

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 – PREMIER AND
FINANCE**

Tuesday 15 March 2022

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, THE ARTS, AND REGIONAL
YOUTH**

UNCORRECTED

The Committee met at 9:30.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Tara Moriarty (Chair)

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Scott Farlow

The Hon. Don Harwin

The Hon. Walt Secord

The Hon. Penny Sharpe

Mr David Shoebridge

PRESENT

The Hon. Ben Franklin, *Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Regional Youth*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

The CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the additional public hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2021-2022. Before I commence, I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present. I welcome Minister Ben Franklin and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Aboriginal Affairs, Arts, and Regional Youth.

Before we commence I would like to make brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Today's proceedings are being broadcast live from Parliament's website and a transcript will be placed on the Committee's website once it becomes available. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. All witnesses in budget estimates have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. There may be some questions that a witness could answer only if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In these circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days.

If witnesses wish to hand up documents, they should do so through the Committee staff but, Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you. Finally, can everyone turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister Franklin, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. Everybody else has been sworn except for three of you.

Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. with a 15-minute break at 11.00 a.m. We will be joined by the Minister in the morning, and in the afternoon we will hear from departmental witnesses from 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. with a 15-minute break at 3.30 p.m. During these sessions there will be questions from the Opposition and crossbench only. If required, an additional 15 minutes is allocated at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions for Government questions. Thank you for your attendance today and we will begin with questions from the Opposition.

Mr MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, on former oath

Mr CHRIS HANGER, Deputy Secretary, Regional Development and Programs, Department of Regional NSW, affirmed and examined

Ms JULIA RYAN, Director, Office of Regional Youth, Department of Regional NSW, affirmed and examined

Ms LOUISE HERRON, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Opera House, on former affirmation

Ms LISA HAVILAH, Chief Executive Officer, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, on former affirmation

Dr MICHAEL BRAND, Director, Art Gallery of New South Wales, on former affirmation

Ms ANNETTE PITMAN, Chief Executive Officer, Create NSW, on former affirmation

Ms KATE FOY, Deputy Secretary, Community Engagement, Department of Premier and Cabinet, on former affirmation

Ms NICOLE COURTMAN, Registrar, Aboriginal Land Rights Act, on former affirmation

Ms LILIAN GORDON, Head of Agency, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, on former affirmation

Mr TIM IRELAND, Executive Director, Closing the Gap, affirmed and examined

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Good morning, Minister. Congratulations on your appointment.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Thank you, Ms Sharpe, and it is wonderful to see you, as always.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am missing having you over here because normally you get me a cup of tea.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I do. I was going to ask my staff to do it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is okay. Minister, I want to ask you about what is happening on Cabbage Tree Island.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You would be aware that there is currently no clean water or electricity there.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Have you made any contact with the community since the flooding, or have you or your agency been in contact with the community there?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, absolutely. Thanks, Ms Sharpe, and I am really pleased that you started with this. You started with flooding. Obviously I live on the North Coast. This disaster is unprecedented and absolutely devastating for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike. I think people thought in 2017 that it was the worst it was going to be because it got almost to the level of 1974 but, of course, this time it has increased significantly and it has caused widespread devastation. In order to address this I have worked closely with Aboriginal Affairs, with the arts and cultural organisations but, much more importantly, across government because this requires a whole-of-government response. It is devastating.

Cabbage Tree Island obviously has been almost entirely demolished and devastated. It has caused, as you know, the total evacuation of the island and we have helped to organise immediately residents being moved to evacuation centres both at Ramada in Ballina and at Camp Drewe in Lennox Head. I have spoken with both the emergency services Minister, Minister for Flood Recovery now, Steph Cooke, as well as the Premier and Deputy Premier and a range of Ministers across government to ensure support for the varying accommodation programs. Obviously the first point was to stop people—to ensure people's lives were protected but now it is about accommodation.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How many people are actually—my understanding is there are about 190 families.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, 190, that is right—people, I think, actually.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, and about half of them are children.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There have already been issues where tenancies for large families have been refused.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And it seems on the basis they were large Aboriginal families and no other reason. I know there are concerns there. Are you able to give us a breakdown of where people are? Are they just in the evacuation centres? Where are they actually sleeping?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: My understanding is that they are at the evacuation centres in Camp Drewe in Lennox Head and at Ramada in Ballina and the children—I spoke to the education Minister yesterday—are at the Southern Cross School of Distance Education centre for school, and I believe that they started at school this week, which is important. Aboriginal Affairs, my department, has been working closely with the land council and has spoken with the CEO, Chris Binge, and Chris's work on the ground has been extraordinary. At the end of last week Aboriginal Affairs called a joint meeting on 11 March between all the relevant New South Wales and Commonwealth agencies as well as Aboriginal peak organisations such as NSWALC, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, and the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council and they discussed the impact that the floods have had on the residents and the supports that were either in place or were beginning to be in place.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If can stop you there, Minister—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Has the Commonwealth extended relief payments to Ballina yet?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Do you mean the extension from a thousand to \$3,000?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I do not believe so, no.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Have you made any attempts with the Commonwealth to get that extended? It clearly is a big problem. The devastation in Cabbage Tree and Ballina is no different to that in Lismore.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is not just Cabbage Tree; it is Murwillumbah, it is Mullumbimby, it is Upper Main Arm.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What have you done about it?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I have written to the Prime Minister, as has, by the way, the Premier. This is, I believe, an arbitrary and unreasonable delineation between those LGAs and I hope it will be reconsidered.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And what is the ongoing coordination on the ground that is occurring there?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: So, basically—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Obviously, people are saying it is going to be two years before they can rebuild—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Absolutely.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: —at least.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Indeed, because of the contamination on the island. Clearly, that needs to be led by the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council. That is what Aboriginal Affairs and other departments—that is who they are working through. But the commitment I want to give today, Ms Sharpe, is that we all know the importance of Aboriginal communities and their connection to country. This Government will ensure that it does what it needs to do to rebuild those properties so that those people who want to return to Cabbage Tree Island can return. I might ask if Mr Coutts-Trotter wants to add anything about the specific support we are providing.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I might pass to Kate Foy or Lilian Gordon, who have been closely involved.

LILLIAN GORDON: So from the meeting that we have held—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, Ms Gordon, you need to use the mic for Hansard. Thanks.

LILLIAN GORDON: In terms of the meeting that we convened in terms of cross-government support, we are making sure that all of the families from Cabbage Tree Island—we have a list and they are all being mapped

to understand what their particular needs will be for all of those families. From there, we are working very closely with Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council along with NSWALC as the land council there, and also Aboriginal health and medical research in terms of the health and wellbeing aspect of that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My understanding is that the medical centre is completely destroyed there.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is happening in terms of medical support?

LILLIAN GORDON: AHMRC is the peak Aboriginal health body. They absolutely work very closely with their members, which are the medical health centres. They are providing that additional support that is required from that perspective.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I know, for example, the mobile medics have gone up there. Are they actually supporting the Aboriginal health services if they need to or are they operating completely separately?

LILLIAN GORDON: Everybody is providing as much support as they can in a coordinated way. That is partly our job is to make sure that is happening from that perspective. We wanted to make sure that we had every single family member to be able to understand what were the needs separately. We are working very close with Jali. I do have to pay my respects to Chris Binge as the CEO for Jali, who is just working like no-one else's business. He is amazing and very well supported from us to be able to do all of those things.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to acknowledge that the *Koori Mail* has done an incredible job, but I am concerned that they are advertising for donations for things like bicarb soda and vinegar and all that sort of stuff. What direct support is the Government providing? People should not have to scabble around for donated vinegar and bicarb to clean up their house.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I agree. Lilian may have something further to add, but can I just say that I have met with Naomi Moran, who is obviously the GM of *Koori Mail*, who is fantastic, and visited the centre. They are basically operating a centre where they are taking in donations and so on. I have also offered for any support that I can provide in that sort of area, both in person and on the phone. I have not been given those specific requests yet. Lilian might add further, but I just want to say that the work that Naomi and the *Koori Mail* staff are doing when their premises have also obviously been utterly inundated is extraordinary. They are an incredibly important advocate and leader for Aboriginal people. Lilian, do you want to add anything?

LILLIAN GORDON: I echo those thoughts definitely for the *Koori Mail*—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So if a request is made like, "We need many litres of vinegar and bicarb soda"—the list I have seen includes extension cords and torches—are they actually able to access funds to be able to go and do that? How does that happen?

LILLIAN GORDON: In terms of what we will assist with, we will certainly help with a container for them to be able to put all that stuff in because there is so much of it, from that perspective. Yes, I imagine down the track as funds become available we will make sure that is available for them to be able to be part of that funding realm that will come out. As part of that also, we work with GIVIT. GIVIT is the group that really helps because lots of donations do come in and it is not easy to manage all of that. We want to make sure that we are working alongside those and along with Resilience. All of that is together to make sure that our families are receiving the help that they need.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, there are obviously other Aboriginal communities. There are the Gundurimba mission, Box Ridge, Wardell and others. What assessment is being done with those communities?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In terms of the specifics on Gundurimba that you are talking about, I do not have those details in front of me. Lilian may have. We are obviously happy to talk about each of the individual communities specifically, if you like. But what we are trying to do is to coordinate whatever requests come in as quickly as they come in and identify the need. For example, as a result of the community raising concerns, Aboriginal Affairs liaised with the local emergency management coordination who tasked the ADF to do food drops to a range of Aboriginal communities at Jubullum and Tabulam as well as Baryulgil and a couple of others. They were ones who were cut off—the floodwaters, they were cut off. I do not have the specifics.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My understanding is that Gundurimba was cut off. There have been significant concerns about coordination. As we know, we have seen some pretty ordinary finger-pointing between State and Federal government. These are very specific communities wanting to know who is taking the lead in those communities or are they, again, just kind of being moved around, depending on what people can do.

Anything that you can provide in terms of who is leading in the coordinated response? Obviously from Cabbage Tree you have got some role there, but the other communities as well.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The regional recovery subcommittee is establishing a range of committees to bring together organisations and agencies to support all of the communities. That includes health and wellbeing, community resilience and other logistics.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But Aboriginal Affairs has a clear role in that as well?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Absolutely. We have been working with Resilience NSW and obviously across government to provide the advice and support that we can. Aboriginal Affairs is not predominantly a delivery agency, but we will continue to work to provide support in any way that we can.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you, Minister, and congratulations on your appointment. It is lovely to see you in the Minister's chair.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Thank you. That is nice of you to say.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, on 22 February in Parliament in response to a question without notice from me, you were asked about—it is not going to surprise you—flooding at Parramatta Powerhouse. We asked about the flooding and about claims that it is a one-in-1,000-year flood incident. You said, and I am quoting directly from *Hansard*, "It is simply far-fetched and utterly unreasonable, the claims." Since we have now had three consecutive years of one-in-1,000-year floods at the site—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, we have not.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, we have. To assist, they were in February 2020, March 2021 and February-March this year. In fact, the one-in-1,000 figure is actually from the mouth of the Premier. Has the New South Wales Government revised its plans involving the flooding plans at Parramatta Powerhouse?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I appreciate the question. It does not come as a galloping shock that this would be a question that is asked. I want to push back immediately on the contention. We have not had three one-in-1,000-year floods in the last three years. In fact, here is a helpful pictorial reference, Mr Secord.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Something you prepared earlier.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: This is the one-in-1,000-year flood level, which is, in fact, below the ground floor level. This is the level at February 2020 and this is the level at February 2022 and March 2021. The March 2021 flood and the February 2022 flood—the one that we have just been going through—was a full four metres below the ground floor of the Powerhouse. In fact, for the dates we are talking about, March 2021 and February 2022, the levels are 3½ metres below the one-in-1,000-year flood level. So your contention is just not correct.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So the answer is that you have not revised any of the plans involving the site.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Yes, because you are wrong.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is based on a premise that we have had three one-in-1,000-year floods in the last three years, and we just have not. The facts show that is not the case. The March 2021 flood was 3½ metres above the riverfront. The February 2020 flood was 4½ metres above. The February 2022 flood was 3½ metres above. This is four metres below the ground level of the Powerhouse. It is just wrong to say that it is the same. I guess the other point that I just make briefly—and I understand this is an issue that continues to come up, but it is important for me to be clear—is that the highest flood event ever recorded in Parramatta was in 1988, and it would still peak two metres below the ground floor. Even on 2GB last week, Steven Molino, who as we all know is a significant environmental consultant and someone who has provided—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: He is a flood expert.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And flood expert, absolutely. He has provided significant evidence to the 5½-year-long committee, possibly six now, that the flooding level from last month was minor flooding that would not place the collections at risk.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, through you to Ms Havilah, with your agreement, Ms Havilah, you wrote to all the staff on 22 March in a group email at 11.34. You wished everyone well and you hoped that they stayed dry and safe. You go through and you talk about the Parramatta Powerhouse and you talk about the flood information provided by ARUP. Do you stand by that report?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, I do.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Have you read the report?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, I have. I am not sure exactly what report you are referring to. If you are referring to the graph, the details of the recent—are you referring to this graph?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am referring to the flood risk and stormwater management report.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Can you cite the date for the benefit of Hansard so that Hansard knows exactly what you are talking about?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay. It is entitled *Appendix J Flood Risk and Stormwater Management Addendum*, dated 16 September 2020.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It was an appendix to the DA.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, I would have read it, but not recently.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you familiar with the fact that it makes certain claims about the possibility of a one-in-1,000-year flood and how it would impact on the site?

