



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

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

(Reference: [Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021-22](#))

Members:

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

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2021

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**Secretary to the committee:
Dr D Monk (Ph: 620 50129)**

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate95, 107

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.31 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
Smyth, Mr Brendan, Commissioner for International Engagement
Croke, Ms Leesa, Coordinator-General, Whole-of-Government COVID-19 (Non-Health) Response

THE CHAIR: Good morning. Welcome to the fourth public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality inquiry into the ACT budget 2021-22. In the proceedings today we are going to examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

Before we begin, on behalf of the committee I would like 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 the 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 the proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live and webstreamed. When taking a question on notice if you could clearly articulate that, so that gives the committee a bit of a help when we are preparing notes from the transcript.

In our first session we welcome Chief Minister Barr and officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Can I remind all 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.

As we are not inviting opening statements, we will now proceed to questions. I will kick off with the first one. I would like to ask about the Small Business Hardship Scheme. I note that the website that advertises the hardship scheme says that things are supposed to start in October. It is now the 25th and I am just wondering, Chief Minister, when the scheme will actually begin.

Mr Barr: This is not the session for those questions but. given it is coming up in half an hour or in 45 minutes—

THE CHAIR: I thought that it was.

Mr Barr: This is international engagement and COVID (non-health) coordinator. The business ones come up later this morning. But I am going to answer the question now. I will very quickly deal with that. Expressions of interest are open in relation to that

scheme. That is on the website. There will be further details coming in the next few weeks.

THE CHAIR: Would you rather me continue my questions in the next session?

Mr Barr: I think that would be appropriate, given the officials for that section are not here. We are in a different output class.

THE CHAIR: I understand. My understanding is this is the COVID response output class.

Mr Barr: Yes, but that is not business programs. That is non-health related COVID matters, whole of government. It is not business support. That is a different section.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, the questions that would be appropriate in this output class are then related to things like the restrictions and borders and that type of thing?

Mr Barr: They are more public health directions. This is non-health whole-of-government COVID matters and the international engagement area.

MR DAVIS: Perhaps on-brand and expected, Chief Minister, with the climate talks heading to Glasgow soon, I want to know if the ACT government will be represented at those talks and if there has been any work done across the whole of the ACT government to have representations as part of those conversations.

Mr Barr: No, we will not be physically represented at those talks other than by Australian government representatives. There is a degree of difficulty associated with international travel at the moment anyway in terms of being able to leave the country.

MR DAVIS: Is there any way that the ACT and the policies and programs the ACT is implementing to tackle the climate crisis will be represented at Glasgow through the federal government?

Mr Barr: I cannot speak for the federal government. I know the agenda for the summit does include, at the very tail end, a section on cities and regions. I am working with my counterpart climate action ministers across the states and territories. Matt Kean and I have been working together on this and we look forward to having some announcements closer to that part of the COP agenda.

MR DAVIS: And separate to Glasgow, obviously the ACT is a sub-national government leader in the world in terms of our efforts to battle the climate crisis. What conversations, programs, representations does this budget support for our government to work with other similarly sized governments to help them, I guess, learn from what we have learnt?

Mr Barr: I guess we covered quite a bit of this in the climate action component of the budget estimates but we do have a team that is working not only on our own policy but also engagement, particularly with New South Wales in relation to their renewable energy zones that are part of regional New South Wales, including areas that are immediately around the ACT. As we develop the Big Canberra Battery, as we develop

some of our other procurement approaches in relation not only to large-scale renewables but also some of the more community and government-scale programs and projects, some of our utilities, for example, have regional New South Wales as part of their markets, and so there is cross-border work that is occurring.

At a national level there are certainly efforts to get the other states and territories to work with New South Wales, the ACT and Victoria. Different jurisdictions are at different stages of enacting their own local plans. But I do note the fact that Australia being likely to overachieve on the Paris targets that were set by the Abbott government is all due to the actions of state and territory governments—all of whom have higher targets and are actually implementing those. Australia's national effort is being carried on the shoulders of the states and territories.

MR DAVIS: Back to Glasgow specifically, Chief Minister, what kinds of outcomes would need to come out of Glasgow to support some of the ACT government's policy objectives in this space?

Mr Barr: We would certainly like to see, as a minimum, the targets that the ACT has set becoming international targets—that would see net zero by 2045 rather than 2050—and interim targets that perhaps are more advanced than what we are seeing at a national level. It is disappointing that, in all of the focus of the last week or so in relation to the National Party's position on emissions reduction, the one thing that appears to have been ruled out is some further action on 2030 or 2035 targets.

One thing we would be looking for out of Glasgow is a 2035 target globally, and that will provide some guidance for the ACT as we track between here, where we are now, and our 2045 net zero targets. As has been discussed at some length, the pathway between here and 2045 or 2050, depending on which date you are setting for net zero, does not have to be linear but we certainly cannot leave the effort of the last few years to reach net zero. We have got to take action now, and the ACT has been at the forefront of that within Australia.

To the extent that our collaborative work with other states and territories has lifted the national effort, I think there is still scope for more of that sort of collaboration between the Australian states and territories to really drag a recalcitrant federal regime over the line at least on some of the interim targets for 2030 and what we hope will be 2035 targets.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, can I take you to international students? Obviously, I welcomed the announcement about the planned return, but I noticed that you had mentioned that the ACT will not be submitting for a trial. Can you take us through the reasons why that decision was made?

Mr Barr: We do not need a trial. We can just resume normal international travel.

MS LEE: What consideration was given, having regard to the other states? Is it because of our size or is it just because you are happy with the negotiations that have happened?

Mr Barr: A lot of the trials were talked about ahead of some of the more significant

changes that were announced by some of the larger states and, indeed, by the commonwealth. Trials were being talked about in the context of where there were caps on the number of arrivals. As soon as the caps were removed on fully vaccinated travellers, trials became redundant.

MS LEE: What discussions have you had with the commonwealth, on the one hand, in terms of borders and, on the other hand, our tertiary education providers about this plan?

Mr Barr: The commonwealth have indicated that when the international borders reopen in about a week and a bit, that will be principally in the first instance for the return of Australians and family members, but, not long after that, they will start issuing visas for other arrivals into Australia.

The conditions on that are that you are fully vaccinated and that you have a negative COVID test within 72 hours of your departure from overseas and arrival into Australia. Once that was done and the caps were removed, there will be resumption of international travel as it used to be, except that you need to be fully vaccinated and have a negative COVID test.

We have worked with the universities on that basis, with a view that we were not going to be imposing any further requirements beyond the commonwealth's entry into Australia requirements. It then just became travel as we were used to it pre COVID.

MS LEE: Obviously, given that most of our international students, presumably, would come via New South Wales, what factors would impact the free arrival of international students to the ACT?

Mr Barr: No factors. There are no impediments after 1 November, beyond your conditions to come into Australia. Literally, it is back to how it was pre COVID, provided you are fully vaccinated and test negative, from 1 November, presuming that the Australian government will give you a visa. The conditions of the Australian government giving you a visa are that you have a TGA-recognised double vaccination.

That will still impact on some international students who have been vaccinated with vaccines that are not recognised by the Australian government. That remains the one outstanding area, as to whether the requirement will be that those people who have, presumably, had two doses of another vaccine will need to have a further two doses of a TGA-approved vaccine. That will impact on students particularly in China and India, where we are advised that a large proportion of the population in those countries have been vaccinated with non-currently-approved vaccines by the TGA.

MS LEE: Have you done any modelling of or discussed with the tertiary education institutions the numbers of students that we will see next year?

Mr Barr: Thousands. They will endeavour to get back to where they were pre COVID as quickly as possible.

MS LEE: What about any discussions or modelling regarding how long it will take for the universities to start seeing things going back to normal, pre-COVID levels?

Mr Barr: Their expectations, based on their understanding of the vaccination status of their existing student cohort, are that some will need to have further vaccination with TGA-approved vaccines before they could come back. But with a dosing interval of three weeks between two doses of Pfizer or four weeks between two doses of Moderna, now that they have got the all-clear, it will be possible for those students to be vaccinated before the return of students for the 2022 academic year.

It is reasonable to expect that most students will be back for day one, term 1 2022, but there may be some whose vaccination status will take a little bit longer to determine. But they know what the requirements are of the Australian government. The only impediment to international students returning are that they meet the visa requirements of the Australian government.

MS LEE: Is there any support or other steps that the ACT government is taking to support the return? For example, are there any concerns or issues about flights or accommodation—that type of thing?

Mr Barr: No. The expectation is that aviation is returning to normal. The universities were, at one point, considering charter flights, but they no longer need to, because commercial flights are resuming across most of the carriers that used to fly to Australia pre COVID. Accommodation is not a problem. The universities have thousands of rooms.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, as we start to open up and we see international borders opening up, what opportunities do you see Canberra having for international engagement?

Mr Barr: Quite significant. Clearly, there are relationships that were well developed pre COVID that we will need to quickly resume our engagement with. Also, during this period we have been updating the territory's international engagement strategy. I will invite Commissioner Smyth to talk about that.

Mr Smyth: Thank you, Ms Orr, for the question. The Chief Minister is absolutely correct in that we have been working very hard to develop relationships over the three or four years pre COVID. Unfortunately, with the slowdown in activity, we have only had one trade mission in the last 18 months, and that was to New Zealand. I think it is fair to say, Chief Minister, that the reception there was overwhelming. People and organisations that we dealt with in both Wellington and Auckland were very keen to renew and establish new relationships.

