



**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

FRIDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2021

This is a **PROOF TRANSCRIPT** that is subject to suggested corrections by members and witnesses. The **FINAL TRANSCRIPT** will replace this transcript within 20 working days from the hearing date, subject to the receipt of corrections from members and witnesses.

**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 Directorate	186, 198
Cultural Facilities Corporation	186
Major Projects Canberra	186

Privilege statement

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

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to committees of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution.

Witnesses must tell the truth: giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter, and may be considered a contempt of the Assembly.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.01 am.

Appearances:

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

Major Projects Canberra

Edghill, Mr Duncan, Chief Projects Officer

Gray, Ms Sophie, Project Director, Canberra Theatre Redevelopment

Cultural Facilities Corporation

Elvin, Ms Harriet, Chief Executive Officer

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Campbell, Mr Morgan, Acting Executive Branch Manager, artsACT, Economic Development

THE CHAIR: Good morning. Welcome to the sixth and final public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality for the inquiry into the ACT budget 2021-22. The proceedings today will 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.

The proceedings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard. They will be published and we are being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, could you let us know.

We welcome Minister Cheyne and officials. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Before you speak for the first time, please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement.

We are not inviting opening statements, so we will proceed to questions. My first question, Minister, is about the Canberra theatre upgrade. It has been on the cards for over a decade now. When can Canberrans expect construction to start?

Ms Cheyne: I have read and understood the privilege statement and its implications.

As you know, Canberra Theatre Centre pre-dates the Opera House. The Chief Minister spoke a bit about this earlier this week or last week.

We expect that construction will probably commence mid-decade. Normally something of this scale would take 18 to 30 months to complete construction. However, this time frame is going to be informed by the work that we are about to commence, which we have funded in this budget to the tune of over \$2 million, which includes the reference design and business case development. It includes technical analysis, utilities planning work, concept design work and beginning work on how procurement and the ultimate contract might be structured. It also includes the appointment of a site investigation consultant and design consultant specifically. You might see that reflected in the accountability indicators in the major projects budget statement.

It is important to note that the theatre is going to be part of a broader district, including how it integrates better with the Canberra Museum and Gallery, which I will refer to from now on as CMAG. We also have funding in the budget to support CMAG to better integrate and interact with Civic Square and with London Circuit.

Another important consideration is that the Civic Square precinct, including the Canberra Theatre Centre, was heritage listed in late 2020. Detailed design of the facility will support the heritage values of the precinct. There has been an architectural heritage consultant appointed to prepare a conservation management plan for Civic Square, including the exterior of the Canberra Theatre Centre. That is expected to be submitted to the ACT Heritage Council by the end of this year for consideration.

All of that will feed into the development and construction time lines. I might hand over to Mr Edghill to give some further information about what the funding means in real terms.

Mr Edghill: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

As the minister has mentioned, the current expectation is that construction may start mid-decade. There is a lot of work that we need to do beforehand to inform what the final contract and the final design will look like.

The theatre itself sits in a reasonably complex part of the city. It is a complex area for a few different reasons. There are a lot of engineering services, so a lot of utilities go through both the theatre precinct and the theatre itself. Part of what we need to do is an engineering master plan so that whatever utility changes get made as a consequence of the theatre development do not cause knock-on problems in the broader development of the precinct. That will be a big focus of our work over the next year or two, and that is one of the items of work that the funding in the current budget will be used for.

It is not only utilities in that area which are reasonably complex. There is traffic and how traffic will move through the city, not just for patrons attending the theatre but also taking into account broader developments which are occurring in the city—light rail and so forth. And the theatre itself sits on designated land, which means that, ultimately, before we can begin construction, there will need to be a works approval from the National Capital Authority.

The last thing the budget funding will go towards is a necessary precursor before construction commences: to work through the options for what the final contract may look like and also to work through the procurement options and present those to government. There are different ways that the government could approach getting to the point of building the project, in terms of both contract models but also the exact geographical scope of what we are looking at and what the scope of works may look like. Because it is in one of the more complex areas of Canberra, it is important that we do our due diligence and get it right before we get to the point of signing contracts.

We will be using the next couple of years very productively to work through those engineering, technical and commercial planning challenges.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I note there has been money for early planning in previous budgets. What did that money go on compared to what you are doing now?

Mr Edghill: I am happy to answer, Minister. The funding in the previous years has gone to initiating some of those things that I was talking about. We will not be starting from a blank sheet this financial year or next financial year; we will be working off the back of activities that we have already undertaken.

Those activities have included initial concept design work. I think the Chief Minister spoke at the major projects estimates hearing a little earlier in the week on some of the potential scope of the new theatre. That has been formed by the work that we have done so far.

There have been initial planning studies. There has been quite a lot of initial consultation with key stakeholders, of course, which has informed the initial concept design. We have received some initial commercial advice around potential ways that we could look at the precinct as a whole and the theatre within it. A peer review of the concept design has been undertaken. And there have been initial works undertaken given the heritage values of the site and the precinct; we have begun to look at those.

So there has been work undertaken to date, which will inform the next stage of more detailed works which will be undertaken this year and in future years.

MS ORR: With the initial preliminary works and concept designs that you have done and the peer review, what are some of the things that you are finding coming out of those, and what sorts of great facilities can ACT residents start to anticipate from this project?

Mr Edghill: If I may, I will pass to my colleague Sophie Gray to talk to some about the finer details.

One of the striking features of the theatre is that the buildings and structures are very unique. Obviously, I am looking at it from an infrastructure perspective. In particular, given the size we are talking about, they are not the sort of facility we build every day of the week here in the ACT.

Quite a lot of technical thought needs to go into the buildings, even just down to the way you treat the acoustics and the sound within the theatre. Hopefully that does not

sound too trite, but it even comes down to things like how the HVAC system, the air-conditioning system, works so that you do not have air-conditioning noise during the middle of a performance, particularly during quieter parts, as well as how you ensure that noise which is coming from an adjoining theatre or from outside the theatre complex itself does not disturb performances.