LISA HAVILAH: I would have to take that on notice because I cannot remember all the details of that flood report.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You probably would remember this because the report actually says that there is a 12 per cent chance of flood reaching the museum.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What part of the museum?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, what part of the museum?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The museum.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: If you are talking about the undercroft, Mr Secord, the undercroft has been specifically designed so that water can flow through. That is the whole point; there is no part of the collection that will be in the undercroft. It is part of the flood management program. There will be barriers set up so that people cannot be there. Yes, it is part of the museum, but it is part of the flood design mitigation for the museum.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will quote directly from the chapter "Risk of Flood Inundation for Ground Floor". It states:

... a chance of 1 in 8 (i.e. 12%) of a flood occurring in that period that gets within 0.3m of the ground floor level.

Since the three consecutive flooding incidents there, has the New South Wales Government revised its flood plan for the museum?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, because, as I have said, the three—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This is your own report.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: —flooding events from the past three years did not come anywhere near the ground floor, and all the current projections stack up.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, through Ms Havilah—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, of course.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: —have you revised, re-consulted, reassessed or re-examined anything involving the flood of the Powerhouse Museum site since the three consecutive 2020, 2021 and 2022 incidents?

LISA HAVILAH: No, we have not.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Can I also make a couple of points, if I may, Mr Secord, and they are that the Parramatta council requirements are that the Powerhouse needs to be above the one-in-100-year flood level, which it is, but it is also significantly higher obviously than the one-in-1,000-year flood level. Flood risk has been a key consideration through the design-development process, in line with Parramatta council's development control plan requirements for all CBD buildings in Parramatta. The design of the Powerhouse in Parramatta responds to the New South Wales *Floodplain Development Manual* and relevant City of Parramatta Council requirements as to other developments in the vicinity along the Parramatta River. The point that I would make is that the ground floor of the Powerhouse is, in fact, above Phillip Street at Civic link. If the ground floor is getting

inundated, buildings across the Parramatta CBD are also getting inundated. So this is a major, substantial, extraordinary event.

The CHAIR: We will move to the crossbench.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: The Ultimo Powerhouse Museum is saved, we were told. Surely there is \$500 million to be spent on that project.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Can you confirm that that is the amount and what is going to be done?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The budget commitment is \$480 million to \$500 million. The renewal of the Powerhouse represents a significant investment in New South Wales' cultural infrastructure. It secures the future of that museum, which will provide, along with Powerhouse Parramatta, a significant boost to the cultural and tourism sectors in this State. It will also provide a significant infrastructure stimulus in New South Wales, alongside obviously the provision of cultural and creative industry employment. It creates the opportunity in Ultimo for a significant new build across the site, which will expand and extend the museum's exhibition capabilities. It will increase the museum's footprint and presence within the city, and it will extend the historic architecture and integrate the museum with the Creative Industries Precinct.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Is it actually going to be a museum along the lines of what it was before in terms of displaying technology?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes. I will throw to Ms Havilah shortly, but there will be exhibition spaces, theatres, learning spaces, libraries and archives, creative industry co-working and studio spaces. Obviously there will be staff administration amenity, but there will also be digital studios, meeting rooms, back-of-house security, workshops, retail, and food and beverage. This is a significant offering and a genuine, real and substantial museum. Ms Havilah, would you like to speak to that a little more?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes. Thank you, Minister. I think the really important thing to note is that the museum's infrastructure is over 30 years old and it is not currently world class. Unfortunately we have leaks in our roof and it does need a very significant upgrade to present—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: With respect, Ms Havilah, leaks in the roof do not justify the spending of \$500 million, does it? I do not think that is an answer, is it?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You're getting the wrong roofer.

LISA HAVILAH: That is a component of what the renewal is.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That is just a lack of repairs and maintenance in the past 11 years under this Government, isn't it?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The previous Minister.

LISA HAVILAH: The upgrade of the exhibition spaces is part of the renewal. As the Minister referred to, one of the really significant abilities that we will have in the renewed museum is to change the exhibitions and give increased access to our communities to our incredible collection of over 500,000 objects. In the past 30 years we have only been able to show 10 per cent of our collection, so the expansion of gallery spaces and the ability to produce and present exhibitions that engage communities and young people with learning around science and technology and the applied arts will make a significant contribution not only to industry development but to the profile of the creative industries in New South Wales.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Perhaps through you, Minister, is there a business case underpinning the expenditure of this \$500 million?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Ms Havilah?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes. There was a business case that was developed and considered by government last year which led to the investment decision.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Has that business case been made public?

LISA HAVILAH: No, it has not.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Minister, can I ask you to table it?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Perhaps we might have this discussion on Thursday as well at the—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: We will have it on Thursday as well.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am happy to take that on notice, Mr Borsak.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We could table it before Thursday, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: We could, but I will take that on notice.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: What about a conservation plan for the site, Minister?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The Ultimo conservation management plan is being updated to inform the renewal of the museum and to ensure that the museum's heritage fabric is appropriately celebrated, integrated and conserved. Staff consultation on the draft of that conservation management plan—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: With due respect, it is not really a plan if you are doing it in motion while you are doing the job.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: We are not actually doing the job yet; we are doing the plan first. We are consulting more widely to ensure that the process is inclusive and collaborative. Now that we have finished the staff consultation, there will be an open weekend for the public held this weekend on 19 and 20 March. There is also a dedicated First Nations consultation next week on the twenty-first. It is being updated to capture the history of the museum alongside the 1988 design principles for the Powerhouse Museum, informed by Lionel Glendenning.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: When do you expect to finish the conservation plan and make it public?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Ms Havilah?

LISA HAVILAH: We plan to complete the plan at the end of April this year.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: And it will go on public display then?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It will.

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, it will be integrated into the two-stage planning process.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: How long are you going to be open for comment and consultation?

LISA HAVILAH: I can take that on notice and we can give you the full time frame shortly.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: We will give you the full time line.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Turning your mind to the Castle Hill museum project, I think it will be great because I think so many other parts of the MAAS have been ruined so you need to put some of this stuff somewhere. The reality is that you are talking about spending \$100 million out there. Can you actually tell me or tell the Committee what this money is going to be spent on? What is the project?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: This will be the only cultural infrastructure in The Hills shire local government area and it will be significant. It will obviously include storage, which is what it is about, but it is also going to increase access to the collection through the creation of new spaces for visible storage research and viewing the collection as well as flexible spaces for education and public programs, workshops, exhibitions and events. The purpose-built spaces at Castle Hill will have a storage capacity of approximately 4,000 square metres, which will be larger than the existing facilities in Ultimo, which are just over 3,000 square metres. There will obviously be significant benefit to the community through jobs through both the construction and operation phases as well. The project is now in the delivery phase and community consultation has—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Sorry, can I just interrupt you for a second there?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes. No problem.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I have never seen a business case for what is going on out there at Castle Hill. Is there one?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Ms Havilah?

LISA HAVILAH: Thank you, Minister. Yes, the business case for Castle Hill was integrated into the Powerhouse Parramatta business case.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: It is part of the Parramatta Powerhouse business case?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: In relation to Castle Hill, is that actually public also? Is that a public document, the business case?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You got it through an order for papers.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: It is actually in an SO52?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is in the building!

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It is in the Mookhey wing.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: It is in an SO52?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Yes?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, I believe you have received it.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That is what Mr Harwin has confirmed. There is a large level of irony having Mr Harwin sitting on the Committee here.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: There is.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think there is a large level of irony about spending months on having debates on calls for papers and you not actually reading them. That is what I am throwing my hands up about.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister—ex-Minister. Minister, stop interjecting.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I think there is a large amount of irony when you get thrown into a Committee like this.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: While you mention Mr Harwin, can I acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of my predecessor.

The CHAIR: There is limited time left. Let us continue with the crossbench's questions. I thank everybody for the commentary.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I appreciate the direction for research between now and Thursday. Thank you, Don.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: We will make sure we have a good look at it before Thursday.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Excellent.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: We appreciate that, and Mr Harwin's presence on this Committee is much appreciated as well.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: As it will be on Thursday no doubt.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: No doubt. Does the exhibition space at Castle Hill duplicate what happens at Ultimo?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, absolutely not. They are entirely different.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Can you explain the difference in nature?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: As an operational matter, I will hand over to the director.

LISA HAVILAH: Thank you, Minister. The exhibition program at Castle Hill will be more focused along the lines of how it has been programmed in the past through open storage. There will be curated exhibitions that give local communities, communities of western Sydney and visitors access to our collection, but there will also be elements of experiencing the new store at Castle Hill where you will be able to see the VLOs and large parts of the collection as you move through the building. One of the really exciting things about the Castle Hill expansion is that for the first time all of the collection will be located in one place and our extraordinary conservators and collection team will be located with the collection. It will be really incredible not only from an audience perspective but very significant in terms of having our professional staff located with all of the collection.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Welcome, Minister. Congratulations. It is good to see you in this spot.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, you indicated in answers about the Powerhouse that if the flooding level gets up to the ground floor of the Powerhouse, you are going to have substantial flooding around Phillip Street and the whole of Parramatta. Correct?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You would know that the Molino Stewart report—Mr Molino, whose qualifications and expertise you endorsed quite appropriately earlier—had very real concerns about what the likely impact of that isolation of the Powerhouse is in a flooding event. Are you aware of that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am aware of the Molino report, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are you aware that he was particularly concerned that if two of the large drainage pipes that I think run on the western side of the Powerhouse get blocked, as often happens in a flooding event from debris and the like, then in actual fact there is a genuine risk of flooding—being I think the one-in-eight risk of flooding—entering the ground floor in a very extreme flood? Are you aware of those concerns?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, I understand those concerns.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you know those postdate the flooding report that you have relied upon for the Powerhouse, that report being September and the Molino Stewart report being I think November 2020? Are you aware of that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I guess what I would say is this: We have engaged Arup, who are extremely experienced and renowned consultants in this field and they have focused on the strategy throughout. The strategy will be fully implemented before the Powerhouse Parramatta is open and operating. We will take all of these considerations into account.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But my colleague asked you and asked Ms Havilah if you have done a review of the flood studies. Because since those two reports have been delivered, we have now had three serious flooding events and—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I would not characterise them as serious.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Tell that to the people of Parramatta, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In terms of the impact on the Powerhouse because they are so significantly below the ground floor—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They completely inundated the construction site—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, they did not.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —and were evidence of the likelihood of the site getting marooned in a serious flooding event.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: They did not completely inundate the site and, as I have shown you on this excellent graphic, Mr Shoebridge, they were significantly below the ground floor, which is where they were here.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order: The Minister keeps referring to this graphic. Is that something the Minister would be willing to table for the Committee, potentially?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Of course. I am very happy to table.