Literally, the whole process is starting again. We believe at this stage we are the only jurisdiction that had a first-minister-level led delegation to get out of the country in the last 18 months, and the results in New Zealand were good. It allowed us to renew the relationship with the City of Wellington. In a city like Auckland, it allowed us to start a new discussion, particularly on whether or not we could link air travel and, using Auckland as a base, how we could then expand into the Pacific.

As the Chief Minister said, the international engagement strategy is now five years old. A new edition has been written, which is out for circulation. I am happy to go

into detail, if that is okay, Chief Minister?

Mr Barr: Sure.

Mr Smyth: The Chief Minister's office have asked that we expand the strategy. The strategy currently has 10 countries that are primary markets. We have seven what we call key capability areas. These are the industry areas that the ACT excels in. There were something like 15 cities in the original strategy that we were interested in having relationships with, as they mirror very closely the activities that go on here in the ACT.

The new edition of the international engagement strategy will be expanded. The number of countries will go from 10 to closer to 14, and that will include a couple of regions. The number of key capability areas—this shows the way that the ACT economy has developed in the last five years—will go from seven to 10. The number of cities that have an interest in us, or that we have an interest in, will rise from about 15 to approximately 40.

MS ORR: Which other countries are we looking to expand our engagement to?

Mr Smyth: This has not been endorsed officially, so I am assuming it gets through the channels and is passed by cabinet. The two extra countries that we will add to the strategy are Vietnam and the United Kingdom. The two regions that we will add are the Pacific and the EU.

As you would be aware, the commonwealth government is currently negotiating a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom, so that gives us enormous opportunities that we have not had before, particularly in the area of the mobility of skilled individuals. Of course, with the EU, while it is not closed to us, we were not a party to that, but a free trade agreement with the EU will be very important.

The other market is the Pacific. Two years ago the Chief Minister asked my office to organise the inaugural Canberra Pacific forum. Indeed, later this week we will have a follow-up to that. Unfortunately, things were put on hold, courtesy of COVID. There are 14 nations in the Pacific islands forum, including Timor-Leste and New Guinea, and the island nations of the Pacific. There is a great deal of opportunity for two-way trade and building relationships in cultural, innovation, sport and economic development. The strategy will look at how we deliver those.

MS ORR: I was going to ask what capabilities you are expanding to, but I think I would get a similar answer to the last one, if this one has not quite been ticked off yet. With the engagement and looking to a post-COVID recovery, what role do you see this engagement having in enlivening the local economy here? What will be the focus that you will be trying to drive?

Mr Smyth: The simple answer is that the Chief Minister's Export Awards for 2021 were delivered on 12 October. A dozen companies were category winners and they cover a diverse range—from Canberra College, an ACT school, who is an exporter of services, in this case education at the senior level, all the way through to Instacluster, which is working in the cloud.

It is about having that diverse range of activities. We are looking at the renewing of direct flights. We are very keen to get the Singapore flight back on the runway at Canberra airport. We are then looking for new flights—connections to New Zealand and from New Zealand on to the east, to America, and flights back through the Middle East to Europe.

Canberra has a unique offering; 95 per cent of our exports are services. Companies like Aspen Medical, who is in the hall of fame for exporters for Australia, do tremendous work all around the world.

We have new companies emerging all the time. For interest's sake, there is a firm called Balance Mat. If you look at the health section of the budget, one of the greatest calls on the health budget is falls in the elderly. Falls lead to broken bones, particularly hips, so if we can reduce that, we take the impost out of the budget. Internationally, falls account for somewhere between 1½ and two per cent of international health budgets, so it is a big market—trillions of dollars. There is an ACT firm that has worked out how, by having a person stand on a mat, they can measure and determine their balance. We have been working with a firm like that to get them overseas. During COVID, we arranged to get members of their staff to Singapore.

It is about taking firms that have an offering in which there is interest around the world, and making sure that they get the opportunities to capitalise on that.

MS ORR: Mr Smyth, we have talked about the newer areas that we are expanding into, but what about our existing partners, where we have had good relationships? You spoke about New Zealand; Singapore is another place with which we have had some quite good relationships in the past. What are you doing to refocus those existing relationships, given that it has been a harder time to interact internationally?

Mr Smyth: The interaction continues. There was perhaps an assumption that international engagement would dwindle during the COVID period; in fact, we found it to be just as busy. For instance, to add to the answer to Mr Davis's question, the last trade mission that the Chief Minister took to Singapore was in late 2019. Part of that was to have the round table the forum on sustainability. We had a representative of the office of the Prime Minister of Singapore, academics from universities and some very large Singapore-based firms that were looking for opportunities to invest in technology projects in Australia, and particularly Canberra—whether it be batteries or renewable energy power stations. At the same time, they were interested in buying technology that would assist them to meet their goals. The reputation of the ACT through what had been achieved through the policies of the government enabled us in that forum to become acquainted with government, universities and the business sector in Singapore.

For Singapore, the Chief Minister took a decision that we have a business development manager. I think it is still the only ACT employee posted overseas. We have a gentleman there whose contract is run through Austrade. He works inside the embassy but he works at our direction. The business development manager, for instance, was able to find investors who put forward bids for the block of land near

the Magistrates Court that will have a new office building. When we were looking for tenderers for the electric bus program, he was able to scour the whole of ASEAN, and he came up with a large number of manufacturers of electric vehicles that he was able to feed into that process. He has helped on several other projects as well.

Singapore is the gateway to Asia. It is very important in that it is a finance sector. It is a country that leads, and it is a country that is interested in what is going on here in Canberra. In particular, with respect to the High Commission here, Ambassador Kwok Fook Seng is very much a friend of and advocate for Canberra. It is those relationships that we build that make it work so well.

MS ORR: With this person posted in Singapore, it sounds like there have already been a few opportunities that have come out of that. I take it they have been working the whole time during the COVID pandemic with the limit on international travel?

Mr Smyth: Yes, without the travel, having someone on ground was very effective. As firms required assistance, we were able to refer them to the business development manager, and he has done a tremendous job. As soon as the budget is tabled, we send him the budget papers. We outline the procurement that is coming, the big opportunities in procurement, what land is in the land release program and what land is available for investors. Canberra is seen as a very good place in which to invest.

We also acquaint the business development manager with the government's borrowing program. Traditionally, after the budget in July, we had what we called the budget roadshow. The Chief Minister would go to Singapore, possibly Hong Kong, and possibly Korea or Japan, and talk to the money markets. It is an opportunity; we do a prospectus, and we can acquaint, for instance, the tourism market—the hotel market. We have had some success in getting firms in both Singapore and Hong Kong to look at Canberra.

We have had a “trade famil” where we brought a number of firms, and I think two of them ended up either taking over leases or buying properties here in the ACT. Having the contacts and having the ability to either get them here physically or virtually has proven to be beneficial. Now that the flights are back, and once that settles down, we will commence that program again.

THE CHAIR: On the trade missions, what is the plan for 2022? Is anything being booked in?

Mr Smyth: We generally put together a three-year program. There are a number of groups we involve. We work very closely with the ACT Public Service. We are not just an economic body. The creation of the output class now is to deliberately take the Office of International Engagement out of Economic Development, because it is about relationships: it is cultural; it is sporting; it is educational. For instance, whenever we were planning for a trade mission, one of the first groups we talked to was the sustainability people in EPSDD. They helped us put together the forum that was conducted with the Chief Minister in Singapore in 2019. Assuming that COVID allows us to, the countries we would like to get to in 2021-22 would be Singapore, New Zealand, Malaysia, possibly South Korea, and Japan—and then, if travel permits, possibly the United Kingdom and Europe.

MS LEE: Commissioner, I know you have talked about some of the countries that are a bit of a priority, but are there any cities within those countries—or indeed any others—where the ACT is looking to create formal friendship city or sister city arrangements?

Mr Smyth: We have three formal sister city arrangements at this stage. Making sister cities work takes a lot of effort, and often it depends on somebody at the other end.

The longest running sister city relationship we have is with Nara. It will be 30 years in 2023, and we have started planning those activities. That primarily worked because there was a gentleman at Nara and there was a gentleman in Canberra who were passionate about each other's culture, passionate about young people learning, and passionate about the opportunities that presented. It works that way. The relationship with Wellington worked primarily because of one gentleman called Kane Thompson, who just loves Canberra. Both the then-mayor and the current mayor are big fans of Canberra as well. So it works on relationships. That is why the trade missions are important. That face-to-face stuff cannot be underestimated.

In each of the countries we would have a list of cities that we are interested in. For instance, in New Zealand number one would be Wellington. Secondly, we will work on Auckland—which we have started. The third city we would look at would be Christchurch. In America, Washington is the place we would like the sister city relationship with.

We have developed a set of guidelines which we have been working on. They are almost ready. That will dictate how these relationships are made, and it will be quite specific that they are not just an opportunity to travel somewhere for the hell of it but are about having a relationship. For instance, with the sister city arrangements that the Chief Minister signed with Wellington, rather than having your normal beautifully put together document that says, "We are going to be friends forever," there is a document with 14 clauses in it that detail the areas in which we will have these activities. We did a summary of activity after the first two years of that relationship, and the results were extensive.