There is quite a lot of technical work in terms of how you ensure that the theatre itself is logistically going to be able to operate. If you think at a very high level, the part that we are used to seeing is the front of house part of the theatre. That probably represents about a third of the theatre. A third is front of house; a third is the stage area; and then a third sits behind it, where all the logistics, the props, the change rooms and so forth come in. There is quite a lot of thinking that needs to go into the design.

But that is more on the technical side. If I may, I will pass to Sophie to touch upon some of the initial features of the concept design.

Ms Gray: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

Duncan has given a good background on some of the details. I will go into a bit of detail on some of the spaces that we are proposing and that we have been considering in the concept design.

At the northern end of the site, we are looking at development of a new, major 2,000-seat theatre. We are looking at a theatre that will have maximum flexibility to accommodate the widest possible range of local, national and international touring performances.

An example of something that we are looking at in particular is to get futureproofing and flexibility. We are looking at, for example, the orchestra pit and technologies around how we can scale up or scale down the orchestra pit so that we can accommodate anything from a smaller acoustic orchestra to a full-scale operatic orchestra.

As Minister Cheyne has mentioned, the Canberra theatre itself is a very old theatre. Some touring shows, when they come to Canberra, cannot fit their sets into the size of the existing theatre. We even have experiences where they have to actually cut down their sets to fit into the theatre.

The new, major 2,000-seat theatre will have that organised scale in terms of the stage. The proscenium—the actual opening space in front of the theatre—will be standardised to national standards, as will the wing spaces. We will have touring shows that move through a series of performance spaces around Australia and we will be benchmarked against those other touring spaces. For example, if we have a full-scale ballet, currently, the wings within the theatre are a bit small for a ballet. That presents some performance challenges for that style of performance. The new major theatre will have standardised wing sizes as well so that those performances do not need to adapt to fit to our facilities.

In the southern end of the facility, where we have the Canberra theatre itself—the

Chief Minister spoke a bit on this earlier in the week—we are looking at some flexibility in that space so that it can have a flat floor but could also be used for seated events.

The benefit of a flat-floor venue is to have the flexibility, for example, for live contemporary rock music—the types of things you might go to the Sydney Hordern Pavilion for, with the types of bands that currently bypass the ACT or struggle with probably less than ideal performance spaces. We will also have the opportunity, when you want a seated performance, to be able to stack or remove the flat floor so that you bring up seats. It will also be a space suitable for town hall events, gala events. We will really get that flexibility into the spaces that we are designing.

I could go on. One of the other key things that we are looking at is moving from the current Canberra theatre system where we have a manual rope system for bringing sets of props up and down; we are looking at new technologies where that is all automated.

That is the trend where the industry is going. And there are some very exciting new technologies using LED lighting for sets and automated programs, set movements, rather than the quite labour-intensive manual arrangement that we currently have.

MS ORR: With these changes in the facilities—this might be a question for Ms Elvin—what opportunities do you see for the arts community? Particularly, how will local artists start to benefit from seeing the arts sector and the opportunities that come from this new establishment, this new building?

Ms Elvin: I have read and understood the privilege statement.

It is very important that in designing this new suite of facilities we are not only considering touring acts but also what this means for the local performing arts community. Perhaps the critical issue here is that we are looking at the totality of the venues that we operate.

As Ms Gray has talked about, we will be able to open up the existing Canberra theatre for a greater range of uses. At the moment, there is intense pressure on that venue. Perhaps not so much at the moment, but in normal times, for example, dance schools really struggle to get access to that venue for their end-of-year performances, because the theatre is currently having to accommodate all the main touring acts as well. The creation of the new theatre is going to free up the existing venues for additional local use.

Also, as part of the planning we are looking at a new 300-seat studio facility. I see that as being a great opportunity for our local arts community. At the moment, we have a courtyard studio with 100 seats. It works very well. It is very flexible. But it is a bit too small and limited in its technical facilities to accommodate the sorts of uses that many of our local performing arts groups want.

We are really working with that community. We have just initiated a new program through the courtyard studio called New Works, where we are funding development of new works. With the increasing range of facilities with the new theatre and studio, I

see that we will be able to increase that range of support and really nurture our local performing arts sector, as well as demonstrating to that sector the very best of what we can offer nationally, and indeed, internationally, with the new theatre facilities.

MS ORR: Can I get a bit of an overall view on how the pandemic has impacted the work of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, how you have adapted to these changes and what you see will be the challenges as we continue to move out of the pandemic?

Ms Cheyne: I will start and then I will hand over to Ms Elvin, who can talk to you in more detail.

You may recall that when we last met for the combined estimates and annual report hearings, the Cultural Facilities Corporation had been through a particularly rough time, with lockdown proper and then, unfortunately, the postponement of *Shrek The Musical* right at the start of this year due to the impacts of the closed borders. We provided funding to support its operations in the last budget, and we have provided that support again in this budget, which we can talk about in more detail.

Most importantly, I am very pleased that, from today, our Cultural Facilities Corporation facilities, including the Canberra theatre but also our historic places and Canberra Museum and Gallery, are beginning to reopen to the public. And the Canberra theatre is looking forward to welcoming the *Wharf Revue* in the coming weeks.

Ms Elvin will be able to talk in more detail about what this experience has been like and how we have navigated through it.

Ms Elvin: It has been an extremely difficult time—the most difficult time in my long career in this job, particularly for theatre. The arts have been one of the worst affected sectors in the pandemic, and within the arts, the performing arts have been particularly badly impacted.

If I can talk about the performing arts in particular, which the additional funding will support, there are two main reasons for that. One is that theatres rely on bringing together large groups of strangers to sit together in close proximity indoors for lengthy periods of time. In that, you have the combination of all the different risk factors associated with COVID. The other thing is that touring productions is particularly difficult at the moment—although hopefully it is now improving—because there has been a whole range of different quarantine restrictions, border closures, and various restrictions on the rehearsing and producing of work which have varied across the country, and that has made it exceptionally difficult to get a product for touring. So we have the combination of those two factors. With the close proximity, we have worked for a lot of the past year under restricted audience capacities, compounded by the difficulty of actually getting product on stage.