LISA HAVILAH: We have copies, Minister.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I thought you were going to say it was a prop.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: No. It is for the Committee's benefit.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you—and indeed also the graph that was demonstrated by Ms Havilah.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, there is also a graph too. I am very happy to do so.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Let us get the graph. Minister, once the Powerhouse is isolated, it is very likely that the local grid will go down because, as you know from the Molino Stewart report, the substations surrounding it are at Phillip Street level and are likely to be inundated and there is a very real likelihood of the grid going down. Are you aware of that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Obviously a significant flooding event can lead to a loss of power as it has in Lismore, so that is not an unreasonable statement.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are you aware as well that as the flood level happens, lower levels of the Powerhouse are inundated and there is a very real concern, even apart from flood increase, of moisture getting into the collection and damaging the collection throughout the building? Are you aware of that concern?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I do not agree with the contention about lower levels of the Powerhouse because, as I have said, it is above the one-in-1,000-year flooding line. In terms of the moisture concern, I am not, as I am sure you are aware, Mr Shoebridge, a flooding or climate expert in terms of museums.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But you do know that museum collections have to be held in carefully climate-controlled—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Of course, and the emergency power supplies will be above any possible flooding level.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: According to the material provided for the development application and cited by Molino Stewart, they only have the capacity to run for 10 hours after which the air conditioning is down, the lifts are down, and once the collection is isolated and surrounded by floodwaters it will inevitably start being negatively impacted. How are you letting that happen?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I guess I would say this: If the sort of significant and overwhelming flooding event to which you are referring happens in Parramatta, it will be a massive impact on the geographic heart of Sydney.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So why add to it by putting one of the most precious collections of our industrial heritage smack in the middle of a flood plain next to a river you know will flood? Why add to it?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is on top of a hill.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: There are two points to make on that. The first is we are putting the museum in the centre of Parramatta because we believe in access. We believe it is incredibly important that cultural institutions are able to be accessed by the public. That implies there needs to be very good transport links to those museums.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There are plenty more flood-proof sites around Parramatta that the community would have rallied around, but you stuck it next to the river, right in the flood zone.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The river is the heart of Parramatta and we believe the heart of the community is the appropriate place for an extraordinary, significant cultural institution for western Sydney to go. The second point is in terms of the collection itself. A significant amount of the collection will, in fact, not be stored in the museum but will be at Castle Hill, which is not going to be flood-prone.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are you saying that what will be at Parramatta is expendable?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, I am not saying that at all, but I admire you and your gumption.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am only troubled for the collection, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, my colleague Ms Sharpe was asking you questions about Cabbage Tree Island. It is only one of a series of Aboriginal communities that have been impacted but, first of all, what, if any, temporary housing is the New South Wales Government arranging for Cabbage Tree Island itself? And I know you are not the deliverer of these services, Minister, but you have an important coordination role.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, absolutely. Obviously, we have established, as you know, 14 recovery centres across the State to deal with, firstly, short-term housing needs as well as a range of other—the recovery centres are actually incredibly important because they bring together a range of government agencies in terms of both accommodation, clean-up—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But I am asking about temporary housing on Cabbage Tree.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I get that, but there will be people listening who it is important to get some information out to, too, so I encourage people to go to those recovery centres. I know that you are talking about the importance of accommodation. Obviously, this needs to be done in a whole-of-government way. The Cabbage Tree Island residents are currently predominantly at Camp Drewe at Lennox Head and at the Ramada at

Ballina. The Government has provided a range of support schemes for the community broadly, including a rental support scheme providing 16 weeks' rental support.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Except there are no rental spots. There are no rental houses, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, I understand.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Let's be real about that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand that, obviously, housing is a challenge, which is why we are also providing a range of other options in terms of, for example, extending the temporary housing program to allow people to stay on their own land if they can—and I know that on Cabbage Tree Island they cannot—through temporary pod dwelling or supplying temporary accommodation through mobile motorhomes and so forth. But in terms of the specifics of what is happening on Cabbage Tree Island, I will pass to Lil, who might be able to give us some further information.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In terms of the provision of urgent, temporary housing on Cabbage Tree Island, so people can come back into their community rather than spend 16 weeks at the Ramada.

LILLIAN GORDON: Thank you, Minister. That will need to be scoped out, Mr Shoebridge. What is happening at the moment is that, in terms of Cabbage Tree Island itself, a number of elements have been happening in terms of understanding what has occurred there, what is the contamination and what is actually happening from that perspective. We are currently working with the families certainly around temporary accommodation, as you know. We really need to understand what is the long-term approach that we have for Cabbage Tree Island in terms of either families returning and, if that is not possible, where will that happen from that perspective. That is currently being scoped.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it the intention—and I thought I heard the Minister clearly say this—to re-establish the community at Cabbage Tree Island? The discussion about relocation that Ms Gordon was putting forward seems to contradict your position, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Could I make two points, Mr Shoebridge. I will answer your question definitively: Yes, if that is what the community wants. But you made a comment before about what are we doing about establishing temporary accommodation on Cabbage Tree Island.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: On site, yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The most important thing is making sure it is safe, and there is significant potential contamination on the site. I am very sympathetic, as you know, to connection to country, and if we can possibly do it we will, but we need to make sure that the land is safe to live on first.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, finally, you would acknowledge—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am happy to.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —wouldn't you, that in some of the most severe flooding places, Lismore town centre as well, it is the Bundjalung community, the First Nations community, that have been the most exposed because of financial circumstances, often being the community that is in the most flood-exposed housing without insurance and they have been hit hardest. Do you accept that that is actually part of the challenge here and that there needs to be a specific program for First Nations housing?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The short answer is yes; the longer answer is that flood insurance is beyond the capacity for many people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, and many people have lost everything. I am in no way minimising the losses to Aboriginal people; I will be focusing on that. Yes, there should be and there will be a specific program to assist Aboriginal people, but I want to make clear the devastation that has been across the community.

The CHAIR: For everyone's information, we will split the time evenly until we get to the break. We have about 22 or 23 minutes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, I will return to the Powerhouse Parramatta for a few more questions. Ms Havilah has confirmed there has been no revision or reassessing of the flood management plans since the three major incidents of 2020, 2021 and 2022. Is the Powerhouse management still adhering to the shelter-in-place strategy—that, in fact, if floodwaters rise too high at the museum site, are they adhering to the shelter-in-place strategy?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I will hand to Ms Havilah.

LISA HAVILAH: As part of the final stages before we occupy the museum, there will be a whole range of operational management plans in place, and that will include how to respond to any localised flood event.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Previously, when asked, you maintained that the shelter-in-place strategy is the approach that the museum would take at Parramatta in case of a flood. Are you telling me that that is now under review?

LISA HAVILAH: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sorry, but, with respect, that is not what she said; what she said was that, obviously, the strategy before the museum opens will be determined and that will be part of that strategy.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you aware that the SES advises, as part of its official policy, that you should not shelter in place with large structures like this?

LISA HAVILAH: All operational plans that we will develop for the museum will align with localised policies, so I am sure it will adhere.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you also aware that the SES has expressed concern that it is impossible to evacuate 5,000 people from the museum within nine minutes, as required?

LISA HAVILAH: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Mr Secord, I appreciate what you are doing and I appreciate the concern, but the ground floor is above the one-in-1,000-year flood line. I really think that a drum is being beaten here, which I do not believe is going to happen and I think it is causing concern and consternation for the community when none should exist.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Havilah, how does insurance work for the Powerhouse Museum? Who pays for insurance? How is it determined? How does it occur?

LISA HAVILAH: We pay for insurance through our operating budgets, and things like our collection have regular valuations.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is the value of the collection?

LISA HAVILAH: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But you would understand that most cultural institutions, from memory, are actually insured by the Treasury Managed Fund, and then there is reinsurance that could be—through the Minister to Mr Coutts-Trotter, are you familiar with how insurance works for major cultural institutions?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: No, I am not. I made the mistake of looking as if I did.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My understanding is Insurance for NSW manages it through the Treasury Managed Fund, which is ultimately paid by taxpayers.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: That is right, but the details of how risk is quantified and paid for I would have to take on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Havilah, has there been any discussion or re-evaluation in the area of insurance at the Parramatta Powerhouse site taking the three consecutive major flooding incidents at the site?

LISA HAVILAH: No, because the ground floor of the museum is above a one-in-1,000-year flood level and each of those events, as the Minister has outlined, would not have impacted the ground floor of the museum.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The three incidents that have occurred have had no impact on the insurance arrangements for the Parramatta Powerhouse site?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, that is true—well, they would not have impacted the ground floor of the museum.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, I take you to the Lismore floods and the Lismore Regional Gallery. I understand that there has been some damage there. Have Create NSW or your colleagues investigated or provided any assistance to the Lismore gallery?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Absolutely. I visited the gallery within days of the flood to meet with Ashley, who, as you would be aware, is the director, and the former director Brett Adlington. We have immediately provided conservatorial support. All items from the permanent collection have now left and have gone to predominantly Queensland in order to see what can be conserved. Brett Adlington was the former director of the gallery and is now the head of Museums & Galleries of NSW. He sent me a photo last Wednesday saying,

"I'm just forwarding an image here of the team at the gallery celebrating the end of the process removing all affected artworks from the gallery and museum for the next stage of assessment. I just want to express my deep appreciation for your prompt support in ensuring this could happen. It was a huge job and could only have been achieved with expert assistance."

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What was the scale of the damage to the collection? I heard reports that the entire collection had been impacted upon.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Absolutely it has. Mr Secord, everyone assumed that the flood level was not going to go above the first floor and so everyone moved their—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But you are saying the same thing about the Powerhouse Parramatta.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, I know.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You are using the same argument and we saw the tragic circumstances on the North Coast.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I appreciate that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: We said we are not going to have more than a one-in-1,000 incident. Then it occurs and afterwards everyone scrambles and says, "I wish we had known."

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I think that there should be—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The reason why they are different is because the highest flood ever in Parramatta was still significantly below two metres below the ground floor. Even if you did have the same unprecedented action in Lismore, it still would not have reached the ground floor in terms of the comparison between the highest level. But I do think it is important to reinforce the message about the gallery. You asked specifically what has happened with the collection. The short answer is we do not know. That is why we sent it immediately with conservators to a range of different areas, predominantly in Queensland, to see what can be salvaged, what can be saved. I am hopeful that there will be a reasonable amount that can be saved and we will do everything we can in order to support that.

With regard to the museum, extraordinarily because of the height of the ceiling and the ground floor the overwhelming majority of the collection was on the first floor, and because it must be on a slight hill or something it did not actually get to the first floor of the museum, which is incredible. Most of the museum's collection was saved. But I have been working closely with Arts Northern Rivers. I have immediately authorised small grants to be distributed through Arts Northern Rivers to affected artists and creatives as well as a larger set of grants to go to institutions who need it in order to receive support. That is obviously only the beginning; there is much more to be done.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, I keep getting representations and concerns about the Parramatta Powerhouse. There is still a belief or a hope in the community that a different site could be utilised. Is that decision done and dusted?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is done and dusted.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is going to go at that site?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Absolutely.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Despite the three consecutive years of flooding that is it; it is going there no matter what?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Correct.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you. Minister, back to the Lismore gallery. Are there other cultural institutions that have been impacted upon on the North Coast?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Absolutely.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is the status of those? Could I also take you to any impact in western Sydney on any galleries or cultural institutions that were impacted in the western Sydney floods?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure. There are a range of cultural institutions that have obviously been impacted in Lismore. The conservatorium, for example, lost all instruments that were on site at the con. Thankfully they do have strong enough insurance that they are able to replace those, but what will not be replaced under that

insurance are the instruments that were lost from individuals, particularly children. The conservatorium is launching immediately a drive in order to have people be able to donate to support instruments being returned to those children. I also acknowledge both the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Opera House for the support they have given this process and helping with those instruments.

As you would be aware, NORPA is, I would contend, one of the best regional performing arts organisations in the country. It was devastated on its ground floor. It was torn apart. I have met and spoken with Julian Louis, who is obviously an incredibly impressive creative leader in his own right. We are talking about what needs to happen in terms of the long-term viability of the Lismore City Hall and that institution. Thankfully the water there only got up to a couple of centimetres onto the first floor into the theatre. That meant that a range of the technical equipment—almost the entirety, I should say—was saved. We are hopeful that the theatre will actually be able to be operational within two or three months. We are looking at potentially holding a number of concerts and events there, which is really the heart of that community, to send a message that things are starting to happen again. You would have seen those extraordinary photos from the library, where two storeys' worth of books which were waterlogged were being thrown out the windows. I again acknowledge the support of John Vallance, the State Librarian, who has offered his assistance in providing support for replacements and so on.