Mr Barr: Just to wrap up those comments, we only have a certain amount of resources to sustain effective city-to-city relationships; there are no immediate plans for any expansion at this point. We are not out there actively looking for another 10 cities to have friendship arrangements with. We may consider one or two.

At this point, I want to be clear that our immediate focus will be on our existing relationships. These things take time, and they need to be enduring beyond individuals. The commissioner is absolutely right to say that they need that spark and engagement in the first place, but what we are endeavouring to do is have enduring partnerships that go beyond particular office holders at any moment in time.

For example, going to Wellington, whilst I have been the Chief Minister on this side for the duration of that relationship, they have had three different mayors in that period. But I have visited and they have visited and we have kept a strong relationship in spite of quite different political perspectives on the other side of that relationship.

In fact, I think we have had all different colours of Wellington government, from Green-aligned to Labor-aligned to more conservative-aligned, over the length of that sister city relationship.

What is important is the durability and sustainability of the relationships longer term and that there is a reason for the partnership. That is what has worked well for the ACT so far, as seen in the fact that Nara is approaching 30 years. It is more of a social, cultural and educational exchange there; I will be frank and say that it is not a major economic relationship. But our Singapore relationship clearly has very significant economic components as well as the social, cultural and education components.

THE CHAIR: Chief Minister, will you be leading the trade missions in 2022?

Mr Barr: I am the minister for trade, amongst my other responsibilities, so yes. Between Treasury, Chief Minister, trade and tourism, I do have most of the portfolios that have an international engagement element. But I do not lead every single trade mission; other ministers do so on occasion. There are only so many times you can travel.

THE CHAIR: I will move to my substantive question. Chief Minister, I am wondering if you can let us know in dollar terms how much the ACT economy has suffered due to the lack of international travel over COVID.

Mr Barr: It would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, although it depends on which time period you look at. Normally our reference points are fiscal years. When you look at the two fiscal years that have been impacted—we are coming into three now for COVID where there have been partial impacts—perhaps fiscal year 2020-21 was impacted by international travel bans, except for New Zealand for a period. Fiscal year 2019-20 was pretty much fine for three-quarters of a year and then the first wave of COVID impacted. In the current fiscal year, clearly we are going to have five or six months of the fiscal year impacted. They are partial year impacts.

The loss of economic activity will be in the hundreds of millions, although there are offsetting factors in that. For example, in tourism services, Australia is a net importer. More Australians travel overseas and spend more money in other countries than international tourists spend in Australia. So the fact that Australians were contained domestically for that period saw more money spent in the domestic economy, because we normally see an outflow of money in tourism services.

THE CHAIR: Other than travel, have you measured the effect on business due to international engagement?

Mr Barr: Impacted by COVID or more broadly?

THE CHAIR: By COVID, yes.

Mr Barr: Clearly most of our trade is in services—99 per cent of it. The extent to which particular service exports were impacted by COVID will vary from industry sector to industry sector. For example, one of our Chief Minister's export award winners, Aspen Medical, have had a roaring trade during COVID because they have

been at the forefront of the local, national and, indeed, international COVID responses. It does vary depending on the particular industry sector.

Generally, aside from tourism, we do not export a lot of hospitality and retail services. Their export dollars are largely international tourists in our city. That was partially offset for a period during the pandemic by more domestic tourists in our economy. Prior to COVID, international tourism was around 10 per cent of our total tourist market; domestic has always been the mainstay, and always will be.

There is obviously greater room for growth in international tourism, because the global market is billions of people while the domestic market is 25 million. Whilst it is easier to travel to the ACT if you are coming from New South Wales, Victoria or Queensland, there are not as many people as there are in our international markets.

MR DAVIS: I have a quick question. I want a bit of an update relating to the whole-of-government non-health COVID response. Chief Minister, earlier in the year, the Assembly unanimously supported a motion from my colleague Mr Braddock calling on the government to develop and implement a social recovery plan. I was wondering if you could give us an update on where that work is up to.

Mr Barr: Sure. That principally sits outside of the direct responsibilities of Ms Croke as the coordinator. That is being led through Community Services. But broadly, perhaps it would be useful if I get Ms Croke to give an outline of the work she is doing, because there is clearly a lot of confusion amongst committee members in relation to this role.

Ms Croke: I formally acknowledge the privilege statement.

I will explain quickly the role we have in the office. We have established a small office within the Policy and Cabinet Division. Our role is to bring together and coordinate all the directorates, including TCCS, EPSDD, Education and Community Services, so all of the directorates together, to support the Chief Health Officer in her public health directions; to implement those public health directions; to support her to ensure that we have a strong public health response and that all directorates are leaning in where they can to assist in those public health directions; and to support the Chief Minister and the Head of Service in their participation in national cabinet. Obviously, COVID-19 has been the main topic of conversation since March last year. Our role is to coordinate, to implement, to ensure there is good governance across the whole COVID-19 response in the ACT government.

MS ORR: What would an average day look like for you?

Ms Croke: I start the morning with a conversation, a meeting every morning, with the Chief Health Officer and the Director-General of the Health Directorate. We work through the overnight case numbers, where there are any cases of concern or where directorates need to have a deep understanding about what their response needs to be. From a whole-of-government point of view, I bring to those conversations the feedback that we have had from industry around how they are going with the COVID-19 response and with restrictions. That is an 8.15 call every morning. I then use that information to update all directors-general in a meeting that we have every

morning. For the period of the outbreak they were every day, across weekends as well.

We would generally support a briefing for the Chief Minister in SEMC meetings, which were daily for quite a period of time. I then chair a forum called the coordinator-general group. That is all deputy directors-general across every directorate. We participate in a meeting every day where we coordinate all of our responses to support the Chief Health Officer in her response. Every directorate is represented in that. We meet every day. At the moment, we are starting to wind that back a bit, but during the height of the outbreak we were meeting every day as well, including on the weekends.

There are all manner of things I might be working on. I could be working with my office in terms of quarantine options, so different facilities that might be available; working with the commonwealth in terms of how they are thinking about the four-phase plan and where they are up to; or supporting the Head of Service in her first secretaries group, which is a forum that sits underneath national cabinet. It could be a whole manner of things. Every day is slightly different to the next, but it is basically doing whatever I and my office can to support the Chief Health Officer in her public health response and to support the chief and cabinet and the Head of Service.

Mr Barr: We have had nearly 60 meetings of the national cabinet, sometimes several times a week, often weekly, although now, thankfully, we are back into a monthly meeting cycle. Ms Croke and her team have been instrumental in providing briefings across a wide range of issues that have come before national cabinet over the last 18 months. At various points there were almost daily meetings of national cabinet as well. It has been a very significant effort across the entirety of the ACT public service. I think it is appropriate to take this opportunity to thank the team for that work, although noting we still have more national cabinet meetings and more agenda items ahead of us as we navigate our way through the next phase of the national plan.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Chief Minister Barr, and the officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate for your attendance today. No questions were taken on notice.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General

Priest, Ms Jenny, Executive Branch Manager, Business Innovation

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

Kobus, Mr Jonathon, Executive Branch Manager, VisitCanberra

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the Economy and Gender and Economic Equality Committee's public hearing into the ACT 2021-22 budget. In this section we will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. We will continue speaking with Chief Minister Barr, this time in his capacity as Minister for Economic Development. We also have officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in attendance.

For the benefit of the officials present, I would like to remind you of your protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Before you speak, can you please state that you understand the privilege implications? We will proceed to questions.

Chief Minister, I have a question on the Small Business Hardship Scheme, noting that we have briefly touched on it earlier. I would like to talk about it in more detail now. The website says that more information will be coming in October. I know you said that people have expressed their interest. My understanding is that happened way back when the lockdown first occurred. When will the scheme start?

Mr Barr: There is a separate expression of interest for this program as it has different eligibility criteria from the other business grants programs, as you would note the use of the word "Small" within the title of the scheme. It is not designed for large business. It will have further parameters released in the not-too-distant future, but essentially the eligible businesses will be provided with rebates of up to \$10,000 against a range of expenses such as utilities and government charges. We will outline further details on the scheme in the not-too-distant future.

THE CHAIR: Noting that it is 25 October, I would like to know when it is going to start. We were told October. It has about five days to go. Does this mean it will start on 1 November?

Mr Barr: The scheme already is open for expressions of interest. We are already gathering information from businesses around their interest and we will have further information available in the not-too-distant future.

THE CHAIR: What are the reasons for the delay?

Mr Barr: There is not a delay as such, but we are prioritising the existing business grants schemes at this time.

THE CHAIR: Given that it is for business hardship, what percentages of businesses are going to be paid within seven days?

Mr Barr: The scheme looks at the July quarter against the September quarter. It is a slightly different approach in relation to looking at quarterly data rather than a very short time frame. The focus will be on being able to make payments against expenses. It will be a lot more straightforward in terms of its application. Time frames again will be up to 30 days.

THE CHAIR: My question goes to delay; it is a delay to me. Can you not explain why things have not been able to kick off earlier?

Mr Barr: I think you are misunderstanding the purpose of this scheme. This is a tail end of the pandemic scheme, not a peak pandemic. Businesses are back trading. This one is designed to provide some targeted support to those who are still experiencing hardship over a three-month period, not a three-week period.