Having said that—and it has been an extremely difficult period, as the minister said—from today we reopen all of our venues. I am cautiously optimistic that we are going to see a great resurgence of audiences and visitors coming back to our venues. We found that by the time we had got back to 100 per cent capacity at the Canberra Theatre Centre late last financial year, from April onwards, people were really

enthusiastic. They were hungry for live theatre. We are seeing that with our first major show after reopening—as the minister mentioned, the *Wharf Revue*, the perfect show for Canberra political satire. We are seeing very strong ticket sales for that.

As long as we can get the product on stage, I think there is a very willing audience for it. And of course, in Canberra we have one of the highest vaccinated populations in the world. I think people will be very keen to come back and have that live theatre experience. I can go into further details, but perhaps, Ms Orr, there are particular things you want to ask about.

MS ORR: Yes. I just want to check this. The minister mentioned that there is some money in the budget. Can you quickly run us through what that money is?

Ms Elvin: Yes, of course. Last year, we were very grateful for a substantial amount of additional funding from the government. \$3.5 million was provided in two tranches: first of all, \$2.5 million, and then a further million. Because of the temporary improvements in trading conditions, we did not need to access all of that money last financial year. We rolled over 438,000 into this year to continue to benefit from that. And there is new money in this budget as well. There is a further \$2.395 million to support us this year. With those two amounts of money, again it is getting on to about \$3 million to support our operations this year. We are immensely grateful that that will allow us to keep operating, to keep employing our staff, and to keep bringing wonderful cultural experiences to the people of Canberra.

MS CLAY: Minister, I would like to have a chat about the Kingston arts precinct. Over the next term, we have \$78 million in capital for that facility, that area, and another \$2 million to establish and run the management body. That is a pretty large amount of money from the arts budget. It is almost half of the entire budget over the next few years. I would like to know how it was selected that we needed this Kingston arts precinct. I would also like to know, with the \$2 million for the management of that precinct, who will be doing it; whether it will be on tender; and whether we can use an existing management structure or some of the existing arts administration talent in Canberra. Can you run me through some of that information?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, sure. I am happy to give you a bit of an overview and then I will hand to officials who have been working very closely with our arts organisations. The project as a whole is managed by the Suburban Land Agency—that is, the construction, under the Chief Minister’s portfolio, but I appreciate that you are asking about the actual operations of the facility.

The facility will contain further densification and be a bit of a landmark piece for us here in the ACT to promote some of our incredible visual and other creators who I think are well known to all of us, including the Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Craft ACT, M16 and PhotoAccess, which will join the two that are already onsite, which you would know are the Canberra Glassworks and Megalo Print Studio, the precinct’s founding resident organisations.

We think that bringing these organisations together creates an experience. On top of that, we will have a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art space. There will be a large area for performance and for other gatherings.

We suspect and expect that it will be a major tourism driver, connecting some of these smaller organisations so that everyone benefits from everybody else.

ArtsACT meets monthly with the arts organisations that are relocating to this precinct. Between April and August this year, the organisations participated in a series of workshops to develop the new vision for the precinct. We plan to share this vision with the sector soon, but this was taking a bit longer than we would have liked due to the lockdown. We have been working to get a really good understanding of the sector's needs, how the arts community and the broader arts community might be engaging with the future of the precinct. Some of the key themes from the workshops are around ensuring that the precinct is inclusive, affordable and accessible for artists. These have been incorporated into the new vision.

MS CLAY: I am pleased to hear that the intention is that it is affordable, because we do have a tendency to build new and very nice arts facilities that artists and arts groups cannot afford to rent. Does this mean that they will be able to afford to rent and perform in this space?

Ms Cheyne: Yes. Working through the concept plan, we have been engaged with the Suburban Land Agency on that; questions are best directed to them. There is an intention that it will be, as I said, accessible and affordable; we want people there. We want this to place to be used and to see a density of people moving through there that reflects the density of the organisations that are there. I might ask Mr Campbell to provide a bit more detail about where we are heading with the project.

MS CLAY: We do not have much time, so could you narrow in on the management body—whether that will be done by tender and how many FTEs that would be?

Mr Campbell: I have read and understand the privilege statement.

Ms Clay, to get to your question around the management body, it is the intention that artsACT will manage the facility for the first five years—in conjunction with the future resident organisations, but artsACT will be the lead manager of the facility. That is where the budgeted funds are intended to go. It has not yet been decided exactly what that structure will look like, but the approximate estimation at this stage is about five full-time equivalent staff.

MS CLAY: Chair, will you indulge me with another supp?

THE CHAIR: Can we go to Ms Lawder? Then we will flick back if we miss.

MS LAWDER: Thanks. Minister, are you able to confirm that some of the government-funded arts groups involved in the Kingston arts centre project have been asked to sign a confidentiality agreement?

Ms Cheyne: Not that I am aware of, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to take that on notice and check if that is the case?

Ms Cheyne: I will take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. And if it is true, could you explain why it is appropriate and necessary for those groups to sign a confidentiality agreement?

Ms Cheyne: Of course.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

MS CLAY: If we have \$2 million for artsACT to manage it over the next few years, with five FTEs, that is quite a lot of funding for arts administration when you look at how much our other arts organisations usually run with. Why have we decided to make artsACT run this rather than using another existing structure or going out to tender to other artists and arts administrators?

Mr Campbell: This was a decision that was made earlier on in the piece during the planning for the facility. As I mentioned, artsACT has been working closely, and will continue to work closely, with those future resident organisations who are moving in.

At the moment, we are very much running the coordination of the engagement and inter-engagement of those groups together. As the minister mentioned, they are meeting together mostly on a monthly basis to develop an operational strategy for the precinct. The next meeting of this group is on 5 November. There is a planned cultural ceremony onsite in December, which the organisations are looking forward to, as a symbol of their commitment to the project and the growing momentum. What I would say is that artsACT is planning that coordination role, and will at this stage continue to do so as the first managers of the precinct once it opens.

MS LAWDER: Minister, a state development plan includes that there will be community consultation, yet I have heard growing reports from community groups that they are being shut out of the process and that their calls have not been answered or returned. Do you know why this is the case? And what can be done to encourage community consultation?