But, Mr Secord, it is a story across the region. You go to Mullumbimby and you see Spaghetti Circus, which is the circus arts organisation training young people across the entire region. Of course, it is not just about the circus; it is about bringing young people together and supporting them. Alice Cadwell there does an incredible job with hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of local kids. She told me on the phone a few days ago that she had an 11-year-old turn up three, four days in a row and stay there for hours and hours and hours every day just because she said that was one of the most meaningful things that she had ever done in her life and she wanted to be a part of it. There is so much destruction and so much difficulty here, but to see the teams of volunteers turning up at the gallery, the con, the museum, NORPA, the Spaghetti Circus and so many other institutions gives you hope that the community will rally and come together, and that they will rebuild. But I do not want to understate the extreme challenge of the rebuild that is going to have to happen.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Since you have become Minister, have you investigated or familiarised yourself with the number of staff departures that have occurred at the Powerhouse?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, I am not aware of that, I am afraid.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Through you to Ms Havilah—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, of course.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Havilah, how many staff have departed the Powerhouse since you have become CEO?

LISA HAVILAH: I would have to take the exact numbers on notice, but I can tell you that it is 3 per cent of our staff over three years. Normal staff turnover is around 10 per cent, so it is a lot less than that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is good news.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Most of those departures have been at the director level, is that correct—director of collections, director of public engagement, CFO, director of the Parramatta project? Yes, it may be 3 per cent, but it is in fact at the senior levels of the organisation.

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, we have had changes at the senior level, but it is my job to make sure that we have the best talent to deliver the renewal project, which is a really exciting project. It is my job to make sure I have the right team to collaborate with to deliver that project.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: When you say that you want to have the best people in those positions, did those individuals leave themselves or did you encourage them to leave?

LISA HAVILAH: I would have to—it is a combination of changes of requirement in terms of the delivery of the project. Some people have moved on to other roles, so it would be a combination of those things. I would be happy to detail each one.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: If you could take that on notice, thank you. You used the figure 3 per cent of the organisation. However, that 3 per cent is actually disproportionate in the director level. Would that be, in fact, a complete cleaning out or replacement of the senior levels of your organisation?

LISA HAVILAH: No.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How does that 3 per cent translate into the directorships? Is that half of the directors? Is it all of the directors? Is it just one or two?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I think, Mr Secord, Ms Havilah has said—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You know where I am trying to go with this here.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, we understand. I guess I would jump in and say that Ms Havilah has already made clear she is happy to detail the specifics of these questions and take them on notice. I would have thought that is the logical thing to do.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, since you have taken over the reins, so to speak, have things at the Sydney Symphony Orchestra settled down? Are things back to regular programming? Maybe you would like to come as a witness, Don.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is that your next inquiry?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I assume that you are talking about the—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The departure of—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: —temporary relocation to the Sydney Town Hall to allow for the completion of the upgrade of the Concert Hall—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, no.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: —which I am delighted to note is due for completion this year. I just want to acknowledge the extraordinary leadership of Louise Herron in this space.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You can tell me a bit about that—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Point of order: Sydney Symphony Orchestra is actually an independent arts company. It is unclear from the honourable member's question what he is actually asking about and whether he is actually asking about something that the Minister has portfolio responsibility for.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Which is why I assumed, Mr Harwin, that we were talking about the upgrade of the Concert Hall, which is within the portfolio responsibilities.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Indeed. It was quite a reasonable answer.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Well, I think it is also reasonable—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: But the Hon. Walt Secord then indicated that that was not what he was seeking at all. I just think the honourable member should be clear about what he is asking.

The CHAIR: Indeed. In relation to the point of order, let us hear the question and the Minister can answer it as he sees fit.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I think it is appropriate that I ask questions about the leadership of the organisation, considering that it receives substantial taxpayer contributions,

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That was not the question you asked, Walt. If you want to ask a question about that, ask it. You have not actually asked the question. That is the problem.

The CHAIR: I have ruled on this. Mr Secord can continue with the question and the Minister can answer as he chooses. We are done with this. Mr Secord, you can ask the question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I want to know if you have investigated the concerns earlier involving the senior leadership of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, considering there are substantial taxpayer contributions to the organisation. Thank you, Mr Harwin.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand the question, thank you. As my predecessor, friend and extraordinary Minister Don Harwin said, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra is obviously an independent organisation. Any of those matters, Mr Secord, including staffing and internal issues, are a matter for the organisation's board.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Now you would also be aware that there was a matter relating to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the allocation during the construction delays of the Sydney Opera House. Have you brought yourself up to speed in regard to that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am aware of what you are talking about, yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, and if Ms Herron could add anything to you answer.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: What is the question?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The question is: Have you brought yourself up to speed on what has happened, and what has happened with the \$5 million allocation and the delays involving the Sydney Opera House?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure. I guess I would make a few comments here. The Government reserved two \$5 million payments as financial support to the orchestra for financial impacts, as you say, due to the closure of the Concert Hall in 2021 and 2022. The funding was to compensate the SSO for losses, financial losses, associated with that temporary relocation. Now that funding was subject to a number of conditions, including as to the number of weeks per annum that the SSO would occupy the Concert Hall when the SSO returned to the Concert Hall in the Opera House. In July 2020 the Government provided the first \$5 million to the orchestra as payment.

Then the orchestra subsequently sought an additional support of a second \$5 million payment from the Government. Create NSW then consulted with PwC to assess the financial position of the orchestra. Data provided by the orchestra on 30 April last year showed that its net profit for 2020 was \$7.9 million, while its forecast of net assets and cash balance at 31 December last year was \$8.8 million and \$14.9 million respectively. The forecast provided by the orchestra in August of last year showed that net assets and cash balance had further strengthened by the end of the year and that their net assets and cash balance forecast at the end of the year had improved by \$1.2 million and \$2.2 million respectively.

Those improvements in the financial position of the orchestra were a result of a number of factors, including the fact that the orchestra discontinued performances during a substantial period of the pandemic, obviously. As you would know and be aware, Mr Secord, because of your long and deep experience in the arts and genuine love for it, when performing arts companies do not perform it is common that their financial position actually does improve since obviously they do not incur the costs of performances.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, I understand that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Based on these improvements and the financial position, the Government decided not to provide the additional \$5 million to the orchestra, thinking that that money could be better spent in other places that needed it more. We have a duty in providing financial support to organisations in the community to assist those who need it most. In this case, based on the financial assessment and the advice that we received, we did not believe that the extra payment—the second payment of \$5 million—was required. I do not know if Ms Herron wants to add anything further.

LOUISE HERRON: Mr Secord, I think I need to swear that I am going to tell the truth too because I have not done that yet.

The CHAIR: You will have done it at a previous estimates, so you are okay.

LOUISE HERRON: At a previous estimates? Okay, good—and I will.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You always do, Ms Herron. You always do.

LOUISE HERRON: I will tell the truth.

The CHAIR: Thank you for confirming.

LOUISE HERRON: Mr Secord, I just wanted to correct one part of your question, which was that you said that the funding related to delays to the Concert Hall. That is not correct; the answer that the Minister has given is correct. There has not been any question of funding as a result of the COVID-related five-month delay to the reopening of the Concert Hall.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, thank you. I just want to go back to the flooding issue and just try to get a bit more specific information. You gave us some general information in the last round of questioning. For example, the 120 motorhomes that are going north, do you know how they are going to be allocated? Is Cabbage Tree, for example, going to get any of them? I do accept that this is a very big problem, but we get a lot of announcements about the 120 motorhomes. Who is going to get them? Who is eligible for them? How do people, if they really need one, get one?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand. I obviously do not know the specifics of the details of the motorhome allocation, since it is not in my portfolio. I am happy to take that on notice, Ms Sharpe, unless Ms Gordon has anything further to add, but I do have some further information which I have been provided about support, which I would like to give you, if that is okay?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Aboriginal Affairs NSW is represented on the State Recovery Committee and there are multiple subcommittees that are coordinating and working through all response and recovery efforts, including short- and longer term housing, health and wellbeing donations funding, agriculture and so forth. The State recovery effort works in lock step with regional and local recovery committees. These are pathways for communities to get help with whatever urgent needs they have, including the resupply of materials and so forth. The housing strategy taskforce, through Brett Whitworth, is meeting today, that is 15 March, on the short-to-medium term housing options. This includes discussions with the local Aboriginal land council, which is looking at a site near Wardell for a demountable village for temporary accommodation, and similar solutions are being looked at for other communities. That is the most up-to-date information I have to hand at the moment.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is very helpful, thank you. Is an assessment being done on insurance coverage of the houses that have been lost?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I will pass to Mr Coutts-Trotter on this.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, there is.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do we have a sense of how many are uncovered?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: You mean all houses lost in the area?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: There, of course, is the old, very nuanced debate about the difference between flood damage and rain damage, riverine and precipitation, but the expectation is 5 or 10 per cent coverage, but it has not been confirmed.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, is that 5 or 10 per cent coverage for all of the houses that have been assessed, or which houses are we talking about?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: We are talking about housing generally, so very low levels of coverage against this event.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, very low.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Which is going to be an ongoing issue, obviously, and going to get worse.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Correct. Minister, there have been a lot of numbers flying out the door about how much money is being provided and for what. Where are we at in terms of funds allocated from the State for rebuilding? Are there any so far?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The secretary might want to correct me, but I do not know that we have even started that process yet because we have to have a full assessment of what is actually needed or required. The critical-urgent at the moment is to get people into safe short-term and medium-term accommodation, and we will need to have a full and holistic look at all communities to work out what needs to happen, and that may require some challenging conversations. Mr Coutts-Trotter might want to add to that.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: In summary, Ms Sharpe, more than \$1.1 billion is currently committed. Some of that is committed to rebuild in relation to small businesses, primary producers, not-for-profit organisations—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, I am just talking specifically about housing.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I understand that a large chunk of that will be the 16 weeks, which is very needed, but obviously not—

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: No, but within that as well, of course, is some of the clean-up. The State and Commonwealth governments cover the clean-up costs for homes. That does not encompass major refurbishments or rebuild and, as the Minister said, there is work underway through the coordinated recovery mechanism to identify what is needed and put further options to Government.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I wanted to ask you about regional youth.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What do you see as your role in relation to urban young people?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is not a question I was expecting, Ms Sharpe, in all of our practice sessions. My fundamental focus has to be on regional young people, because that is obviously the job, and when

you look at a range of different statistics you see that there is a significant difference between young people in the regions and young people who live in the cities. For example, early school leavers are—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that is great, but clearly there is no—and this is not your choice—youth Minister, there is only a regional youth Minister, so you see your remit as being regional youth only?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, but obviously the functions in terms of the broader youth agencies fall under the Minister for community services, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, so she deals with those issues in terms of urban youth per se. But I was not trying to filibuster. The point that I was trying to make before is that there is a ministry for regional youth because of the significant difference in everything from health issues to educational outcomes to employment opportunities between urban and regional youth, a deleterious comparison, and so that means that we need to focus on regional youth in order to close that gap as well as the other gaps that we are trying to close across my portfolio.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You have recently re-announced the money for the New South Wales Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery initiative.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is \$10.3 million. Is that correct?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That was originally announced in September last year, but the funding round has just opened now. Is that correct?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The funding round has opened, that is correct. It opened on 9 February and will stay open until 31 December this year or until funds are fully expended, and it will leverage the work of the regional youth community coordinators and will partner with a range of other organisations, like councils, joint organisations, government agencies, not-for-profits, Aboriginal land councils and so on, to fund projects that improve the wellbeing and health of young people. I am happy to go into this in detail if you would like me to, but—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have got the criteria, I am just trying to understand some of the breakdowns.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure. Basically eligible projects could include community events or social activities, sport and recreational programs with a focus on improving mental health and wellbeing, training, cultural and connection programs, particularly for Aboriginal people, digital resources and so forth. Particularly now, after what we have experienced on the North Coast but also in other regions, the Central Coast and so forth, through the flood, this is actually the perfect time to have this sort of program. In terms of the announcement, I do not know, I will throw to Julia—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, that is okay.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Okay. The answer is that it was announced that we were going to do it in September and then when it actually opened, that is when I announced that it was—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You re-announced it, that is okay.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Well, I announced that it was open and encouraged people to apply.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You re-announced it, but that is fine.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You want to shine a light on it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Given the grants record of this Government, I am quite happy that it has even been announced, so that is quite good. Congratulations, Minister, on that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Thank you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Fund transparency, that is excellent. So there are three streams of grants. There are large grants of \$10,000 to \$50,000 for regional New South Wales, there are smaller grants of \$10,000; and then there are larger grants for flood and impacted regions. Is that correct?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: My understanding is that there are two streams of grants. There are smaller grants up to \$10,000 and larger grants from \$10,000 to \$50,000, but I might throw to Ms Ryan to give you some details.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The reason I am asking is because some of these are actually metropolitan LGAs, hence the questions about your role in Regional Youth.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Understood.