MR DAVIS: I have a quick question and possibly one that needs to be taken on notice. Chief Minister, with the business support grants, there is a lot of money going out. With the Small Business Hardship Scheme, there is a lot of money that is not coming in. Do you have a total dollar amount for what the impact is on the budget with the combination of those two things and what percentage that makes up of the total territory budget?

Mr Barr: It will be over \$350 million, part of which is shared with the commonwealth. The business grant scheme is fifty-fifty; the Small Business Hardship Scheme is entirely funded by the territory government and is anticipated to be in the tune of around \$46½ million, solely from the ACT government. We have a budget that approaches \$6½-\$7 billion; so \$46 million is not quite one per cent of the territory budget.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, I understand what you are talking about in terms of the difference with this scheme but, as you also said in your answer, a lot of the information is actually already held by the ACT government. What preparation was done prior to the lockdown? You have previously said that the government was ready and prepared to ensure that this scheme would be able to kick off without too much time for these people.

Mr Barr: This scheme is focused on a longer tail, on a narrower range of industries that are still impacted by COVID restrictions. It is deliberately targeted at small businesses and it is deliberately focused on a narrower range of expenses associated with utilities and government charges. It has a different focus. It is similar in terms of what we were able to do last year in providing support for businesses, for example through their utilities, because the utility providers have a direct payment relationship with businesses. They already have accounts; they get bills every quarter.

Providing assistance through utilities is a more straightforward way but it is not the only way, because we recognise that not every small business will have a large utility bill. Some do, obviously, because that is one of their largest business input costs. But

for others, that would not be the case. There are a range of other government charges that are considered as part of this scheme. But this is different from the business grants process, which was a substitute for JobKeeper effectively.

MS LEE: That goes to my point, though, Chief Minister—that obviously, as you say, with this scheme, being different, I suppose the fundamentals are already in place, as you mentioned. The businesses have their accounts and the ACT government has access. As much as you are saying that it is not a delay for the businesses who are very hard done by and waiting for this, I guess what they are wondering is: what preparation, what preparatory work, was done before the lockdown to make sure that this could be rolled out fairly quickly?

Mr Barr: This scheme also has to adapt to the changed circumstances in terms of which industry sectors are operating and which are not. It also has to respond to the timing of other payments. The point here is that the prioritisation was for business grants that were wide in reach across the broadest number of industry sectors. This one is a small-business focused scheme based on rebates across and assistance against expenses such as utilities and government charges. It has a different focus.

I am also very conscious of the need to provide targeted assistance, and this is even more so having learnt about the nearly \$200 million of JobKeeper assistance that was given to Canberra businesses whose revenues went up. That was an appalling waste of public money. We are not going to repeat that. This \$46½ million needs to go to the businesses who actually need it, not to businesses whose revenues have gone up. I would hope that this committee would agree with that principle.

This is nearly one per cent of discretionary expenditure for the territory. It has to be targeted. And I make no apologies for targeting this assistance and having a process that makes sure that this money goes to businesses that genuinely need it, not to businesses whose revenues have gone up or whose revenues have not been affected. We will not be repeating the outrageous waste of public money that was the first round of JobKeeper.

MS LEE: In terms of whether it was going to be targeted or anything like that, I do not have any issues with that. I guess what I am asking—and we still have not got an answer; this is the third time now—is: what preparation was done prior to the lockdown?

Mr Barr: Preparation to prepare business support schemes began in 2020. Which lockdown are you referring to? The 2021 lockdown?

MS LEE: If that is the case, then why have businesses still not received the money that they are eligible for?

Mr Barr: They have received the money they are eligible for under the business grants schemes—

MS LEE: One per cent of business?

Mr Barr: which were a partnership with the commonwealth. The businesses that have

submitted and have submitted correctly—more than 90 per cent of them—have received assistance within 30 days. There are a small number who have submitted later, who are still within the 30 days and who are awaiting their payment, but that is being processed within the 30-day time frame that the government outlined.

THE CHAIR: Ms Orr.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, I know there has been a huge focus on getting cash to businesses within the ACT, and we have heard in the community quite a bit of feedback from businesses that that was important, particularly at the very start of this last lockdown. But what is now shaping up as the bigger task, and a growing task, is the attraction of skills in the workforce as businesses start to reopen. I appreciate that businesses are the ones who lead the attracting of skills in the workforce, but what is the government doing to help with this challenge that so many of the businesses have outlined?

Mr Barr: It is multifaceted. The biggest issue will simply be population. The biggest determinant here will be what the commonwealth determines in relation to the migration program. Part of the skills shortage in a number of industry sectors that do not require a high level of skill will simply be due to population. In many industry sectors that will simply relate to the return of domestic and international students, for example. That will provide a labour force in those areas.

In others, clearly more skills and higher skill levels are required, so that is where the JobTrainer program comes into the scope of a joint territory and commonwealth government effort, together with the broader level of training funding. This is perhaps best explored with the skills minister, as the detail of the particular skills programs sit within Minister Steel's portfolios. But, broadly, the government will continue its work with the commonwealth on skills. We will continue our focus on renewal of the Canberra Institute of Technology, both in terms of its physical campuses and its course offerings. And we will continue to work with the university sector, including with UNSW Canberra's new campus and expansion of activities as well as through the range of partnerships we have with the ANU and with the University of Canberra across the tertiary education sector, which cover many of the areas where there are identified skills shortages.

The fundamental issue, though, is going to be business needing to understand the changed labour market. A number of trends are emerging globally and, indeed, within Australia, in relation to how work has changed and what the future of work is. Part of that is a need for much greater flexibility in relation to how people work. It is very clear from employee surveys undertaken by the big four consultancy firms and others across the economy, that much more flexibility in relation to what is being described as hybrid working—the mix of working from home, office settings, collaborative opportunities—is going to have to be provided by employers in order to attract and retain staff. So we are going to see quite a shift.

We have also experienced several decades where the wage share of the economy has been falling. From 1975 to 2018, the amount of gross domestic product shared with employees—with workers—has fallen from about 58 per cent of economic output to about 47 per cent or 48 per cent. So we have seen the profit share of the economy

increase over several decades and the wage share decrease. I think that era is coming to an end. The labour market is tightening. Already we are getting reports that it is an employees' market, and employers are having to offer better wages, better salaries, better employment conditions, attraction and retention bonuses, and relocation bonuses if they wish to bring staff in from interstate and overseas.

So I think in the short-term, given national borders will still remain difficult in terms of the flow of skilled migration into the nation, we are going to have to focus very much on retention of people who are already here in Canberra. So specific programs and projects are going to need to focus on business working with universities, with the CIT and with private training providers on providing immediate employment offers to people who are already in Canberra.

Another factor that is going to be absolutely critical is that business must guarantee that if short training courses are supported through government funding—for example, through JobTrainer or apprenticeships or other areas where government will publicly fund training—they will recognise those qualifications and employ people. There is absolutely no point in publicly funded short-term training courses that do not end up with a job and with an employer actually agreeing to take on staff.

I have been made aware of one example in Victoria over the weekend where the Australian Hotels Association and the Victorian Chamber of Commerce have partnered with a major employer in Victoria, Crown, to provide 1,000 free training places in core hospitality skills. That is business and industry associations working together, independent of government, to recognise a particular training priority and to invest in the future of their own businesses. So if it can be done in Victoria I do not see why it cannot be done in the ACT nor why, particularly in hospitality, there is not a matching offer locally for those businesses to come together. They can partner with ACT training providers, most likely even private sector ones, to offer free training in those core skills that those businesses will need. There is a practical example of what could and should happen, that is happening in another jurisdiction, entirely driven by the private sector. And that is what should happen in the ACT as well.

MR MILLIGAN: Just recently the MBA has come out and mentioned the lack of investment by the ACT government in the skills and training sector. What is the ACT government going to do to help support this sector, which is currently lacking in terms of apprentices and traineeships in the skills sector? It desperately needs an injection by this government. What do you plan to do to help support this sector?

Mr Barr: I have already outlined the range of government programs that are there. This is heading, Mr Milligan, into Minister Steel's area of responsibility. I think the detail of the question is best addressed on the skills side. But I would also observe that the MBA is a group trainer itself, so I will turn the question back to you and the MBA. What is the MBA going to do, as a significant training organisation itself, to train its own workforce?

MS LEE: Chief Minister, this supplementary question goes to something you said in answer to Ms Orr's question. You mentioned that if the government is going to be providing some publicly funded training, the employers must employ people. Are you concerned that that is not the case in the ACT?

Mr Barr: Well, I think there is a live debate in terms of the national skills agenda and reform here. We hear a lot in general terms, “We need more training, and we need more skills,” but we have to ensure that these are aligned with employment opportunities in local economies. There is little point in investing a lot of public money in training that does not lead to a job. So part of a reform agenda and part of a focus, particularly around short courses that are designed to get people job-ready, is that they are in areas where there is labour demand.

Part of it, Ms Lee, is just population. With an unemployment rate that is approaching full employment, we simply run out of people in certain areas. In a closed migration environment you are simply going to have to attract people from other states or territories. That is going to be driven entirely by the salary offering, the conditions, and whatever relocation bonuses an employer is prepared to pay to get someone to relocate from another state or territory.