Ms Cheyne: This is straying into the Chief Minister's responsibilities and the Suburban Land Agency's responsibilities. I know that it was touched on the other day, though I think most of the questioning was around the brickworks.

The Suburban Land Agency has been undertaking a project review on the progress, and is working through that review. There are self-evident delays to the project, but further questions should be directed to the Suburban Land Agency.

MS LAWDER: Minister, I want to go back to funding in the budget of 200,000 for public art for and by women and/or non-binary individuals. I asked about this recently in question time, and at that time you were unable to talk about examples of how much public art has cost. I have found since that time that, for example, the Belconnen owl, the Drakeford Drive moth sculpture, the Gungahlin Drive rhizome sculpture and others all cost well over \$200,000. How many women and non-binary artists were you expecting to support with this underfunded initiative?

Ms Cheyne: For starters, I reject the premise that it is underfunded. Public art is something that we are really looking to re-engage with in a very concerted way. We absolutely appreciate—and Ms Orr has been at the forefront of making this case—that the ACT government public art collection does not currently fully reflect the diversity of our community. As we know, just 20 per cent of works in the public art collection that is managed by artsACT are created by women. That is not to account for the works that are managed by the National Capital Authority.

This is expected to be one piece of work, but this is what I would hope is the beginning of addressing this imbalance that we see in work that is created by female or non-binary persons and also where they are the subject.

As I mentioned, there have been considerable efforts by Ms Orr in this space—also by Jasiri Australia, which I know is an organisation familiar to many of us. The ACT government has well and truly listened and responded. As I said, this will be one piece. I appreciate that the federal government has also been listening about what the parliamentary triangle looks like. This is a really important signal for us to send. But as I mentioned, this is what I would hope is just the beginning of rectifying this imbalance.

MS LAWDER: Why is there not ongoing funding? This is a one-off. You have said it will support one piece of art. Is that it for the next four years?

Ms Cheyne: No. This is a budget for 2021-22. This is a piece of work that I would be expecting that we would look to procure in early 2022 and that would be in place sometime during 2022. Obviously, the sooner the better. But we will work through the detail of that. As I mentioned, it is the beginning. There has been a lot of debate over the past decade or so in the ACT about public art. I think that as a community we are really ready to re-engage in this debate. And yes, I really look forward to engaging on it.

MS ORR: Minister, the examples that Ms Lawder gave were all references to statues. My understanding, though, is that the funding does not necessarily go to a statue as a piece of art—that it is far broader than that, and at the artist's discretion. Is my understanding correct?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, Ms Orr. That detail has not been decided yet, but we have not, at this stage, limited it to just being a sculpture. Noting how many sculptures there are of men in the ACT, it may well be appropriate that the first step to rectifying this is a sculpture, but we are still working through that detail.

MS ORR: In giving autonomy to the artist and letting them come forward with a vision, in procuring this piece of work, what sort of role will you give for the artist's interpretation of the brief in realising this piece of work? It might not be a ministerial question; it might be a directorate one.

Ms Cheyne: It is a good question, Ms Orr. At this stage, we are working through that detail. We really want artists to engage with the brief that we give, but we have not finalised that brief at this stage. Look forward to seeing more on it soon, but I am just not in any position to make announcements today.

MS CLAY: Minister, our last arts policy was in 2015. I am really pleased to see your release of the statement of ambition. I understand that that is the top-level document, and that the detailed policies will come out underneath it in consultation with the industry. That is a really good way to do it. I think that is all extremely positive.

I just wanted to know this. A lot of the concern in the arts sector is about the transparency of funding decisions—how we make these decisions, who gets them, who gets to tender. I am wondering if the detailed policies that will come under the statement of ambition are going to be really clear about what the ACT funding pool is, what the commonwealth funding pool is, how people get grants, how individuals get grants, how the artists and arts organisations can tender and whether funds are recurrent or whether they are for one year. Will it go into that level of detail and make that really clear?

Ms Cheyne: Yes. That is a great question. Yes, absolutely. We have heard loud and clear from the arts sector that they want more transparency with funding—where the funding is going and how decisions are being made. Our first step, as you are aware, was with the statement of ambition. We have included an attachment at the end which indicates all of our expenditure right across the ACT and into the forward years. It does not necessarily capture the previous years, but it is from year on.

This is something that we intend to be a live document, where all of the arts funding is captured, at least from the ACT perspective, in the one space. It is a bit more difficult for us to capture the commonwealth's funding, because it is changing all the time. Sometimes it is growing; more often, it is decreasing. But there are always opportunities that are available for commonwealth funding, and we use our newsletter as a key way to make sure that the sector, more broadly, is aware of that.

You touched on the really good point that the statement of ambition is the high-level document. Then there are two key pieces of work that will sit underneath that. The arts policy, which comes first, is about how we are going to implement the ambition through the strategies. Beneath that, or perhaps in partnership with that, is an updated funding model.

This is something that we will work on with our arts community, including our key arts organisations, our program organisations, and people who might not be receiving recurrent government funding but might like to. I know there are quite a few out there, and many would like to see their share of it increased. It will engage with the policy about [*inaudible*] and below that, by working with the sector and developing this model together. Then they will need to apply by the end of the year.

Sorry, I am being distracted by other witnesses.

THE CHAIR: Can the guests who have just arrived go on mute, please.

Ms Cheyne: We will be working with the sector on developing it. Then the sector will have the opportunity to apply through that model. It will all be adhering very closely to the policy, the strategies and the ultimate ambition.

MS CLAY: Excellent. So it will all be open—

THE CHAIR: Ms Clay, in the interest of time, let us put further questions on notice.

Minister, I have a question about the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. I note that \$2 million over 2021-24 has been included for the Tuggeranong Arts Centre theatre for the refurbishment of the floor coverings, furniture and fixtures. I understood that they wanted to do more upgrades to the theatre than you have listed. Is \$2 million enough?