JULIA RYAN: Just in terms of the large grants, which are for storm- and flood-affected areas, the funding we received for that was through the 2021 storm and flood recovery funding package. So we have made eligible any storm- and flood-affected LGAs, and some of those were in fact in greater metro Sydney. So we are definitely open and encouraging those councils to apply for the wellbeing funds in the storm allocation of the funding.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What proportion of the \$10.3 million funding is it?

JULIA RYAN: Sorry, that is for metro, or that is for storm and flood?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: For both.

JULIA RYAN: The \$3.6 million was allocated for flood and storm.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Over two years.

JULIA RYAN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is for all of New South Wales that is flood affected. I am just trying to get a breakdown of how much is going to go to metro and how much is going to regional in the first instance.

CHRIS HANGER: I would jump in and just say the grants are still open, but what we will do is we will take it on notice with feedback on grants that have been approved to date.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Great.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, so there is not an allocation for metro and for regional. I presume that the assessments come in as the applications come in, and then each application is assessed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it more Government, Opposition, crossbench? Is that more the categories?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, no, of course not.

JULIA RYAN: There is a cap, a maximum amount, for each LGA, but there is no minimum amount.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: But we can get you more information on that, Ms Sharpe. It is a very valid question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I will have more questions this afternoon.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is an important question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, your portfolio capacity as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, there are only really two Acts: the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the Aboriginal Languages Act.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could I ask you in the last 12 months, and maybe you have the figures for calendar year 2021, how many Aboriginal land claims were made—sorry, were successfully concluded—in those 12 months?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Right. So I do not know that I have the numbers for the last 12 months but I can tell you as at 28 February this year how many have been granted, refused and are incomplete.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is in total—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In total.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —over the history of the Act?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In total over the history. Is that helpful, or would you like me to drill down to—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Well, why don't we start there?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: All right, and I might ask if we can get that specific information, if we are able to, for the year—the calendar year—which I do not think I have in front of me. So there have been 54,045 land claims made, 3,609 have been granted, 10,079 have been refused, and 39,435 are incomplete and undetermined at this point.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can anybody—there are only these two Acts in the department so it was pretty obvious—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, but you—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You have been asking about a range of things that are not anything to do with the Act so I do not think it is fair to say these are the only things I need to know about. I am not trying—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, I am not pointing to you—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Okay.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —because these are detailed figures that you probably should know in the broad, but I am not going to expect you to have them in the back of your head. But somebody here at the table should be able to tell me how many land claims were finalised last year.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Somebody must actually know this portfolio.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, I mean, obviously—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, but he should know.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Okay.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, but you know that Aboriginal land claims are determined jointly by the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Lands and Water, and not by me. But, nonetheless, we are endeavouring to get that information for you. So, Mr Shoebridge, we will take that on notice and we will try to get that information for this afternoon.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, 3,000 in the entirety of its operation since 1983, which is the better part of 40 years, 3,600 claims have been determined but there are more than 10 times that outstanding.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The last time I did the numbers it was going to take roughly 400 years to actually resolve outstanding land claims. Do you have any idea of how long it will take to resolve those 39,000-odd land claims?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I want to make it clear right now that we are on the same page on this. It is absolutely unacceptable that this number of land claims is outstanding. I will be doing—even though, as I have made clear, I do not have legislative responsibility—I am an important stakeholder in this and I, obviously in terms of the Act and in terms of the responsibility for the registrar and so forth, have an important role. I accept absolutely the premise of your question. In terms of what we are doing to try to speed this up, I would point to four key things that I have already tried to give significant focus to. You will obviously accept that I have only been in the role for less than three months and this is a—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, I am not blaming you for the 39,000.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Indeed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Maybe just for the 435 that have come in during the last 12 months.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, all right. So the first point is that we have established a task force to improve the operational processes involved with making and determining land claims. Aboriginal Affairs NSW and Crown Lands recently met with—for the benefit of Hansard, I will say NSWALC, which is the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, for future reference and they are okay with that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And the registrar, Nicole Courtman, is here and you can ask specific questions of her, if you would like to, of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to establish this task force to improve the operational processes associated with making a determining land claim. So the point of that is to make sure

that there is no clunkiness in the system or administrative procedures that are holding things up and try to smooth that. The registrar can talk further today, if you would like to hear that. The second point is we need to obviously assess claims more quickly. Crown Lands needs to work through the individual land claims as quickly as possible.

I am advised that they have allocated additional resources to the assessment of claims in order to speed up the assessment process. They have also worked on cleaning up the—or sharpening, I should say—the claims assessment process itself. The third point is that we need to prioritise the Aboriginal land claims that local land councils want prioritised. To that end, Crown Lands, I am advised, is working closely with Aboriginal land councils to prioritise claims in order to expedite the process and to particularly enable bulk claims to be determined, including obviously in situations where multiple claims have been placed over lands.

That, I should also say, is part of that figure of 39,000. There will be multiple claims over the same portion of land, which will inflate that figure. I am not saying that is justified; I am just adding that in for context. Obviously, when you are determining bulk claims, potentially that can be done through Aboriginal land agreements. Fourthly, and finally, we are providing Aboriginal land councils more access to information on land claims in the area, which is critically important.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Right.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sorry, I am trying to be meaningful here. Crown Lands data will be available in a stage two release of ePlanning's local Aboriginal land council portal imminently. The data will be updated weekly and will include Aboriginal land claims' extent and status, Crown parcels, roads, waterways, reserves and tenures. LALCs will only be able to view claims in their area. The portal will also include information on biodiversity, hazards, planning instruments and public places.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: All right. So, Minister—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —if I was to go back to the stakeholders that have contacted me and asked for these questions and said, "You've got yourself a task force. There's some kind of ambiguous additional resources in Crown Lands. They're talking about the prioritisation"—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And bulk claims.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —"and bulk claims", the direct question that I would get back is, "Well, what's that going to mean in terms of the numbers that are going to be processed? What's that actually going to mean on the ground?" They do not want to hear about a task force. They do not want to hear about nice words from the Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They want to know how many more land claims will be processed next year.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, and you are right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is what I am asking you.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: David, you are right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Sorry—if I was to tell them about a task force—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, I know.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —they would probably bang their head on the table, as would I.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And we will see what happens; I might be joining you. But I have to do what I can do. Clearly, Aboriginal land claims have been increasing each year. The number of outstanding land claims is my understanding and we will have those figures later.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So assume that I am going to ask later this afternoon for the numbers going back five years on all of those figures.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, and we are not trying to hide those or anything.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, as I said, I am not blaming you for where we are, but 12 months from now people will be blaming you for what where we have got to—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —if the numbers have not reversed and there is not a genuine resourcing.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Indeed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you accept at the end of the day it is an historic failure of successive governments to resource land claim determinations and it begins and ends in part with a massive surge of resources to determine the claims?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I do not think it begins and ends with resources. I did make clear in the point that I made that Crown Lands has added additional resources. But I agree with the fundamental tenet of the premise of your question. I note as well that the Crown Land Commissioner has also recommended significant and increased resourcing. So I understand that resourcing is a significant point, and it is certainly a priority of mine. If you are comfortable, I might ask if the registrar has anything further to add on this. Nicole?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Sure. We will probably come back to it this afternoon. But if you have anything specific to add now, please do.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand that.

NICOLE COURTMAN: I am conscious that I have not been sworn as yet.

The CHAIR: You have at previous estimates.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This is the third round. This hearing just never ends.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Like the Powerhouse committee.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: It is like the COVID vaccination; it lasts for a few months.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sort of like a booster.

NICOLE COURTMAN: In terms of the figures that you asked for earlier, I can confirm that in terms of the total number of land claims, it has increased by 1,107 this year. There has also been an increase in the number of land claims granted by the Crown lands Minister. That has increased by 261. There has also been an increase in the number of claims refused by the Crown lands Minister of 161.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So despite all of those changes, Registrar, as I understand it, the backlog increased by 1,107 claims. So there would have been something in the order of 1,500 additional claims made last year. Is that right?

NICOLE COURTMAN: That is about right, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So there were 1,500 made and 400 determined or so. The maths must keep you awake at night, Registrar. Does it?

NICOLE COURTMAN: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It keeps both of us awake at night, to be honest.

The CHAIR: It is now the morning tea break. We will resume at 11.15 a.m.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back everybody. We will continue our questions with the Opposition.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Madam Chair, with your indulgence and in consultation with Mr Shoebridge and Mr Borsak, I will probably ask a couple of questions to the Art Gallery of NSW and maybe one to the Opera House and, if they do not mind, they could be discharged in the afternoon session. I understand there are board papers and things to deal with.

The CHAIR: Sure.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is with the concurrence of Mr Borsak and Mr Shoebridge.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I thank you for that, Mr Secord. That is very generous.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is not a deal yet. On that matter, maybe you could update us on the Sydney Modern Project and what is happening with it, including targets, signposts, deadlines, dates and financials?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I will ask Mr Brand to come in, but I will give some initial information. Obviously everyone is aware of the \$344 million transformation of the Art Gallery, known as the Sydney Modern Project. I had the privilege of touring the Sydney Modern with both the director and the chair just last week, in

fact. It involves the construction of a new state-of-the-art building north of the existing gallery building, as you would know, revitalising the existing building and having extensive outdoor landscaping work done. I am incredibly excited about the project because it will inject, the estimates are, a billion dollars into the New South Wales economy over 25 years, including the creation of 242 full-time jobs.

It will double the exhibition space to show more of the State art collection, and will enable New South Wales to host more exhibitions from Australia and around the world. It will grow visitation to the Art Gallery of NSW to more than two million people per year. The construction commenced in 2019 and it remains on track to be completed late this year. I will throw to Mr Brand for specifics, but I did want to make two particular points. The first is the importance and the success of the Dine and Discover vouchers, which have enabled the community to access the gallery to see the world-class exhibitions, art gallery memberships, meals and so forth. Over 50,000 vouchers were redeemed. I think that is really important in terms of COVID recovery.

The second is that, in terms of the Sydney Modern itself, one of the things I am most excited about with not only my role as Minister for the Arts but also Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is that when you walk in, the first gallery that you will see in a massive space will be a gallery for Indigenous art. It is so important that is front and centre for the experience of both locals and visitors alike. I am glad it is being given the prominence that it deserves. Mr Brand, you might like to add some extra details.

MICHAEL BRAND: Thank you, Minister. Also, I have testified here before, so I have taken an oath before. I think you have covered the essential parts very clearly. Perhaps I will just add, as I think you are all aware, it is a public-private partnership, with \$244 million from the State of New South Wales and a target of \$100 million raised privately. That is a target which we have met. As the Minister said, we are aiming for practical completion of construction in the middle of this year, and then open to the public by the end of the year.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I just want to take you up on one thing. By doubling the exhibition space, does that have a practical spin-off in the sense of being able to host exhibitions from overseas? How does that work?

MICHAEL BRAND: The existing building is about 22,000 square metres of floor space. The new building will have about 17,000 square metres and about—again, I can give you the exact figures later on, but say around 8,000 or 9,000 square metres of display space. Across both buildings we show the collection in certain galleries, and we also have spaces in both buildings for temporary exhibitions. You are correct. This will allow us to show more of the State collection of art, which is very important, but also the quality of the temporary exhibition spaces in the new building is significantly increased. The space where we have just completed our Matisse exhibition, which finished on Sunday night, is about 900 square metres. In the new building, the temporary exhibition space, there is about 1,300 square metres, so almost 50 per cent bigger. The ceiling height goes from 3.6 metres in the existing building to 5.5 metres in the new building. This will allow us to do more ambitious exhibitions and also more ambitious installations or designs of exhibitions.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Would you mind if I made two other quick points about the Sydney Modern, which I think are incredibly important and exciting? The first is that there are going to be much more significantly enhanced digital capacity and capabilities within the new art museum, and this is incredibly important obviously for engaging and having access to regional areas. That online outreach is a critical focus, and I am thrilled that it is being implemented. The second is that the building is going to be the first 6 Star Green Star design-rated museum in Australia, and it will set a new national and international benchmark. Obviously, with my former hat as the Parliamentary Secretary for energy on, it is something that I am very passionate about as well.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, Mr Brand mentioned—or maybe you did—that construction would finish and hopefully doors will be open at the end of the year.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: At the end of the year, yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Which brings me to your earlier comments where you said that the Powerhouse Museum Parramatta was done and dusted at that site. We know that former Premier Mike Baird announced the project in 2014, which is almost eight years ago now.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sorry, back to the Powerhouse?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, back to the Powerhouse. Taking in the point that it is now eight years later, when will construction begin on Powerhouse Parramatta?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Two months ago.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Pardon?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It started in January.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Get out there, Walt.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: When will it be completed?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The completion date? Good question. I will throw to probably Ms Pitman would be a more appropriate person, or Ms Havilah. Ms Pitman, as you would be aware, headed Create Infrastructure and is now the interim head of both Create NSW and Create Infrastructure, brought together under one body, so she is intimately familiar with all the time lines and so forth. In terms of the current completion date, I will throw to Ms Pitman.