Then there is a secondary question—it is a really important one, and I would welcome the committee forming a recommendation on this—as to what should be the size and the composition of Australia’s migration program over the next few years. Noting that, based on our usual population share of any national program, we could expect between 1.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent of the national migration intake to be coming into the ACT, does the committee have a view that that should be skewed towards skilled migration, humanitarian migration, family reunion or a combination of the three? And then at what quantum? What we have lost as a nation—and, indeed, as a territory and as a city—over two years of closed borders, is around half a million people nationally and somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 residents of Canberra.

Those people would traditionally have been split between humanitarian migration, family reunion and skilled migration. Some of those people would have clearly been the labour force that is missing for certain industry sectors. So should we be arguing for more skilled migration over the next 12 to 18 months? Or are we simply interested in the largest possible migration intake for Australia? Or are we more focused on continuing to see our unemployment rate fall?—because what has happened with a closed migration policy is that we have seen Australia’s national unemployment rate fall because we have not had new workers coming into the market. So we have seen people who have been long-term unemployed finally get employment again.

There is no perfect answer to this, but it is a very legitimate public debate that we need to have. I think it is best if there is a bipartisan or tripartisan view on this because it means that policy settings would then be consistent in the medium term. I will just pose that as a question, but it is also an explanation about what is going to be necessary in the next stage of our training priorities, our population policy and the input that we have into national migration policy. It is obviously going to be driven by the needs of larger economies than ours, but I think we should have a view on it, and it would be best if that view could be agreed across all parties in the Assembly.

MS LEE: Okay, thank you for your question, but can I go back to my question, which is the whole point of these hearings. You said that there would be little point in having publicly funded training if employers are unwilling to employ or recognise. The question is: is that practice happening in the ACT? If so, in what sectors or industries?

Mr Barr: What you see across the economy are thousands of publicly funded training places. They are often driven by the needs or desires of business and individuals, but there is not a coordinating mechanism that can perfectly align the employment signals with the training desires of individuals. Now, that is always going to be the case, so any new government funding needs to be in areas where we have identified skills shortages and where at least a short course training opportunity would lead to a job. So it is most likely to be in lower-skill industry areas because you cannot do short course high-skill training, by and large. You can do some—

MS LEE: Okay, so if I flip that question, what are those low-skill areas?

Mr Barr: You are talking about the areas of the economy that have been impacted by public health restrictions. And for our economy that would particularly focus in areas like hospitality, retail and the services sector. Some instances include low-skill construction—labouring and the like—and some areas where either short course supplementation of an existing skill base or being trained in a new technology building on an existing skill base, might be beneficial. Let's use an environmental example. There is no point training hundreds and hundreds of people in the maintenance of electric vehicles if the service centres across the ACT are not interested in employing people who have skills in servicing electric vehicles. You need industry buy-in for this, so that is one of the areas of finer detail that needs to be worked through.

MS LEE: Sure. Can I finish with this then: in the areas that you mentioned were the low-skilled areas—hospitality, retail and those kinds of things—is it fair to say that your government is going to be prioritising public training?

Mr Barr: We will continue to work within the national framework. Obviously, JobTrainer is a partnership between the ACT and commonwealth governments with a degree of local flexibility, but the fine detail of how many training places are in each area is a matter that is within the skills portfolio.

MS LEE: Thanks.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, I would like to talk about Summernats. I have been contacted by a number of my constituents pretty excited about the prospect of Summernats coming back to Canberra in the summer. There has been a fair bit of media reporting around it as well. Would you be able to let us know what conversations the government has had with the proponents of Summernats and what we will be doing with their proposal?

Mr Barr: Well, certainly there were a number of discussions at various points during the pandemic in relation to what the likely public health directions would be at the time of the event. As it related to this calendar year's event, it was clear that it would not be possible to run it in a COVID-safe way.

Looking now at the vaccination rates and the travel freedoms that are going to be in place, all things being equal, ahead of next year's event they will need to submit a COVID-safe plan, but the requirements will be very different from what we have been

used to over the last 12 to 18 months.

So it would run at Exhibition Park, reasonably close to how it has run in the past but with a range of agreed COVID-safe protocols that are event-specific but then also some that would be obviously in place for any large gathering.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, you will no doubt be aware of the historical tension between the Summernats community and those who live in the residential communities along the Northbourne Avenue corridor and, in particular, in the Lonsdale Street precinct. Has the government turned its mind or done even any preliminary thoughts to what a purpose-built automotive sports facility in the ACT might look like?

Mr Barr: No, there is not an identified site for such a wide-ranging motorsports facility. So we have a range of, I guess, more narrowly focused motorsports facilities in particular locations. But no, I do not have any expectation of a large-scale broad-use motorsport facility being located inside the territory.

I believe there are some discussions with the New South Wales government about suitable land on the New South Wales side of the border that is reasonably proximate to the ACT. But I do not believe there is an available block of land that would be suitable that would meet all of the environmental constraints for a motorsports facility as such, broadly defined, to be located physically inside the territory.

MR DAVIS: Has the government done any analysis on what the economic benefit is for Canberra businesses in hosting Summernats?

Mr Barr: We require Summernats to commission independent research as part of their event funding arrangement. It has varied over the years in terms of its economic contribution, but in the low tens of millions has been the general answer.

MR DAVIS: Given the answer to my last question—that there may not be an appropriate site within the territory's borders—though the territory does obviously have a historically good reputation for hosting Summernats and there is an economic benefit to hosting Summernats, has the ACT government initiated a dialogue with the New South Wales government about what a purpose-built automotive sports facility might look like across the border in a way that could still protect the economic benefit ACT businesses get from hosting the event in our locality?

Mr Barr: It has not been the subject of any detailed discussion, but I am aware that the former Deputy Premier was interested in something within his electorate which would be proximate to the ACT. I do not know the status of that now.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, were the New South Wales government to commit or even propose developing a purpose-built automotive motorsports facility in our region, would the ACT government want to be a part of that conversation so as to protect the economic benefit that we enjoy?

Mr Barr: I guess we would be an interested observer, and were our input requested by the New South Wales government then we would engage. But largely it would be a

matter for them. Obviously the more proximate geographically to the ACT, the greater our level of interest in any such proposal.

MR DAVIS: Do we not think we would have a priority to reach out, though, and start the conversation? I am flagging my anxiety that were the New South Wales government to beat us to the punch and build such a facility that Summernats and other motorsport enthusiasts are proposing, the ACT may lose the economic benefit of the festival altogether across the border.

Mr Barr: No, I do not believe we will, and Canberra would still be the major economy, the major accommodation hub. There is no suggestion that Summernats, for example, would be moving away from Exhibition Park.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, what studies has the government actually done in relation to looking at a possible purpose-built facility here in the ACT? Can you direct us to any of these studies or anything that we could actually assess and look at ourselves?

Mr Barr: So the work around suitable locations goes back 17 years and relates to sites for a dragway in the ACT.

MR MILLIGAN: So that is for dragway, but what about for events such as Summernats and also rallies or the super V8s we are hearing about now? Has the government actually looked at anything recently in terms of a possible venue or facility or location?

Mr Barr: We have Exhibition Park, and that obviously is a major events location but has to operate within its EPA-approved noise credits. Rallying occurs in a number of the territory forest areas. In relation to V8 supercars, I am aware of a proposal, but it is not one that is currently being considered by government.

MR MILLIGAN: Are you willing to enter into discussions with the organisers of the super V8 proposal?

Mr Barr: The government has an open mind, but there is no public funding available for it. So if it can operate and pay its own way, then we would entertain a proposal, but if the proposal is that the government spend tens of millions of dollars on the infrastructure and \$10 million subsidising the event then no, we are not interested.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, can I take you to the Future Jobs Fund? Obviously before the election there was a commitment by ACT Labor about a \$30 million Future Jobs Fund. How much of the \$30 million has been spent already, and can you give us an update on what job-creating or job-saving projects have been funded fund?

Mr Barr: Sure. There are \$2 million in expenses in fiscal year 2021-22. That includes \$500,000 to deliver the next phase of the Canberra Cyber Hub. That includes, linking back to our skills discussion earlier, cybersecurity education pathways; supporting small and medium enterprise growth; and investment, attraction and promotion of the ACT's cyber capabilities. Some \$450,000 was provided to support creative industries through a joint funding initiative with the Academy of Interactive Entertainment to

establish a sound stage and virtual studio to bring more screen productions to Canberra; \$322,000 has been allocated to implement the future workforce strategy, including a partnership with the University of Canberra to undertake research around workforce development—that is \$150,000 of that \$322,000—and \$172,000 to deliver a cooperative grants program aimed at attracting skills and talent to Canberra in particular industry sectors.

We have a \$150,000 investment in significant capital ventures, a venture capital area. We have provided funding for resourcing and delivery and costs associated with the Canberra Economic Advisory Group. We have provisioned \$5 million in capital funding under the Future Jobs Fund that we will allocate over this fiscal year. We are currently working on the best approach to the use of that capital fund to partner with industry and universities that will leverage this government investment. We will have a little bit more to say about this in calendar year 2022.

MS LEE: In terms of the work that you are doing in partnership with the universities, how does that work? Do they have to meet milestones or are there any KPIs? What is the ongoing assessment in terms of that investment?

Mr Barr: I will get Ms Arthy to talk about that.