Ms Cheyne: Two million dollars was the ACT Labor election commitment. Through my engagement with the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, the key advice that I have received is that the theatre is the priority. You might be aware that there was a major refurbishment of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre in 2013, but the works that were undertaken then—and it is a fantastic arts centre, I have to say—did not include the improvements to the theatre space. That theatre was built to design standards that were relevant at the time of construction back in 1998. It is a 110-seat theatre. But it is not meeting the contemporary performance arts or accessibility standards. We believe that the funding will address that and enhance it. We will be working closely with the Tuggeranong Arts Centre in achieving that.

MS LAWDER: It said that the money is for the refurbishment of floor coverings, furniture and fixtures. But the arts centre in, I think, 2018 said that the theatre is in need of major upgrades and renovation in order to remain safe and operable into the future. They said that for all these activities to continue to take place and to ensure public and occupational health and safety, the facility requires an urgent upgrade. And that includes not just furniture, fixtures and floor coverings, but sound system and backstage refurbishments.

My question remains: is \$2 million over four years going to be enough to achieve these goals of addressing their health and safety issues?

Ms Cheyne: In preparing this budget, we have re-engaged with the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, including on how to upgrade in a way that means the space is still usable. We look forward to continuing to engage with them. I believe that the \$2 million is enough, based on that engagement, particularly in those priority areas regarding safety. Perhaps I will take on notice the detail about the backstage works.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank Minister Cheyne and officials for their attendance today. There were two questions taken on notice. Please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five working days.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development
Triffitt, Mr Ross, Executive Branch Manager, Events ACT, Economic Development
Starick, Ms Kate, Executive Group Manager, Economic Development

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the economy and gender and economic equality committee's public hearings into the ACT 2021-22 budget. This session will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. We will continue speaking with Minister Cheyne, now in her capacity as Assistant Minister for Economic Development. We also have new officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in attendance.

For the benefit of the new officials present, I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. Before you speak for the first time, can you please affirm for the record your understanding of the privilege implications of the statement.

We will go straight to questions. Minister, I am looking at the output class for this session and I note that there is a line item in 3.1 for manufacturing. Can you point me to the strategic indicators and budget line items for manufacturing for this output class?

Ms Cheyne: I acknowledge that I have read the privilege statement and understood its implications.

As far as I am aware, there are no specific indicators or budget line items for manufacturing in this budget. This is something that we take a keen interest in, especially in our advanced technology. You might be aware of some of the industries that we have been supporting over time, but that does not necessarily mean that it needs a strategic or an accountability indicator in the budget. Some of the companies we have supported are Liquid Instruments, Seeing Machines and Instacluster.

THE CHAIR: Was manufacturing classified as an essential service during COVID?

Ms Cheyne: Yes. Perhaps not immediately, but I think it came back online quite soon after lockdown began.

THE CHAIR: Have you heard from many of our manufacturing businesses in town about how they coped during COVID? We had some people contact us and say that they were manufacturing in Canberra, and often had across the border warehouses, and could not do that commute in the early period. Do you have any comments on that? Have you heard from businesses in that situation?

Ms Cheyne: You are right. There were certainly some challenges regarding the border restrictions that occurred. I think that is why the Chief Health Officer gave very early consideration to the exemptions that we provided for our border communities. I appreciate, though, that there was some commentary. Goulburn, for example, only came back in later in the piece.

We did really try to balance both those supply chain issues, in addition to the public health response that we were undertaking here in the ACT. But I might check whether Ms Arthy or Ms Starick had any further representations regarding the manufacturing experience.

Ms Arthy: The minister outlined in very broad terms the interaction we had with the manufacturing industry. Most of the questions we got related to the cross-border movement. We worked with the Chief Health Officer's office around those sorts of matters. The other interaction we had would have been in relation to the business support grounds, although I do not recall seeing any direct representation from manufacturers as such in relation to that. We would meet regularly with the peak bodies, and all the representations on behalf of the various industries would come via that.

THE CHAIR: Do we know whether any manufacturing businesses closed permanently during COVID?

Ms Arthy: No; we do not have that information. I believe that was asked of the Chief Minister last week. We do not get that information for some time. It is very hard for us to gather that level of detail.

THE CHAIR: I look forward to hearing that later in the year.

MS ORR: Minister, can you outline how the Amp It Up! program works and how the uptake has been going?

Ms Cheyne: This stretches over a few of my portfolio responsibilities, so I am happy to answer it here. You might recall that we announced Amp It Up! in particular in response to the uncertainty that we were experiencing well into 2021. It was not the year that we had hoped for, by any means. We used thorough engagement with both MusicACT and individual venue operators to understand the magnitude of the problem in being able to book a performance. It was not just musicians, but also comedy, burlesque, poetry and more. We specifically and purposely designed a program—initially a \$700,000 allocation—that bars, clubs, cafes and pubs were able to apply for. Essentially, we would be underwriting them for acts they wanted to book. That included touring acts from interstate, but at least 50 per cent of the acts they intended to book needed to be from the ACT.

It was designed to assist our small and medium live venues to recover. Not only were there issues with the touring and the programming, but, as Ms Elvin was talking about before, we had issues relating to density limits. We have engaged very strongly, particularly through this program, with the office of the Chief Health Officer, to gain exemptions for some of those venues. I am pleased to say that we are doing that again

in this process. But we were able to fund 23 venues. The highest amount, I believe, was about 58,000. That was for many venues. Some were a bit less than that.

We then went into lockdown. That is exactly why we designed the program in this way. It was designed to be flexible. And while it was due to conclude in November 2021, we will be extending it into 2022 to help our smaller live music and performance venues to recover, so that they can begin to again build a really solid calendar of events.

I might check with Ms Starick as to whether there is anything further she wishes to add about engagement with venues so far.

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

I do not have a lot to add, except to say that we have been working with venues in the ACT on multiple fronts. In regard to this program, mainly it has been understanding how they are tracking with redesigning their forward program, so that we are in touch throughout the length of their proposed program going forward about what further issues we might need to follow up on their behalf.

MS CLAY: Minister, Amp It Up! had a funding model that we do not always see with our funding. Quite a lot of the funding had to go direct to the artists who were performing, in addition to the venues. Is that a new funding direction? Are we likely to see more of that direct funding going to pay people making the art so that they can continue to do so?