ANNETTE PITMAN: Lendlease was appointed as the main builder in September of last year. It is responsible for the detailed design and construction of Powerhouse Parramatta. As you know, Lendlease is a well-established, Australian-based company. It took possession of the site in January and commenced its work. It will progress its construction work through the next year and a bit, and our target for completion of the project is by the end of 2024.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So construction began in January 2022. What actually began at that stage?

ANNETTE PITMAN: Lendlease has been doing some of its site establishment works and preparing the site, getting everything settled, and it has been doing its tendering internally et cetera and progressing the design at the same time.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Because it obviously needs to start with bulk excavation and earthworks because it starts putting pillars and bricks in the ground.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Did the recent flooding incident impact on the construction work that began in January 2022?

ANNETTE PITMAN: The recent flooding incident?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The recent incident.

ANNETTE PITMAN: I believe Lendlease did request its staff to stay out of the area, but I would have to take the details of the impact of that on notice.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Could I add a couple of points to that?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It has limited the site activities, but design development and procurement activities are continuing to meet the forecast for construction activities, and the forecast program includes allowances for inclement weather. Like all major infrastructure projects, the contractor has made allowances for the effects of wet weather within its delivery program, and the program still remains on track for completion by the end of 2024.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I think you are probably seeing where I am going with this.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Has the flooding of the site been factored into the construction time line?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Inclement weather has been factored in, as it is in all major projects. It continues to be on track to be delivered on time.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But the unique flooding aspects that occur at the Parramatta River, have they been factored in?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I can only repeat what I have said, which is that the contractor has taken into account the likely and potential weather outcomes. I am advised that the recent flooding, in fact, the significant weather events, have not impacted the time line at all.

ANNETTE PITMAN: Every project is its own individual project.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I understand.

ANNETTE PITMAN: And the program for the project is developed based on the individual characteristics of that project, be it the design, the site et cetera. So the program for Lendlease has been considered in relation to the site in question that it is constructing on.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So it has factored flooding of the site into the construction timetable?

ANNETTE PITMAN: It has factored the full site conditions into its planning for construction, of course.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: If you do not know the answer, you can take it on notice and provide it in the afternoon session. I would like to know how much of a buffer it has allocated in the construction for flooding? What is the current completion date for Parramatta Powerhouse?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The end of 2024.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, you would be familiar that some time ago, at the end of October, the ICAC heard evidence that the Riverina Conservatorium of Music \$20 million stage two upgrade would not go ahead. I was delighted to see in yesterday's clippings that you have been announcing something called Music in the Regions. Has that \$20 million that was allocated corruptly to the Riverina Conservatorium of Music been reallocated to other projects?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The whole premise of the question is—sorry, Minister.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: He started to answer the question.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I was going to say exactly that, that obviously the \$20 million did not come from Create NSW. It is not part of Create NSW; it is not part of my portfolio. But you talk about Music in the Regions, and I do want to pick up on that, because that was the brainchild of former Minister Don Harwin. It was an extraordinary program that I launched in Goulburn with the former Minister a couple of weeks ago, which is going to allow classical music to be taken to some of the smallest centres around regional New South Wales and give them the access that I have been talking about that is so critically important, particularly for young people. We had the delightful experience of seeing a young 11-year-old child play a beautiful piano piece at the Goulburn Conservatorium, and that to me exemplified more than anything else why the Music in the Regions program, led formerly by the former Minister and chaired by the inimitable Naseema Sparks, is going to be such a success.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, I want to take you to a question I asked earlier about the Powerhouse Museum and the value of the collection. During the break I actually checked the Powerhouse Museum's annual report, and the value of the collection is \$329 million. Can you bring me up to speed on the digitisation of the collection?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I will have to hand over to Ms Havilah to talk about that if that is okay.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The figure of \$329 million is from your 2020-21 annual report.

LISA HAVILAH: You would like me to—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I want to know about the digitisation and the value of the collection—that kind of stuff.

LISA HAVILAH: As part of the renewal of the Powerhouse, we are undertaking a really exciting project to digitise 338,000 objects from our collection. Our team has been undertaking that project for the past couple of years. We have digitisation studios set up in Ultimo and also we are now doing digitisation works in Castle Hill. We have been focused to date on 3D objects. We have digitised around 65,000 3D objects. We are now moving more into the phase of 2D digitisation. We are planning to wrap up that project at the end of this year. We will have, for the first time, 338,000 additional objects available to the public and to the community, which is really, I think, a very exciting and important part of the renewal project.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I think there are more than 500,000 objects in the collection and you are planning to digitally capture 338,000.

LISA HAVILAH: Prior to that there were already 120,000 digitised.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How much of the collection will be at Castle Hill?

LISA HAVILAH: The collection will be 100 per cent at Castle Hill if it is not being presented at Powerhouse Parramatta or the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo or we also have exhibitions at Sydney Observatory and we also have an ongoing program where we loan collection objects to regional galleries or to national and State institutions, which is part of our responsibility in terms of providing broad access to the collection.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Has there been a revision of what is going to be at Parramatta Powerhouse? There was a proposal, at one point kicked around, for a farmers market there. What happened to that proposal? That was one of the options that was—

LISA HAVILAH: As outlined previously, the plan in terms of exhibitions for Parramatta is that, of course, our collection will be central to those exhibitions and we will tell a whole range of stories through creating exhibitions that are relevant to the communities of western Sydney. Alongside that, we will have a very dynamic program which will include learning programs and digital programs. As you know, we have the academy, which is a 60-bed accommodation where we will bring young people from across western Sydney and regional New South Wales into the museum and provide them these incredible immersive STEM education programs where they will have direct access to industry leaders across STEM, which is a really important component of the learning program. Then, of course, we will have broader programs, like connecting audiences with agriculture and agricultural science. We also have the Vitocco Family Kitchen, which is a 200-seat production kitchen where we will do education programs and a whole range of science education programs which will be connected into the productive rooftop garden. We really take very seriously our responsibility to engage broadly across the community but have a very dynamic, changing program that supports repeat visitation.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How much exhibition space will actually be—

LISA HAVILAH: Eighteen thousand square metres.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: There will be accommodation for schoolkids visiting. I understand there were plans for artistic studios—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Residencies.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Residencies. Is that still going ahead?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, that is a really, I think, exciting part of Powerhouse Parramatta—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is incredibly exciting.

LISA HAVILAH: —where we have 30 residential apartments that the museum will manage where we will bring scientists, researchers, and artists to the museum to collaborate with us but also create an ecology where young people who are in the academy or part of our learning programs can have direct access to research that is being undertaken in the museum.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Have you finalised the very first exhibition that will occur at Parramatta Powerhouse?

LISA HAVILAH: We are in the process now of conceiving and developing our opening exhibition programs. They are under development and they will be under development over the next three years leading up to the launch of the museum at the end of 2024.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I want to go back to the New South Wales Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery grants. There is \$10.3 million and that is jointly funded by the Commonwealth. How much of that is Commonwealth money?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Julia, if you could—

JULIA RYAN: In the \$3.6 million that was allocated as storm and flood funding for 2021, 50 per cent of that is contributed by the Commonwealth.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Right, so \$1.8 million of the \$10.3 million is Commonwealth money.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Is that \$1.8 million of the \$10.3 million or \$1.8 million of the \$3.6 million or both?

JULIA RYAN: Both.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is fine. To be clear, there is \$1.5 million for the small grants which are up to \$1,000. Is that right?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Up to \$10,000.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, up to \$10,000. My apologies.

JULIA RYAN: That is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you tell us how much funding has been put out through that so far?

JULIA RYAN: For the small grants?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes.

JULIA RYAN: We have just approved the first four small grants, but the contracting is underway at the moment so the funds have not been received.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to tell us where they have gone?

JULIA RYAN: Yes. Would you like me to list them?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, please.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is that \$40,000 of \$1.8 million?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, that is a separate bucket. It is out of \$1.5 million. It is \$40,000. Is that right?

JULIA RYAN: Sorry, \$1.5 million is available for small grants.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It only opened last month and it goes to the end of the year. Nonetheless, go through the full grants if that is okay, Ms Ryan.

JULIA RYAN: Read out the recipients?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, please.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Unless there is a reason not to.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I assume you have not done the press release because we have not got it. That is probably why there is some hesitancy.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is probably embargoed with a deed of release.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I would like to know where they are going.

JULIA RYAN: The grants are under contracting at the moment, so it is probably pre-emptory to list them. We would be able to make that available in a short time.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you give us an idea of the locations? I do not necessarily need the specifics.

JULIA RYAN: We have one in the Liverpool Plains, Kyogle, Bellingen, Bega, Northern Tablelands and Wallsend or Newcastle.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is six and you said there were four.

JULIA RYAN: Sorry, there are seven. There was one in Eurobodalla and one in Bega. Did I say that?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How is it that you determine the grants until the closure of the grant round? Is there a merit assessment? How are you determining the grants? Unless you have all of them in front of you.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In terms of the assessment, I will throw to Ms Ryan, but in terms of the time frame, it is until 31 December or until the funds are expended.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you understand the question, Minister? Normally if you open a grants round, it is open for a period of time, you receive in the arts space seven times as many grant applications as there is money, and then you work it out on a merit-based assessment to determine the most—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is one way to do it; another way to do it is the way that I just described, which is that you open it and then you assess grants as they come in on a merit-based process and then, once the dollars are done, the dollars are done. But I will throw to Ms Ryan or Mr Hanger, who might like to go into detail about that because obviously that is done at the departmental level.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But if you do not know what grants are due to come, how do you know that you are prioritising the money where it should go? Anyhow, you can explain this, Mr Hanger or Ms Ryan.

CHRIS HANGER: There are public guidelines that outline how this program is administered that called out very clearly, given that this is a wellbeing program, that the desire is to get funds into those communities to help regional young people or flood-impacted metro young people. If you assess the applications as they come through—and we were very clear that applications, when they come through, will be assessed against the program criteria, a recommendation to the Minister and that assessment process occurs monthly—applicants are able to move quickly to bring forward their projects.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So you are doing it on a monthly tranche basis?

CHRIS HANGER: On an ongoing basis, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it a monthly tranche? You look at the applications in a month, you assess them and then you forward the recommendations to the Minister?

CHRIS HANGER: Yes. Again, remember this program opened on 9 February this year. It takes time for community groups to put applications together and we want to give them that time, but we also do not want to hold them up unnecessarily given particularly some of these flood-impacted communities are now dealing with the floods that we have currently.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Hanger, I understand the process and there is a place for that kind of process when you are dealing with urgent grants like this. Minister, you are the ultimate decision-maker on these grants. Is that right?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Have you read the Auditor-General's review into how the cultural funding grants program worked last time?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You know that the Auditor-General made a series of critical recommendations. Have you implemented those recommendations for this grants round?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I will make a few points. The work that the Public Accountability Committee did was important, and I am absolutely committed to the integrity, efficacy and value for money for all New South Wales grants, including those which are administered under agencies that fall within my portfolio areas. I would expect that all agencies have the highest appropriate standards of integrity when it comes to those grant processes, but I have not spoken specifically to the Office for Regional Youth about this program with regard to the Auditor-General's findings. My integrity is paramount to me and I would always ensure that those processes are done with openness and transparency.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We make systems not for angels but for ordinary human beings, Minister. Do you accept that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I appreciate the implied complement.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am just reflecting back at you what I heard. There are two recommendations that I will take you to from the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General should be part of all grants programs in New South Wales. The first is including:

... minimum mandatory administration and documentation standards including for interactions between ministers, ministerial staff and public servants.

Are those arrangements in place for this grants program?

... minimum mandatory administration and documentation standards including for interactions between ministers, ministerial staff and public servants.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I would hope so. I will ask Ms Ryan if she can comment further. Of course I would hope so.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You would hope so, but the reason the Auditor-General put this in was because it did not exist at the time the Auditor-General completed her report in February this year.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand. Ms Ryan, do you have any comments to make?