Ms Arthy: Thank you, Chief Minister. I have read and acknowledge the privileges statement. On the work with the universities, there are several layers. In relation to the Future Jobs Fund, it is specifically looking at—the previous title was the Priority Investment Fund—it is where universities can apply for funding and it is a form of grant funding; they have to be able to demonstrate that they are able to at least match and preferably put more resources on the table, whether it is cash or in kind.

They are also required to demonstrate that it is going to be providing broader benefit to the economy, preferably through partnerships with local businesses or with other universities. And it needs to be aligned with some of the key sectors that have been identified by the government for growth, for example cyberspace, renewables, agritechology.

So it goes through quite a rigorous assessment process with an external panel. Then we enter into a grant with each university for each project where they do have milestones and then is managed accordingly. These are focused on longer term projects rather than short-term projects. These are ones that are fairly significant, for example, supporting the setting up of the Centre for Agricultural Technology at ANU. We also do a lot of work with the Academy of Interactive Entertainment. We have also worked with ANU around space. We have worked with UNSW around satellite provision. It is a very wide-ranging set of work that we do, but it is all tied to milestones with a grant, and we manage that quite tightly.

MS LEE: Those grant documents are available publicly?

Ms Arthy: I will have to check. I can check as we speak and come back to you later on. In terms of what is available publicly, I know we put up an outline. It is whether the grant documents are up. I do not think so because a lot of it would be commercial in confidence. But I will check what is available publicly and come back.

MS LEE: That would be great. Whilst you are checking that, Ms Arthy, if you would not mind checking what is available in terms of the ongoing milestones—if they meet it, that kind of thing.

One of the other key industry areas was renewable energy. Is there a current project online that the universities are involved with in this sector?

Ms Arthy: I may need to pass to Ms Jenny Priest; she is online in another room. She is the manager of this area. She will be able to tell you which projects we have specifically out of this program for that one.

Ms Priest: Good morning. I have read and understand the privileges statement. Could I ask you to repeat the question?

MS LEE: Yes, sure. One of the areas that was identified as being a key sector for investment was renewable energy. Are there any current projects the universities are working on in this sector?

Ms Priest: Yes, there are. Under the PIP program we have a renewables project in place with a distributed energy renewables lab project. That is one contract we have in place at the moment. I am just doing a quick scan of my information. I think that is largely it for the renewables one. I can check that and come back with further information.

MS LEE: No worries. In terms of the types of projects, is that information also publicly available?

Ms Priest: Yes, I can confirm that once we have entered into contracts with our PIP recipients then the contracts are publicly available. There would be, potentially, elements that may be commercially in confidence, and we would redact if need be. But largely they are available.

MS LEE: Ms Arthy, just so it is very clear, you are getting back to me about those two questions I asked?

Ms Arthy: Yes, although Ms Priest just answered that some of them about contracts are publicly available. I am just trying to get the weblink for you so that we can provide that to you.

MS LEE: Yes, it was more for *Hansard* than anything else.

THE CHAIR: What is the value of the contract? What is it worth?

Ms Arthy: Is that the contract for the renewables?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Arthy: The value of that contract is \$1.5 million.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, when you were running through what you were looking at supporting, I think you mentioned the cyber hub, which is on page 139 of the budget outlook. Can you provide an update on that cyber hub and the progress with the project?

Mr Barr: Ms Arthy is in a position to do that.

Ms Arthy: The cyber hub was set up following a review that we did working with all of the universities, CIT and the local industry, the cyber industry. We were looking at what makes cyber so good in the ACT, like what our strength is. Every jurisdiction claims to have cyber excellence, but we believed in Canberra that we were very different to other parts of the country. Our unique strength lies in the fact that we have three top universities—ANU, UNSW and University of Canberra—as well as CIT, which is one of the leading TAFE providers for cyber. It is our education focus that really sets us aside from other places when it comes to cyber.

One of the things that we were looking at with the investment into cyber was how can we leverage the unique position that we have with our universities and our proximity with the commonwealth government, particularly around defence and national security agencies; how can we use that to grow a really strong cyber industry within the ACT? We already have a fantastic cyber industry, but how do we grow it?

We came up with four different areas. One was: how do we really engage with our education providers to make sure that we provide the training that is needed by business, as well as the training that is needed by individuals, to get into cyber? That is not just around school leavers; it is around, potentially, a change of career. Cyber is an enormous employer in terms of roles and jobs. One of the big priorities that we have at the moment is pulling together what we are calling a cyber education hub, which is essentially a website that pulls together what all the offerings are in the ACT when it comes to cyber education. We are very close to having that ready to go. So that is one big project.

The next one is that we have a lot of small businesses and start-ups in cyber in the ACT and businesses have told us that one of their challenges is they find it hard to scale up. They have got a great idea, they start their business, they get their first customer and they do not know how to grow. We are also working with the Canberra Innovation Network on how we can get programs to assist the cyber industry to scale up. Also, we know that in the ACT, with our amazing universities and research partners—and we also have a lot of non-university-based research organisations—we have a lot to offer when it comes to research. What we are looking at is: how do we actually tell people about our research capability? The fourth area is a typical thing in relation to Canberra—that is, we are our best worst kept secret. We do not tell our story when it comes to what we are doing with cyber. Another focus of the cyber hub is around that work.

Regarding where we are at at the moment, we have Dr Michael Frater, a previous rector of the University of New South Wales, leading the work on this hub. We are just going through the process of finalising the education hub. We are doing a lot of connecting work and networking and engagement with the local industry and getting the networks right with the universities. We are now moving into formalising the

cyber hub by way of incorporating it. We are just doing that work as well.

MS ORR: So that will be the work that is progressing over the next 12 months, this period of the budget?

Ms Arthy: Yes. The priority is really around, as I say, the education side of things, because that is our competitive advantage. We talked earlier about workforce attraction. The cyber industry are really calling out for a lot of workforce so that they can scale up. The commonwealth government has unprecedented investment in cyber, and we need to make sure that we have the workforce here in the ACT for our companies to be able to meet the demand. That is going to be a focus, as well as the incorporation.

MS LEE: This is more a clarifying question in terms of how the fund is allocated and accounted for in the budget. If you look at page 108 of the outlook, you will see the knowledge capital—future jobs fund and, when you go across the page, five zeros. When I asked you, Chief Minister, there were a number of investments made and funds allocated. How is it actually accounted for in the budget and how can people look at it and realise that it is from this fund?

Mr Barr: That includes net cost. There is already a provision for it. When you draw down on an earmarked provision, it is already accounted for in the budget; so the net cost of the new initiative is within the provision. Obviously, the publication in relation to the nature of programs is done by media release and information in the annual report of the directorate, as well as the individual contracts.

MS LEE: When you go to page 139, you have got the \$2 million, but that is the only thing there. So you are relying on media releases and the annual reports; is that right?

Mr Barr: When we commit projects against the fund, we publicly announce them. They are reported on in the directorate's annual reports. The contracts are available on the contracts register, depending on their value, of course, once they are over the reportable threshold. That is standard practice for the reporting of public expenditure.

MS LEE: That is after the fact though. Is there any way that the public can know how much has been allocated for the coming year, the fiscal year?

Mr Barr: Yes, in the budget papers, by way of the initiative that you just referred to. Then when we add to it in subsequent budgets, you will see the new initiative.

MS LEE: So in this budget—

Mr Barr: So budgeted, appropriated and provisioned for.

MS LEE: It is budgeted now in this budget for \$2 million. Is that it for this year and then nothing in the forward estimates?

Mr Barr: There is a \$5 million capital provision and future budgets will then acquit against the \$30 million commitment.

MR MILLIGAN: This is a bit of a change of topic: sport and rec, elite sporting performance and venues. In the budget outlook statement you have a section on more support for women's elite sport. Currently it is \$1.6 million over four years. What is that money going to be spent on? What is it going to cover?

Mr Barr: That is in Minister Berry's responsibilities in sport and recreation. The question is absolutely legitimate but is best directed to Minister Berry.

MR MILLIGAN: What is the government doing with GIO? Are you going to invest and ensure that that facility is made available for women in elite sport, such as basketball and netball? Does that come under this—

Mr Barr: When you say "GIO", you mean—

MR MILLIGAN: Bruce.

Mr Barr: the Canberra football stadium? I do not think we will be playing basketball or netball at the football stadium.

MR MILLIGAN: At the AIS.

Mr Barr: You are referring to the AIS Arena?

MR MILLIGAN: Yes.

Mr Barr: That is not GIO. GIO sponsor the football stadium. The AIS Arena is a commonwealth-owned asset.

MR MILLIGAN: So you have no plans to use that as a facility for our women's netball or basketball?

Mr Barr: We would be very happy to use it as a facility, but we need the commonwealth to allow us to use it.

MS LEE: Have you had any discussions with the commonwealth or asked them for use by ACT for those sports?

Mr Barr: Yes, dozens of conversations in relation to that, and I reiterate my call today for the commonwealth to allow us to use the arena again for its purpose. We are currently using it as a mass vaccination centre. Once it is no longer required for a mass vaccination centre, we would warmly welcome the opportunity to resume its use as a sporting arena.

MR DAVIS: Chair, can I ask a clarifying supplementary? As a standing member of the committee, it would be great to get a word in.