Ms Cheyne: Yes. It is a really good point. This was to directly support the artists, to give the venues the confidence in booking the artists. But also something that was critical for us was making sure that we supported our arts workers. They are the technicians, the people behind the scenes who are making the experience such a great one. It is a new model for us. I am not sure we have done something quite like this, at least recently—certainly in the last five years that I have been here.

Once the funding is all acquitted, I am really keen to engage with those venues, and to engage with MusicACT, about how it worked and the broader “ecosystem”—though I hate to use that word—that was supported. There was a real ripple effect by structuring it in this way; everyone benefited.

I would just note that this was an emergency response as well. What I am really looking forward to is using other leaders that we have to hand to grow our audience base here in the ACT, with new local audiences as well as interstate and, hopefully soon, international audiences. We do have the most incredible arts scene and, within that, an amazing performing arts scene, which I think we need to showcase.

MS CLAY: Minister, I am interested in and pleased to see the funding for Screen Canberra. It is quite a large funding pool, and I think it is a really good direction for Canberra’s creative scene. But there are risks and opportunities, as always.

The arts budget is very limited. We look at everything very critically. I want to know how that will build a local industry, rather than simply resulting in people from

interstate and overseas bringing in their touring shows. What often happens with those is that they bring in all their tech crew, they bring in all of their support staff, they use the facility, and then they leave. Is that likely to happen with this facility?

Ms Cheyne: I am just going to check, Ms Clay. You are talking about a facility. Do you mean at the Academy of Interactive Entertainment?

Ms CLAY: Yes.

Ms Cheyne: Or do you want to talk about Screen Canberra?

MS CLAY: Sorry, the academy.

Ms Cheyne: They are two, but interrelated.

MS CLAY: They are. Sorry, the Academy of Interactive Entertainment.

Ms Cheyne: This was a really important opportunity for us here in the ACT. I feel as though I need to talk a bit about Screen Canberra as well. What we have seen, and we have been very open about it, is that we are, I would say, aggressively pursuing the creative industries as a growth sector here in the ACT. And I mean that as a whole, including the arts. That is exactly why I released the statement of ambition for the arts.

We know that creative industries as a whole—film, but also games—have been an area of great interest in the broader community. The ACT government in the last parliamentary term worked with the Academy of Interactive Entertainment on the site that they now have confirmed in Watson. They are looking to ensure that we have state-of-the-art activity—and indeed, I believe, world-firsts—operating there. What that does, and you touched on it rightly, is allow us to bring people here who have the skills. That contributes to our economy, as they spend here; they stay overnight here. But also, it gives more opportunity for the growth of our local sector. That is something that is really key in the statement of ambition—growing our capability and growing our capacity.

I know that the Academy of Interactive Entertainment has been working on more education and teaching opportunities that this sound, stage and virtual production studio will be able to support. Screen Canberra has been engaging with the University of Canberra about some qualifications that we might be able to pursue. But we do not just want the infrastructure here; as you mentioned, we want the people here. We want to train them here, and we want them to stay here. And if they come here for work, we would like them to see Canberra as a fantastic place, not just to visit for work but to live for work.

It has been really critical for us. The AIE campus is a \$200 million campus, and this funding, with the AIE co-investing, takes the total investment in the virtual production studio to, I believe, around \$5 million. It is going to increase demand and expertise here in the ACT and as people visit us.

I might see if Ms Arthy, to begin with, has some further detail to add.

MS CLAY: Perhaps the further detail might be how you evaluate retention and evaluate that long-term career development to make sure that you are getting that outcome, if that is the goal.

Ms Arthy: The context here is that the Academy of Interactive Entertainment is first and foremost an educational institution. The whole business model for that agency is to use the know-how and the expertise of the owners, about how they provide training and real-life experience for the people they are bringing through. Their whole thing is to set up all their productions and their business—and their partnerships with the local screen industry, whether that be animation or other areas of the sector—to give students the experience they need to be successful so that, hopefully, they can spin off into successful businesses.

That is the context for the entire studios, that facility. It is not just about looking at homegrown artists; this is around how we develop professionals who can be sustainable as a business. And as the minister said, how do we keep them in Canberra?

This one part of the investment for this year is part of the bigger relationship that the government has with the Academy of Interactive Entertainment about how we can use its credibility and its standing as a really significant education provider and how we can then use its connections to go with the investment that must come internationally?

Because of the way the film industry works, it is very rare for there to be home-grown local investment. You often have to bring in investment from international sources or other parts of Australia. So it is about how we make sure that we develop a core industry here in the ACT where we can take advantage of the external investment and how we can actually grow the expertise so that when people are looking for a place to produce films, video, arcade games or video games, they come to us first. It is not as straightforward as that the government provides this money for a particular outcome; it is part of growing the whole capability.

You asked about evaluation. It is not a very straightforward evaluation, because it is tied up in the entire business model of the Academy of Interactive Entertainment and it is tied up with the government's approach in securing the site for them and providing this level of investment, and it is also about the work they are doing with the other universities and CIT about how we grow the skills within the ACT.

MS CLAY: Minister, COVID has been long; lockdown has been long; we are all looking forward to a good party. I grew up in Canberra; I have always been here. I remember when we did not have much on. These days we have a pretty healthy festival scene.

I was interested in your statement of ambition. You have the arts expo which is coming up in a few years. We have quite a busy festival scene in normal times. I am wondering how you see the arts expo and the rest of our festival scene balancing out so that all those events are not accidentally competing for the same audiences, the same talent, the same funding pool.

And I am wondering whether that arts expo will be a new thing, whether it will be

tying together a lot of existing things, and what work you are going to do just to make sure that we do not oversaturate that short-term festival market, which is great for audiences but does not create particularly good opportunities for the sector itself.

Ms Cheyne: I could wax lyrical about this, but I will try to contain myself. You are exactly right: we do have a really strong festival scene in the ACT, both events that are managed by Events ACT and our ACT Events Fund, which encourages community events. I am looking forward to making some announcements about that soon.

But getting to the heart of your question, the arts expo is something that we really do want to engage with the community on, including with people who are very experienced in putting on festivals and who might have, or might intend to have, a festival that would coincide with others at the same time, about how we integrate and ensure that—you are right—we are not cannibalising each other.