JULIA RYAN: We have had probity advice on the process and we have been part of the Auditor-General's review and our departmental systems for grants administration follow the Auditor-General's advice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Sorry, does the probity review say that the recommendations of the Auditor-General as recently as February this year have been incorporated into this grants program?

JULIA RYAN: I would have to look at our probity adviser's advice specifically to that point, but we have had recent probity advice in the last few weeks.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Did you ask for that advice to include a review of the recommendations of the Auditor-General?

JULIA RYAN: I would have to take—

CHRIS HANGER: We will take that specifically on notice, but it is fair to say that programs' design clearly take into account good practice guide, take into account audit reports in regards to how these programs—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not interested in generic statements. I am going to take you to another very specific recommendation of the Auditor-General. Given her caustic findings about how previous grants rounds have happened, I would have thought, Minister, it would be at the front and centre of your work here to ensure that in this grants program—it is just \$1.5 million of public money—those recommendations have been implemented. To be honest, I am not satisfied from the answers that they have been.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Understood. I guess I would say two things. The first is that the Office for Regional Youth has made clear that they will take the specifics on notice. It is clear from Ms Ryan's answer and Mr Hanger's answer that they have considered the Auditor-General's report. Now, I understand—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You must have heard different answers to me because I heard there was a probity report and I know the previous round of funding, that was deeply criticised by the Auditor-General, also had a probity report. So the probity report is not comfort, given what the Auditor-General found, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Understood. They will take the specifics of the question on notice and provide that information to you. The second point I would make is that I am very conscious, in terms of setting up appropriate structures within my office, to ensure that those sorts of structures referred to are in place.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are there arrangements in place for you and your staff to ensure that, if there is any communication about this round of grants funding or any future round of grants funding, those interactions are actually being documented? Minister, is that being captured in your office?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Absolutely.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The way that I fundamentally deal with grants in the less than three months that I have been there is that I will receive a briefing from the department and a suggested allocation—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Recommendation.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: —a recommendation from the experts within the department or often from an appropriate oversight body, and then I will approve that and then it will go back. I cannot think, off the top of my head, of a time where that has not happened, but I might be wrong. But if there is any discussion, to what you say, I am instructed that any of those discussions that do not adhere to those recommendations must be immediately put in writing.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What about discussions between your office and the department if, for example, somebody has approached you and said, "We have put a grant in; we want to know. It is a great grant; we want you to get behind it" or any variation you can imagine of those kinds of conversations from somebody who has a grant in? What arrangements are there to ensure probity in any communications that come from your office and the officers crafting the recommendations?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Obviously if there is a request for information—that is, when are these likely to be announced or whatever—then that is one thing entirely and that would not fulfil the requirements that you are asking about. But if someone was to ring the department to ask about a specific grant, I would expect that that would be noted and documented, absolutely.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, do you have in place specific requirements that require—again, it is another recommendation of the Auditor-General:

... any ministerial override of recommendations to be documented, with transparent consideration of probity and conflict of interest.

Is that part of the grants scheme?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is my expectation. I do not think that that recommendation is an unreasonable recommendation.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it part of the guidelines? Is it in the documentation that the department has about how this grants scheme will be administered?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In terms of those specifics, they have taken that question on notice

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No, not this question. They have not taken this question on notice.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is fine. I would ask them to do that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Surely, if they are bumping things up to you, they need to understand what is going to happen. Mr Coutts-Trotter may know.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I just wanted to add—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You look like you know.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I have misled the Committee before now! But in fairness, the Auditor-General's recommendation, of course, is directed at the Department of Premier and Cabinet recommending that we develop a model for grant administration that is used for all grant programs administered in New South Wales that contain those features. As you would know, there is a review of grants underway at the moment, supported by DPC, involving Peter Achterstraat as the Productivity Commissioner. One of the products of that review will be addressing the recommendations from the Auditor-General's report. Agencies do need some guidance about how to put this into practice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There was a Premier's memorandum previously that everyone ignored.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I will not quibble with that. But your point is a valid one in the sense that there was a Premier's memorandum and it needs to be updated with the results of the grant review that is currently underway.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Or even made mandatory and enforceable.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: That is one of a number of recommendations that have been made by committees or integrity agencies.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Coutts-Trotter, we are effectively 12 months away from the next State election.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You would accept that there is widespread community concern about how grants have been administered to date by the State Government. It has been evidenced there are very real shortcomings, not the least in the Auditor-General's reports. Do you accept that?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: The Government has commissioned a review of grants, supported by DPC, to substantially improve things in light of a series of reports and recommendations.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes—and also, I note, the recommendations from the Public Accountability Committee.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But are you telling me that none of the recommendations in the Auditor-General's report—there is no separate process to try and implement them within agencies under your control until such time as you get a report back from Peter Achterstraat?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: No, but some things are clear and binary.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Well, I am asking about this one: requiring any ministerial override of recommendations to be documented.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: For example, in the WestInvest program, that is a feature of the guidelines and the operation of the grants program. That is very clear.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So why not of this one?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: But you are referring to minimum mandatory administration and documentation standards. That does require some precision and guidance for agencies. There is work to do on that, and it will come out of the grants review.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But in the meantime there could be a requirement that any interactions between the Minister's office and officers working on crafting recommendations to the Minister should be recorded. That does not seem to me that it would take a PhD to say, "You should record those interactions. Let's start doing it now and we will see if we can improve on it after Mr Achterstraat comes with his report."

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I do not disagree, but I am just making the point that there is some guidance that can and should be provided to agencies about how to give effect to that. My colleagues have taken on notice how the grants program you are questioning responds to that and a bunch of other recommendations.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, in the absence of specific direction from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, will you review the guidelines for this particular project in order to ensure those elements are mandatory?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The short answer is yes. The longer answer is I had already made clear that it is my expectation that if I overrode departmental recommendations that I would do that, so that actually—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, can I just stop you there? Mr Shoebridge, do you mind? I have a direct question about this.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I am looking at the assessment and approval process for this grants program. You seem to have a misunderstanding about your ability to override this. It actually states that you are not the signer-offerer.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Okay.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The consent in relation to this—it suggests that it is the regional—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think the problem has been that Mr Shoebridge has been ranging over a range of grant programs.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, we were talking specifically about this—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No, not true.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Well, he has not. He has been going to ones referred to as—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Have you got a point of order or are you just going to interrupt?

The CHAIR: Members will speak one at a time. Is a point of order being taken? There is not. Ms Sharpe, you can continue.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just for clarity, I was asking about this grants program that Ms Sharpe started on.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Correct, which is what pricked up my interest in relation to this—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Can I just—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: But you were referring to other programs which are quite different.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: For clarity, I might just say something. I am advised that the Minister endorses the recommendations.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Does that mean that you can change it?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Well, I would not do that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, but that is not what I am asking. Theoretically, you could change it. These seven grants that we just heard about before will come up to you for signature.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

JULIA RYAN: If I could just clarify?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Please, Ms Ryan.

JULIA RYAN: There is a difference between the small grants application and assessment process and the large grants application and assessment. The small grants are less than \$10,000 and have the ability to be signed off within the department and provided to the Minister for information. The larger grants will come to the Minister for endorsement and approval.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is documentation being put to the Minister for the endorsement of these \$10,000 grants?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Do you mean below \$10,000 or above \$10,000?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Up to \$10,000. Of the seven that you described, Ms Ryan, are they going to go up to the Minister for endorsement?

JULIA RYAN: For information. Those are approved at the departmental level—less than \$10,000. The financial delegation allows that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Alright. It allows for it and that is the process that is in place; is that right?

JULIA RYAN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Does it allow for the Minister to change that, though, even though it is for information?

JULIA RYAN: My understanding is that the Minister could not change those. But, in the event the Minister requested that, we would seek legal advice.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I also would not, by the way. I would not.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You say that now, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, I would not. These are the—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But, Minister, if you are the—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sorry, David, this is actually a really important point.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No, this is why I am going to ask you a question and then you can respond to the question.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Okay.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you are the decision-maker, you have an obligation to test the recommendation and see whether or not you agree with it or disagree with it. You actually have that obligation.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There may be circumstances where you would disagree with it because it is actually your job to test the recommendation.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Which is why the \$10,000 and \$50,000 grants are constructed in that way.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When you say you would not refuse a recommendation—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, I would not refuse a recommendation for lower than \$10,000.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Alright. But I do not say, and I do not think the Auditor-General says—and I do not think Ms Sharpe says—that if you are the decision-maker and you have a recommendation in front of you, you are just a cipher and you just have to approve it.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, of course.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You have to exercise your role as a Minister to determine whether or not you approve it.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Of course. That is why, as I have already agreed with you—even noting Mr Coutts-Trotter's comments, which are appropriate, and of course that there is a broader inquiry into this matter—my view is that if I do disagree with recommendations that come up from a department, a working group or an oversight committee then, as we have already discussed, I should detail my concerns in writing about why I am changing that determination. I agree with you. Of course the Westminster system requires that the Minister must have the final—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am just not quite sure where we are going. Anyway, please keep going.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Where we are going is pretty simple. The Auditor-General has made a bunch of recommendations, two of which seem pretty simple to implement—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And I have agreed with both.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I do not in any way challenge your bona fides. I do not sit here and say you want to go off on a frolic of your own to do X, Y and Z. What I am putting to you is it is not at all clear what arrangements are in place. It is not at all clear what is in the guidelines. It is not at all clear how your decision-making fits into this model, and there has been confusion about it today. I think you have an obligation to sort it out before the program rolls out any further.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure. I would say three things. Firstly, I have given you as clear and definitive an indication in terms of the two recommendations that you have raised about what my position is on

the public record. I do not know that I could have been any clearer than that. Secondly, in terms of the way it is constructed within the department, that question has been taken on notice in terms of responding to the specific issues that you have raised, which will be provided to you. Thirdly, obviously there needs to be some sort of level of umbrella oversight across all of government responding to the issues that have been raised, which is exactly what Mr Coutts-Trotter discussed. That will, of course, be something I will adhere to, along with the rest of the Government.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: With my colleagues' indulgence, I ask a final question in this regard. One of the disturbing features of many grants that were handed down by the Coalition Government in the last few years has been that when the announcement is made to the grant recipient, they are also given a confidentiality agreement that they have to sign, stating that they cannot tell anyone about it until such time as the Government is ready to send a backbencher or a Minister down into the community to announce it in public. Is that at all a feature of these grants rounds, that kind of confidentiality obligation?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That is standard operating practice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I hear the Hon. Don Harwin says it is standard operating practice.

The CHAIR: Let us hear from the Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I look to the director, who says it is not.

JULIA RYAN: Yes. As Mr Hanger mentioned, this is a very early part in our grants process, where our panel will be meeting later this week to assess the first grants, large grants. Once recommendations are made to the Minister, I guess we will offer the opportunity for the Minister to write to the recipients and let them know of the outcomes. That will be how they will be informed of the outcome.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I also do not think, for what it is worth, that it is unreasonable for the Government to announce grants from the Government, as governments have—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You do not think it is unreasonable to put confidentiality requirements and deeds on the recipients of grants?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is just a request to respect an embargo.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is one thing to—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is how the media works all the time.