Chief, can I ask a clarifying question on elite sports and the delineation of responsibility between you and Minister Berry. I am interested in what strategy the government has more broadly to encourage the next Nick Kyrgios or the next Patty Mills, who were born and raised in Canberra, to grow up to become an elite sporting

professional. Would you suggest that those kinds of questions and those kinds of programs and pathways are best put to Minister Berry? What responsibility do you have as part of this output class for that kind of program and professional management?

Mr Barr: Minister Berry is the sports minister and has responsibility for the Academy of Sport and all of those things that go to individual athlete development. My responsibility is a whole-of-government one that relates principally to the coordination of venues and the elite performance sporting agreements that are tied. A number of our agreements with high-profile sporting teams have a tourism promotion component, an economic development component, a venue commercial negotiation component, and a sporting performance fee component. That is, we pay the teams—the Canberra Raiders, the ACT Brumbies, the Giants, Cricket Australia and some of the other sports—to bring their content to Canberra, to play at ACT government-owned venues. My responsibility is to coordinate all of that from a whole-of-government perspective. The individual sports development programs, grassroots community sport, et cetera, sit firmly within Minister Berry’s portfolio as minister for sport.

My involvement is largely where it is whole-of-government and where it has an economic development angle—as it relates, for example, to large-scale commercial sponsorship: effectively where the ACT government, through brand Canberra or Visit Canberra, is a sponsor. That ties in with my Treasury portfolio and my trade, tourism and economic development portfolios.

Hence, under the administrative orders, I have responsibility for that very small number of commercial agreements at ACT government venues. And as we lease venues from the commonwealth—namely, Canberra Stadium in particular, but formerly the AIS arena—that also falls into the intergovernmental relations area, which I am the lead minister for in terms of engaging with the commonwealth. Then there is the major projects infrastructure side, where I also have a responsibility across portfolios.

That is why I am in this space. Otherwise, the default would be Minister Berry.

MR DAVIS: That is perfect. I have a supplementary question for you specifically on the management of those contracts. I know we have had a conversation in the chamber about the economic impact relative to locality across Canberra, and I have previously flagged with you my reservations that sometimes big-ticket events that cost ratepayers a pretty penny can risk having their economic advantage concentrated around particular localities where the sport is played—in the case of the AIS arena, in Belconnen.

I wonder if there has been any whole-of-government analysis about the locality-specific economic benefit of these contracts. I say that particularly as a representative of an electorate that, as I understand it, does not host any of these major elite sports.

Mr Barr: The economic benefit analysis is for the territory economy as a whole rather than being localised by postcode or suburb. I think it is a fair presumption that

some business types in immediate proximity to the venue are significant beneficiaries, because that is where people are gathering, particularly interstate and/or international visitors associated with a major sporting event.

It would certainly be the case that traders in immediate proximity to Manuka Oval would be the greatest beneficiaries of events held at Manuka Oval. But the relative spend in the economy is principally driven by accommodation, so it would be mainly about where people stayed the night. That is why overnight spend is much bigger than day spend—because you are paying for your night’s accommodation. That is more distributed across the territory. I acknowledge that, depending on your price sensitivity as to how much money you are prepared to spend on accommodation to attend an event, that will vary depending on the location and quality of the accommodation you choose.

MR DAVIS: How much does your management of those contracts or the negotiation of those contracts intersect with the broader tourism and economic development strategy? For example, when negotiating a contract where it is very clear that the bulk of the economic benefit will be enjoyed by a particular community, is there an analysis done about investment in the tourism portfolio more broadly? To give a quite crude example, do you say, “Belconnen is going to make a lot of money out of this contract, so we had better spend some more money to promote the tourism attractions in Tuggeranong.”

Mr Barr: No. We are just too small a jurisdiction. If we went down to regions, why not suburbs? Why not streets? What is the benefit in O’Halloran Circuit, Kambah as opposed to Barr Smith Avenue in Bonython? We have to keep things at a territory level; we just do not have the data. We also know that a business owner might be in Tuggeranong, but their business might be somewhere else, or vice versa.

We have to stick to a jurisdictional level. The models of economic analysis are just not sophisticated enough to devolve down, and we are too small a jurisdiction. We are one city of 435,000 people; we are not eight different regional communities of 50,000. We are one city, and we have to stay as one city.

THE CHAIR: Chief Minister, I would like to go back to the business hardship scheme. Of the \$280 million, how much is going to administration costs?

Mr Barr: We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Great. And just as a follow-up, I am not sure I got a clear answer from you about whether the scheme will start in October. Yes or no?

Mr Barr: The scheme is already open for expressions of interest. Payments will not be made in October, though; payments will be made later. Payments are designed to be in the December quarter to assist with the December quarter cashflow.

THE CHAIR: Can I clarify? When the two schemes—the support grants and the hardship scheme—started, my understanding was that if a business were to register their interest, there was a tick box for both the hardship scheme and the support grants. Was that not enough for businesses to express interest in the hardship scheme? Is

there another expression of interest required?

Mr Barr: We have those expressions of interest, but we are also able to take other expressions of interest, because the criteria for the different schemes take different time frames. One is effectively an assessment against a period of weeks. The other, the Small Business Hardship Scheme, is a quarter-by-quarter assessment, so it has a longer tail.

We had all this discussion that some areas of business would need ongoing support beyond the initial commonwealth fund. This scheme is part of that. Then there is a further scheme that is tailored to a smaller number of industry sectors; that is jointly funded with the commonwealth.

THE CHAIR: I understand that. That is not what I am asking. My question is about the fact that if there is confusion for business, my concern is that a boatload of them will think that they have already put their expression of interest in. My question is: do they now have to go back and put in another expression of interest for the hardship scheme, or were they captured in the beginning?

Mr Barr: The ones who have already identified for it, we have registered. But they are not the only ones. We are allowing other businesses who may have had a longer run impact over a quarter rather than just a few weeks. That is the distinction.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I understand that it is a quarter. I do get that. I am just making sure that the original first lot of businesses do not have to do it again. I will start going out and explaining to them that that is required.

Mr Barr: No, no, no. We are leaving it open for additional businesses to register. I need to be clear that the purpose of this is not to cut across the existing business grant schemes; it is to provide further assistance, but in the December quarter.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I am clear. Thank you; I understand that. So will applications open in October?

Mr Barr: Applications will be open as soon as we are able to. The priority at the moment is to make the balance of the existing business payments. I understand that we have now paid out over 10,000 businesses in the business grants program, the one that is jointly funded with the commonwealth. That is the \$280 million—and rising—scheme.

THE CHAIR: Support grants.

Mr Barr: Yes. There are only about four per cent of businesses left who are yet to proceed through that. We have a rejection or duplication rate of a little over two per cent in terms of applications. We are at the tail end of that scheme.

We then have at least three other programs, though. We have the top-up grants for the larger businesses within that scheme; they will receive further funding. We also have the targeted tourism, accommodation, hospitality, fitness and sports scheme that is funded with the commonwealth. That will also provide further payments during this

quarter. Then we have the Small Business Hardship Scheme as well. There are different eligibility requirements, because the bigger businesses are getting the top-up payments but small businesses are not eligible for those. Small businesses have the Small Business Hardship Scheme. Then we have the intersection of the ongoing assistance for businesses that are still impacted by a degree of public health restriction. All three overlap to provide coverage across specific industry sectors and for businesses of different sizes. In some instances, some businesses are eligible across a number of the schemes, but not all three. You cannot be simultaneously a large business and a small business, as I am sure you would understand.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I completely understand that, of course. I am just wondering about the certainty for business. There does not seem to be much. They are expecting the scheme to open for applications in October, and my understanding is you have said that no, that is not going to happen. You do not know when it is going to be—

Mr Barr: Expressions of interest are open now; that is all we need from people at the moment. Further information, including the detail of what people are eligible for, will be provided in due course.

THE CHAIR: So not in October.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, how has the CBR Innovation Network been supporting our startups and innovative thinking throughout this pandemic?

Mr Barr: Ms Starick will provide some information.

Ms Starick: I have read and understood the privilege statement. CBRIN is part of a broader network and ecosystem whereby government has been working to support businesses no matter what stage of their lifecycle they are at. CBRIN has been working for a number of years, focusing on entrepreneurs and startups and linking them with research, to translate research into a commercial and business enterprise.

During 2020 and into 2021, we worked with CBRIN very closely to develop a number of additional programs that could target enterprises seeking to accelerate and develop new business offerings. Two that I would like to highlight here would go to the Idea to Impact on research and Research to Impact programs, which provide entrepreneurs and researchers with practical tools to turn ideas into high-impact ventures.

There is also the Griffin Accelerator, which is a three-month intensive program led by experienced mentors, who not only mentor and coach but also assist to invest in selected startups to create high-growth businesses.

During the 2020-21 financial year, they also did the Boosting Innovation grants, which was for existing businesses to become more competitive and sustainable, and develop initiatives that differentiate themselves in the marketplace. Through this program, 11 grants were provided. Ms Arthy spoke earlier about the work that CBRIN did with the cyber accelerator program through 2021.

CBRIN also, very quickly, shifted a lot of their programs online so that they could

continue with their workshops online. They also have a cooperative working area and they assisted the businesses that use the CBRIN office space as their base to continue their work remotely.

MS ORR: What will be the focus for the next 12 months for the innovation network, as we are coming out of COVID?