What I really intend is that the arts expo will be months long. We are looking to see everything benefit each other. People will be attracted to come to the ACT for the arts expo, and in a weekend, or a week, they might be able to have 10 or 20 different experiences. That might be through some mini-festivals that are held throughout the entire arts expo or people might go to a careers fair at the Academy of Interactive Entertainment or UC, which is also pursuing a very aggressive creative industry strategy.

It is something we want to work with the sector on. We have some really strong experience in the ACT with festival delivery, including with Contour 556 and Design Canberra, which has been growing and growing. Having those conversations about what this could look like and how everyone could benefit and grow is the intention, rather than festival fatigue or cannibalisation.

MS CLAY: That is great. Will all the artists that are involved in all of our festivals, including that one, be paid at industry award rates for the hours that they work?

Ms Cheyne: I would expect so.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I have a question about the accountability indicators for 3.1 and 3.2. I note that they are spread across the Chief Minister and you. How do you distinguish the accountability indicators between the two of you?

Ms Cheyne: Going to 3.1, looking at table 41, it really is aligned with our administrative arrangements, which we have talked about before. In table 41, I think it is fair to say that c, d, e, g and h are in the Chief Minister's portfolio; f would be split a bit between us; and a and b would be split between us.

For 3.2, item a, "Local sentiment on major and community events", major events are the Chief Minister, as you know, and I am community events. And b, c, d, e and f are in the Chief Minister's portfolio.

THE CHAIR: On events, I have one question about applications. What is the main reason event applications are being rejected in the ACT?

Ms Cheyne: I will hand over to Mr Triffitt, who has just gone through our ACT Events Fund round for the next calendar year. He might have some up-to-date feedback on the applications that we have received.

I would just note that we went to considerable effort this year to update our ACT Events Fund guidelines to serve the application purpose, to make it a bit simpler. There were two streams to apply for: a community stream and a development stream. The community stream—Mr Triffitt will talk more about it—is about the local community essentially, things that are a bit more experimental or one-off things. The development stream, which was up to \$30,000—the community stream was up to \$15,000—is about how we can showcase what may have started off as a community event to a wider audience. Something that has been funded previously that would perhaps meet the criteria for that would be the Stromlo Running Festival, which attracts a very large number of people to the ACT. But I will ask Mr Triffitt if he can provide more detail.

THE CHAIR: But more focused on the rejections, please.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, sure.

Mr Triffitt: I have read and understood the privilege statement.

As the minister outlined, there are two funding categories: community event funding, which is for up to \$15,000 to support the delivery and enhancement of events that encourage local engagement and participation; and the event development funding, from \$15,000 to \$30,000, to support delivery and enhancement of events that can demonstrate strong potential to develop and grow, including the capacity to generate tourism and economic activity.

This year, we had a large number of applications, 53 applications, requesting a total of over \$1 million in funding. We have available \$450,000 in total across the fund, across those categories. An independent panel assess all the applications. Effectively, they are assessed against the two categories that I outlined. Going to considerations around applicants that may be unsuccessful, they would be for events that may not encourage a large number of instances of local engagement or participation. They may have small levels of participation. The majority of their funding may rely on the government funding, rather than being built on a sustainable model where they may be able to transition out of requirements for government funding. They may not satisfy criteria around tourism opportunities and economic activity. But this year we did have 22 event organisations over the 53 that were successful: 12 in the development funding category and 10 in the community event funding category. Successful applicants and unsuccessful applicants have not been notified at this stage so we are not able to make them public.

THE CHAIR: Does the government reimburse financial compensation if events are cancelled?

Mr Triffitt: We have had a number of events unable to go ahead, particularly in relation to the 2021 fund. Where event organisers have incurred expenses relating to

their funded activity, we have acquitted those funds against that activity. Even in the event that the event has not been able to go ahead, they have expensed money against the activity, as outlined in the grant, and effectively they are able to use that funding for that purpose.

Ms Cheyne: Ms Castley, just to paint a picture, a good example of that is the Big Canberra Bike Ride. A lot of their funding had been towards the promotion of that, and preparing for it. Then wild weather occurred. They were still able to expense against what had occurred.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS ORR: We have touched a bit on Screen Canberra and the AIE investment. We spoke a lot about those two developments, but with particular things like the *Blacklight* filming success and a few of these other investments, how are they going to promote film in Canberra, and what benefits will we start to see from those?

Ms Cheyne: *Blacklight* really helped put us on the map. The key feedback we heard was about the ease of engaging with the ACT government. That was for a range of reasons. We had many committed officials, but we also had a flatter level of government; by not having both local and state government functions, they were all combined together. During that production period, we drew officials from all the relevant directorates and worked very closely with Screen Canberra and the producers to make it happen. That has really assisted our reputation both domestically and internationally.

As I mentioned, we know that screen and screen production are an area of high growth in terms of creating jobs and bringing people to the ACT. Building on *Blacklight* and what I would say have been several very strong years under the leadership of Screen Canberra to attract more filming here, you would be aware of *Total Control* with Rachel Griffiths and Deborah Mailman; that has been a key one here. It is about to go to air again, I believe—season 2. And there are others still to come.

What we have really done with this budget is further supported Screen Canberra to continue their operations. But also, there is a location incentive scheme. Again, this was an election commitment. It is now titled the screen attraction fund and it is something that we will be using to attract more productions here to the ACT.

There has been a really strong pipeline of international production coming into Australia. All Australian states and territories, except the ACT and Tasmania—until now, at least for the ACT—provide those grant incentives to attract those high budget film productions to their jurisdiction. This is something where, given the really strong reputation that we are developing in our small jurisdiction, this was the right time to pilot this location incentive scheme to attract people here.

It will be available to productions that have at least \$2 million of spend in the ACT and it will provide a grant for a proportion of the projects spend in the ACT. It will provide an attachment for ACT practitioners on a case-by-case basis. What we are looking to do is supplement the production as long as they meet a minimum spend

here in the ACT. Essentially, everybody wins.

I might just see if Ms Arthy or Ms Starick have anything further to add.

Ms Starick: Thank you. We all want to talk about this.

