. We connect them with relevant areas across government so that they can obtain the approvals that they seek and need. We also have a dedicated phone line and email address that businesses can use to get direct contact with us. The types of things, as mentioned, that we talked to them about include the diversification of their operating models, such as extending into outdoor dining or activation of outdoor public spaces.

We also support event promoters and organisers, and often that has a strong link as well to businesses. Indeed, we supported 125 events of various scale in the reporting period, and across those there were 410 different approvals associated with that.

We learnt a lot from probably the most intensive period of engagement we have ever had with businesses during COVID where we undertook more than 25,000 direct engagements and more than 270,000 direct communications with business. What we know and what businesses are telling us is that they are about to enter their busiest period of trade of the year, being November and December. So we are looking to definitely expand our concierge model to more outreach support—so going to businesses and having the conversation with them about how we can best support. That would kick off in earnest in 2023, noting we are heading into the busy period of time.

So we will be reaching back out to business and re-educating them in how we can best support them not only through their communication needs but also connecting and reaching across government to enable them to grow and do what they do best in the territory.

MS ORR: Great. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I have a question about entrepreneurship programs but we will leave it there.

Ms Cheyne: Looking forward to it.

THE CHAIR: We will draw the session to a close. On behalf of the committee, thank you, Minister Cheyne, and all of the officials today. There have been many questions taken on notice. I know we did get some responses, but I believe there are still some out there in the ether. So please get those to our secretary within five working days. Again, thank you all for coming today.

The committee adjourned at 6.14 pm.