Ms Starick: CBRIN will have a huge focus. The Chief Minister spoke earlier around what the workforce needs are into the future, what a future-focused workforce would look like and what businesses need to do to attract that workforce. CBRIN will continue, with the foundation partners, which include the universities, to link with startups, because our startup ecosystem needs to be a strong part of our recovery.

CBRIN will also be working closely with other business support mechanisms, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business support. We also have TradeStart, which supports businesses that are export-ready to scale up and prepare to export.

There are also links with the Canberra Business Enterprise Centre, which provides advice to businesses that is perhaps not so much in the entrepreneurial space but more general business advice. That also goes to some of the mental health needs that businesses have, and whether they are looking at a different service offering. The Chief Minister also talked earlier about the venture capital review that is currently underway. CBRIN is part of a broader ecosystem that will be important for the ACT as we emerge from the impacts of the pandemic.

Mr Barr: CBRIN will double in size, in terms of the physical space that it has within the 1 Moore Street building. When the Civil and Administrative Tribunal vacates to move to their new accommodation, that will free up level 4 of 1 Moore Street. That will mean CBRIN will go from 1,638 square metres to around 3,300 square metres, by taking over level 4 to give it both level 4 and level 5 of the 1 Moore Street building. The ACT government provides that space to the network as part of its package of financial support for CBRIN.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, in your conversations with CBRIN, are you confident that they will have capacity and sufficient demand to fill that space? If so, what time frame do you imagine they will take to fully utilise that additional square metreage?

Mr Barr: CBRIN are very confident that they will. I understand that the ACAT move will occur in the first quarter of 2022, subject to their purpose-built office facilities being completed. I would imagine it would be by the end of March next year.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary about monitoring of businesses that have closed during lockdown. Do you have that information?

Mr Barr: Could you clarify what you mean by that?

THE CHAIR: Monitoring of businesses as a whole in Canberra—how many closed in a 12-month period, and specifically around the COVID recovery. Do we know how many businesses have closed in the last nine weeks?

Mr Barr: Again I am not sure what you mean. Closed permanently—

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Barr: as a result of COVID?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Barr: No, we will not have that data for some time.

THE CHAIR: Have you expanded or have partnerships with CIT and UC?

Mr Barr: Yes. What specific areas are you referring to?

THE CHAIR: With regard to CBRIN and BEC.

Mr Barr: Yes, they are foundation members and sit on the board of CBRIN.

MR DAVIS: Chief Minister, I want to ask about the intersection between tourism and hospitality and the arts. We know that a lot of Canberrans have worked in the sector most dramatically impacted by lockdowns, being tourism and hospitality, and so many of those people are also artists who have seen a dry-up of, essentially, both of their streams of income. What projections has the government done about how these individuals and the businesses that they work for may recover over the next 12 months, specifically related to that crossover impact—that double whammy?

Mr Barr: We do not have a research project on that specific issue, but I can observe that we are already seeing a rebound in hours worked and an increase in payroll jobs across the territory economy. We are already seeing significant demand for labour in those industry sectors. The question around individuals will depend on where, within tourism, hospitality or the arts, their particular skills or employment lie. There are some areas that are more strongly linked to decisions, for example, of national or international touring organisations, around resumption of performance and resumption of tours, that would impact on their employment opportunities within the ACT or Australia.

There are other things that are more local that would be impacted by decisions, either of key arts organisations or indeed of ACT government venues. I mean that if you are a staff member at Canberra Theatre, and your employment is linked to the number of performances and events that the theatre hosts, that is somewhat different from where your particular employment is associated with hospitality or whether you are an on-stage performer associated with a production, within the ACT, nationally or internationally. So it will vary.

All the indications are that there is a lot of pent-up demand across the sectors, but there is a confidence question in relation to timing. I suspect that some activities will recover more strongly in 2022 than they will in the balance of this calendar year. There will be an element—this is understandable—of people wanting to wait and see what happens in an open but vaccinated economy. We do not know exactly what will happen. There is some early evidence that highly vaccinated communities have not

seen a significant increase in hospitalisations and severe disease, whilst they may have seen an increase in case numbers. That is encouraging.

Clearly, with the decision to invest in a major production or to bring touring artists, there will be a greater level of confidence about that once international borders have opened, interstate borders have opened and we have seen just what plays out in cities with high levels of vaccination.

I would anticipate, particularly on the performing arts side, a little bit of reticence initially. But you also have to factor in postponed performances that were scheduled to take place during the lockdown period and that were pushed back several months; they are now starting to re-emerge. We might also see that there are some booking pressures, as in more events and performances than we have available venue space, to meet that pent-up demand. That is probably a problem that the theatre director, for example, would be happy to have.

MR DAVIS: If that is in fact the case—and we all hope that it is—has there been any work done across the whole of government to consider what government-owned facilities and spaces could be made available, even on a short-term basis, for performing artists? I am referring to things like school halls or under-utilised assets through the ACT Property Group, for example. Even as we come out of the lockdown, there will still be square metreage restrictions in place for the time being. In response to that pent-up demand that you mentioned, there will probably be demand for more physical spaces. Has any of that work been done?

Mr Barr: I understand so, but it is not in my direct responsibilities. Minister Cheyne might be in a better place to respond, as it relates to the arts.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, can I take you to the 2022 action plan for recovery from Events Canberra? Can you tell me whether the Business Events Fund has been established and what has come out of that, including how much in terms of expenditure?

Mr Barr: Yes, I understand it has, and I am happy to provide on notice some details for the committee.

MS LEE: No worries. What about the Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund?

Mr Barr: Mr Kobus might be in a position to talk about that.

Mr Kobus: Thank you. I have read and understand the privileges statement. The Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund is a two-year program. One year of that has run already and we are just due to launch the second phase of that program, which will be another \$500,000 invested in 2021-22 in that program. We have held off opening it because obviously it is a demand-driving program, so, whilst we have been through the period we have been in lockdown, it is far more preferable to launch that program in a period of time where it can be actually used to drive demand and where people can see the flow-on benefit to their business.

Just by way of example, the way that program ran in the first year of operation,

\$480,000 of the \$500,000 that was budgeted was committed under contract to different businesses. We had applications that exceeded the total budget by about \$300,000; about \$800,000 worth of applications and about \$500,000 was allocated to the fund. Some 24 projects were funded supporting 86 Canberra businesses. By nature of a cooperative marketing fund, it does require collaboration between different businesses, and so it was fantastic to see the level to which the tourism community did come together and collaborate.

Quite a few of those programs have been deferred to run in 2021-22 from the first round because of the restrictions that have been put in place for travel. So that will see a volume of projects run in 2021-22 greater than the \$500,000 that has been allocated this year.

One change to the program that we are implementing in 2021-22 to support the accommodation sector in particular is providing the opportunity for accommodation businesses to apply for up to \$20,000 without providing match funding as long as they are delivering a cooperative project to ensure that that part of the economy can come together and put messages out into the market through their own distribution channels and generate overnight stays.

MS LEE: You talked about the 24 projects for 86 businesses. Can you tell us on average how much the funding was per project and the nature of the projects? As examples you mentioned that obviously people work . It would be good to know what the types of projects are.

Mr Kobus: Yes, sure. So there were two parts to the grant—a grant 1 and a grant 2. Grant 1 provided up to \$10,000 for businesses to apply for without the need to match funding. So that provided the opportunity for smaller collaborations through different types of businesses. And even though a modest amount of money went into the market, it has resulted in some quite creative partnerships coming forward. We had, for example, a partnership between a hotel, a winery and a small local gallery that partnered together to put a message out to the market about a cultural stay. So through that program we had about 18 projects funded in grant .

Through grant 2 we had another five projects with up to \$100,000 available for businesses to apply for. Probably the major part of grant 2 funding that was provided was a collaboration between Canberra's national attractions. That was a project called Your Cultural Capital, which saw the national attractions come together—12 national attractions in all—to develop a cultural brand for the city with \$100,000 from the attractions and \$100,000 for the ACT government to enable a very clear message to be put into the market about Canberra's unique cultural experience as delivered through the national attractions.

Then there was a great partnership through a few of our local privately owned attractions called For Canberra. There was \$96,000 provided to a collaboration between GoBoat, Cockington Green, the Dinosaur Museum and the National Zoo and Aquarium to initially put out a message to the Canberra community about visiting Canberra's great private attractions. That will expand in 2021-22 to an interstate campaign.

PROOF

THE CHAIR: I want to ask questions about the Canberra Economic Recovery Advisory Group. Chief Minister, there does not seem to be an appropriation for it in the budget for 2020-21 or 2021-22. I will put this question on notice since we are out of time.

Mr Barr: Before we go, Ms Castley, I did refer to the funding for the Canberra Economic Advisory Group in an earlier answer. It is part of the Future Jobs Fund, and Ms Arthy needs to provide a clarification on an answer.

THE CHAIR: Yes, correct.

Ms Arthy: We previously advised that the individual grants were available online for the Priority Investment Program. I have been advised that they are not; there is a considerable amount of commercial-in-confidence information in them. High-level projects summaries are in the annual reports. My apologies for not providing that information earlier.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. On behalf of the committee I thank the Chief Minister and all of the officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate for your attendance today. We have had some questions taken on notice and I remind you that you have five working days to submit those to our secretary. This hearing is now adjourned. Thank you, everybody.

The committee adjourned at 11.46 am.