I have read and understand the statement.

The only thing I would add is that what we have heard from industry and from companies is that bringing large productions to Canberra offers opportunity for local companies to gain experience at that scale, which they may not otherwise get. Not only does it bring the financial investment, and, as the minister said, jobs for people in those industries, but it brings exposure and experience for people at a scale that cannot always be achieved just by maintaining local productions.

For example, *Blacklight* was a production that was over \$34 million. It had a \$2 million spend locally, plus the experience for government to operate with a company and a production of that scale and the experience for the multiple technical staff that were involved in the local production.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned that you go to local businesses and give them the opportunity to upskill or do things that they can learn from and grow in. But on Wednesday, I think, we heard from the Chief Minister that a Victorian company has won the contract to develop a strategy for Enlighten and Floriade. Why was an ACT company not chosen for that?

Ms Cheyne: Ms Castley, I believe that was covered quite extensively. I listened to that hearing. The Chief Minister went into the procurement rules. As I understand it, it went out to tender. I believe Mr Triffitt—

THE CHAIR: Yes; my understanding was that there was a Canberra company that did not quite have the experience of the Victorian company. But I wonder what your thoughts are, with events as one of your indicators—what you think about not allowing that smaller ACT company the opportunity to grow into that area?

MS ORR: Chair, I put it to you that this sits with the Chief Minister's portfolio, and we did have quite an extensive discussion in the last hearing on this. The Chief Minister has answered that. Right now, we are asking for something that is outside the current minister's portfolio. It is perhaps better if we just move on and stick to the stuff within this area.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Based on the indicators, I thought it was in the portfolio.

MR DAVIS: Minister, I want to ask about what specific new events we will be running in 2022. Specifically, how are we intending to measure the community wellbeing outcomes of those community events?

Ms Cheyne: We are in a new space, I suppose, going into 2021. I know the Chief Minister touched on this in terms of major events in response to questions from Ms Orr the other day. We are in an enviable position in the ACT. With our higher

vaccination rates and borders reopening, I think there is quite an increased degree of confidence about our program of events. But equally, no two events in the ACT are the same. They vary on the scale considerably. We are working with the Chief Health Officer's office as we go through each of these. I think that generally we are feeling more confident, but some events will be different—some slightly different, some a bit more different, depending on delivery or timing.

You might be aware that Windows to the World, for example, and the Canberra Nara Candle Festival would have been held about now. Neither has been able to go ahead this year. With Windows to the World, we have been able to reprofile that funding to next year in our engagement with the embassies. I know they are very keen to welcome people back onto what essentially is their land.

In the accountability indicators, you can see from our community events the way that we are looking to quantify the experience of people. When we are surveying them, we are looking to get a satisfaction rate of four out of five. I might just check with Mr Triffitt as to what will be included in that survey and whether it will touch on the wellbeing indicators.

Mr Triffitt: In relation to the survey that was conducted to assess those events, questions specifically relate to how events contribute to city vibrancy, community pride, social connection, and value for money. Social connection has a direct connection to the wellbeing indicators.

And going to your question about the events within this portfolio that will be occurring, there is New Year's Eve, Australia Day and the community events that are associated with the Enlighten Festival. That includes the Canberra Day celebrations: Lights! Canberra! Action!; Symphony in the Park; Canberra Day; and the Canberra Balloon Spectacular. Events ACT also delivers Reconciliation Day on behalf of the Community Services Directorate. Those are the events that are occurring in this financial year.

MS CLAY: Minister, one of our next big challenges in climate is the transition off gas. Tourism has a really valuable role in demonstrating some of the gas-free ways of cooking and some of the things that are the last hold-out for gas devotees. In your business and innovation sector, how are you supporting everyone's transition from gas as fast as possible?

Ms Cheyne: I will briefly touch on the arts portfolio. I know that was in a previous section, but it all relates, I suppose. There have been significant sustainability initiatives in our arts centres. That has been one of the immediate focuses for us, particularly given some of the other challenges we experience with our arts centres, given that many of them are heritage listed. We have been looking to phase out the use of gas at those facilities wherever it has been possible.

I am pleased to tell you that, most recently, a gas-powered heating system was replaced with energy efficient heating and cooling at Gorman House. There has also been a very concerted effort, and I think quite significant funding, in replacing our lights across our venues with LED efficient lights.

PROOF

In terms of cooking at different events and festivals, it is probably something that we are moving more towards. I think there is a focus on sustainability of our events as a whole. You will know that Minister Steel has spoken quite openly about the move to plastic-free events. That definitely touches on us. But we have also heard from the business community and from the community more broadly that it should not be everything at once.

So let us just work through these changes as we go. I appreciate that gas is a key one, but plastic free has been our focus in the short term and we would like to get through that first.

But I am very happy to engage with you on some ideas, particularly if we might be needing to support our community organisations with cooking at some of those larger festivals.

MS CLAY: That is great to hear. I think there is a really powerful demonstration role in some of these portfolios. I know that many potters are now transitioning to electric kilns. I did not realise that tech was ready to go, but it absolutely is, so it would be great to showcase that. And at our events there is still quite a lot of gas cooking; some of our good chefs are still using gas cooking. Some of that role modelling would be quite powerful in this space.

Ms Cheyne: Yes. And I recall that, particularly when Ginninderry were coming online, they partnered with some organisations and cooking schools at the Belconnen markets to show that you can cook with electricity and produce the same high-quality meals. That is something I will certainly give some more consideration to.

THE CHAIR: What are the legislated targets driving this transition off gas, Minister?

Ms Cheyne: I do not have that on me.

THE CHAIR: Can you take that on notice?

Ms Cheyne: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

On behalf of the committee, I thank Minister Cheyne and officials from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate for their attendance today. If witnesses have taken questions on notice—I think that might have been the only one—please provide the answers to the committee secretary within five working days.

This is the last hearing for our committee. I want to thank the committee staff: David, Brianna, Julia, Fiona and Dennis. You have been amazing and I appreciate all of the hard work that you have done in pulling this together for us.

The Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality has concluded its inquiries into the 2021-22 ACT budget and stands adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 10.30 am.