The CHAIR: Let us hear from Mr Shoebridge, then the Minister.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is one thing to request an embargo; it is another thing to give a successful grant recipient a deed of release, with express legal silencing obligations on it. You do not see the distinction between the two?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand your point. I would just say again that if it is a government grant, I do not think it is unreasonable that is announced by a member of the Government.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, would you be familiar with the Creative Kids program?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I would. Give me one second and I will get to that page. Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can you bring me up to date on Creative Kids? I will then ask you some other questions.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think he wants a Dixer.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sorry?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am sorry; maybe I whispered there. I just wanted you to bring me up to speed on what has happened with Creative Kids.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure, not a problem. I am really happy to.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I think there have been some changes made to the program.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is important too because this is obviously in response to the Active Kids vouchers, which was to encourage young people to be involved in physical activity and sports. There was a cohort of us, me included, who suggested there is perhaps a coterie of young people who are missing out because perhaps they are not as focused on sporting achievements and sporting participation and may get their extracurricular involvement in other ways. Creative Kids then was developed, which is a four-year initiative to

encourage school-age children and young people to participate in creative and cultural activities. What that means is that parents, guardians and carers can claim a \$100 voucher each year to put towards the cost of lessons and fees with registered providers.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What was the take-up? What was the response to that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Since the program was launched in January 2019, parents have downloaded two million vouchers and providers have redeemed 1.49 million vouchers as at a week ago, 9 March. This equates to over \$149 million in savings for families in New South Wales and obviously in support for the arts, creative and cultural sectors.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That \$149 million, does that include sporting endeavours too or is that purely—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, this is just for Creative Kids.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Now there were changes made on or around 1 March. Is that correct?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What were those changes?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Basically, in response to—I will go back a step.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In response to the COVID-19 restrictions across New South Wales, the program was expanded in 2020 to better support distance and digital learning activities when kids could not participate in classes face to face. This includes delivering programs online and also sending physical materials and equipment to families for activities which could be completed at home in lockdowns and so forth. With the continued easing of the COVID-19 restrictions across the State and with children returning to school and face-to-face interactions with other children then permitted, the Creative Kids provider guidelines were amended, as you rightly pointed out, on 1 March. The following changes have been implemented then, which are that all programs that include the supply of creative materials or art kits are ineligible under the updated Creative Kids program.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is where I want to stop, Minister. That is where I wanted to get to.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have had representations from the sector concerning why arts and crafts kits were excluded. What was the rationale behind that? When were people in that sector notified that there would be—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Because it is all about getting kids being involved face to face with creative industries. It is about having an artist or a musician or a drama teacher interacting and teaching, involving kids in the creative pursuits. It is not about providing a packet of crayons from China. This is not a business support package, Mr Secord. It is a cost-of-living package to help families support children to be involved in arts and culture.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Absolutely.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The only reason that those changes were made was through the COVID lockdown process, but we needed to ensure the whole point of the program is to get young people back involved in creative industries again. And, frankly, after the two years that arts providers have had—whether it is musicians or songwriters or drama teachers or artists—they are the ones who research has shown are one of the hardest industries that have been hit. It is them that we want to support as well, not businesses that are making millions of dollars potentially out of sending art packs, which had a place during COVID where it was this sort of—we wanted kids to do stuff at home. But it is not about that. In the same way, it is not about buying a hula hoop for the Active Kids program; it is about getting them to go to soccer lessons.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Absolutely.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I want to take you back to that. You are telling me that arts and crafts kits were removed on—my understanding is that the sector was notified on 28 February that these changes would come in on 1 March. There was widespread disruption, no understanding and they were absolutely perplexed that arts supplies would not come under the Creative Kids program. Can you understand why there was confusion and absolute bewilderment that art supplies would not be included in this program?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I can understand that, but I do not make an apology for that because that was not what the program was about. The program is about supporting young people in having cultural experiences. Frankly, if a business is going to determine its entire structure based on what we know are fluid rules throughout the COVID times then, frankly, that is on them. There have been changes all the time through COVID—to public health orders, to a range of rules and requirements. That is as it should be because this Government is positive, focused, live and fast on the ground in responding to outcomes and situations as they change. That is exactly what we have done here, and I do not make any apologies for it. The money is now going where it needs to go, which is to get kids in front of musicians, in front of singing teachers, in front of drama coaches, in front of artists to actually get a true cultural experience and education.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You are welcome.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, I have one last question. You would be familiar that at the Federal level there is discussion about bringing in 20 per cent local content involving streaming services, involving support for the New South Wales and Australian drama documentary, children's content, co-productions and that. Has Create NSW or the New South Wales Government made any representations on the 20 per cent content suggested?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I might throw to my colleague Kate Foy on this matter, who was complaining to me earlier that this is the quietest budget estimates that she has experienced.

KATE FOY: And I am going to take that on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: There we go.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: So I took that as an invitation, Mr Secord.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: We will change that.

KATE FOY: Thank you, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You are welcome. You may need to take it on notice.

KATE FOY: I am working a bit from memory, but I do recall that we had some conversations about that. We may have made representations. I am sure in the next couple of hours I can get the detail of that for you, Mr Secord.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, how many young people have been involved in the Regional NSW Gap Year initiative?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: There is a lot more focus on regional youth than I thought there would be, and I am excited about that because it is very important.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I wish we were talking about urban youth as well, but that is a different question.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And a different Minister. Let me give you a little bit of context just for information. It was launched in December 2020 in response to rising youth unemployment due to decreased international travel and labour shortages in agriculture, tourism and hospitality in regional New South Wales. So basically what happened is the program consisted of a web presence and social media activities developing this campaign to promote young people, particularly urban young people, working, studying and having lifestyle opportunities in regional New South Wales. It is impossible for us to give the exact numbers of people who have taken it up—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you have a ballpark of how many people did?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, because it is about connecting a young person to a provider, so there is not a portal where they have to go through approval. But I can tell you that the webpage has had 65,876 views since the campaign commenced and last month alone there were over 8,500 page views for the regional gap year main webpage and over 1,000 views for the work information page. We know that the social media campaign promoting the regional gap year has achieved 2.38 million video views with an audience reach of 1.71 million to date.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But you cannot tell us how many young people have gone and done a gap year in regional New South Wales?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, we cannot, and the reason why is because, as I mentioned, this structure connects a young person—and Julia can tell me if I am wrong here, but my understanding is that it connects a young person directly with a provider. It does not go through an overarching portal because we want to make the connections as clean and as efficient as possible. Ms Ryan, would you like to add anything to that?

JULIA RYAN: Yes, I would. I think that is a really good point and the regional gap year was built as a campaign, so really quickly stood up during the early impacts of COVID as a way to promote the idea of travelling in regional New South Wales during COVID when overseas gap years were no longer possible, and also just to give the opportunity to promote a lot of the jobs that were available that were not being filled by incoming overseas workers. So it was really a campaign to connect those different parties and also to connect young people with skills opportunities. So with the Training Services NSW program and also with information about how to write resumes, how to get in touch—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that is terrific; I am just trying to get an idea of how many people have actually done what the campaign was trying to get them to do.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And that is the point, Ms Sharpe—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You cannot tell us.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: We cannot tell you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is okay.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: But we can tell you how popular it has been in terms of—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So the way that you manage success is how many people have viewed the website.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: In terms of the structure, I think that—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is okay. I am just asking the question—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The short answer is yes, because the way that it is structured is about connection.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is there any other measure of success?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is about connection and, of course, there is anecdotal evidence that it is amazing, but you do not get a reach of 1.71 million if the program is not successful.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I would argue that—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: My social media does not get that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: People can look at the media, but whether that actually means that one person went and filled a gap I think is a different question.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Obviously there has been—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is okay. We can move on.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No problem.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I was just trying to understand how many.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am glad that you are interested.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Unions NSW did a report last year into issues for young people and work, and made a range of recommendations. I suspect you probably have not read that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I have not.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, that is okay. My question, though, is that it very much raised issues for regional young people, being labour exploitation, particularly in some industries and some horticulture industries in particular, the use of piecework and skyrocketing ridiculous hostel costs that basically chew into their entire wage. Are you aware of this issue, and what action are you taking to address it?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, that issue has not been brought to my attention formally. Obviously, as a proud resident of regional New South Wales and as someone who has been involved in the regional space for a long time, I have heard some anecdotal stories speaking to the exact issues that you raise. To be honest, Ms Sharpe, having three portfolios that are all quite complex, in less than three months I have not been able to

turn my mind to all issues. But, given the fact that you raise it today, I think it is a valid issue and one that I will ask the Office for Regional Youth to look into and I will do so with my office as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: They also make recommendations about unpaid internships. Where is the Government up to on dealing with exploitation with unpaid internships?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That would not be a matter for my portfolio. I mean that is obviously now getting into the industrial relations space, and so that—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But young people are massive users of internships.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, I get that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Regional young people come to the city to do internships.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You do not see that you have a role in that?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, no, I did not say that; I am just saying that I think that obviously the primary driver for that would be within different portfolio areas, but you are a sensible and reasonable person who makes sensible and reasonable points and this is an issue that I give you the guarantee that I will consider and look into.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My next question is also about the issue of wage theft. This goes again to exploitation in terms of regional workers and young people. Is the issue of wilful and systemic wage theft also something that you will choose to have a look at in your role as Minister for Regional Youth?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: All employment issues for young people are incredibly important to consider. We know that there is a substantial gap between employment opportunities for young people in regional areas and young people in urban areas. The heart of the three issues that you have just raised—I suspect that you accept the premise of that point, but the point that you make in reply is, yes, we need to make sure that they are not exploited, particularly if the challenges are greater. Those points are well made. I have not been involved in that space up until now, but I am happy to give you a personal guarantee that I will look into these issues with my office and I will ask the Office for Regional Youth to consider them as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. I appreciate that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You are welcome.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I want to ask you about your charter letter from the Premier and the issues of the current Premier's Priorities versus the Closing the Gap targets and how they mesh with your charter letter and the prioritisation, particularly within Aboriginal Affairs.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am really glad that you have raised that. I see this as the most important job that I will ever have in my life, and the most important part of the most important job is my involvement in Closing the Gap. The Premier rang me—and the Deputy Premier—to offer me this role, and the Premier told me that he was going to take on the role of Minister for Aboriginal Affairs himself until a few days before the announcement was made because he saw that the role was so critically important and he wanted to place Aboriginal people at the heart of decision-making for the Government. He decided that he could not do that because he would not have the time to give it the focus and attention that the issues required and he asked me, and I am incredibly grateful and humbled that he and the Deputy Premier did.

It was made clear to me from that initial conversation and at every meeting since that one of my fundamental requirements for success in this job is doing all I can to focus on Closing the Gap. To that end the Premier put in the charter letters of a range of portfolio Ministers a requirement to focus on implementing strategies to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and I believe that that is the first time that has ever happened—and of course he has made that clear to me that that is one of my fundamental focuses.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How does that fit with the Premier's Priorities process? Mr Coutts-Trotter might be able to answer—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I mean, I am confused. My understanding of the way in which government has been working is with the Premier's Priorities and pretty much you, as the secretary, force all of the other secretaries through their KPIs and a whole range of processes and the board of secretaries, I think you are called, to basically work to that. I am trying to understand how that dovetails now, and particularly within the

Aboriginal Affairs space, with Closing the Gap. I am fully supportive of Closing the Gap and very pleased that the Government signed up to it. I am just trying to understand how that drives priorities within government.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Sure. So the Premier's Priorities have not changed and that has been, from my best recollection, communicated to Ministers by the Premier and charter letters as well. And, of course, the time frames for the Closing the Gap targets and priority reforms are different to the time frames for Premier's Priorities. Premier's Priorities have a shorter-term focus. Some of those Premier's Priorities are essentially the same quantified measure and anticipated performance that you would hope to see for the Closing the Gap targets over a 10-year period as opposed to what is now an 18-month period.

So I think they coexist relatively easily. What really has been disturbed by COVID and the most recent terrible floods are some of the routines that have been associated with the Premier's Priorities. They are usually subject to quarterly meetings where there is a chance for Ministers, Premier, senior public officials to go through in some real detail performance issues that have arisen and mitigants that are in place to try to improve performance. That has been interrupted by COVID and the floods, so that is one immediate change. But, I guess, in summary I think they do coexist pretty happily.

KATE FOY: I am happy to add to that as well, Ms Sharpe. Some of the processes you talked about in your question around a board of secretaries, so we have learned a lot from the Premier's Priorities and the approach to habits to reporting, the consistent approach and the engagement of the secretaries board. We do engage, Aboriginal Affairs and myself, with the secretaries board on Closing the Gap and seek their support. In addition, which is different and it was started under the previous Minister, there are regular quarterly meetings with each and every Minister who is responsible for a part of or a target under Closing the Gap, and those are held quarterly and regularly.

We are actually in the middle of those now. That is led by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs with those relevant Ministers. Then, as you would have seen in the media, the Premier has asked through charter letters that Ministers are held accountable for the part that they need to play in Closing the Gap, as well as their other portfolio areas. So we have learned a lot. In summary, we have learned a lot about the habits from the Premier's Priorities. We are implementing those. We are strengthening that with those ministerial meetings and we are tracking that and reporting on that, not dissimilarly to Premier's Priorities, and we learned from the Premier's implementation unit on that as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you for that. That is actually very helpful, thank you. Minister, you will be reporting against the Closing the Gap target?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How are you going to deal with the Premier's Priorities issues? I know that they are not directly your portfolio but the one I am looking at at the moment is HSC attainment for Aboriginal young people, which has gone backwards and we are nowhere near the target. How are you going to practically deal with that issue? That is just as an example. Some of these issues—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand. One of the first issues is getting data. Obviously, we are at the beginning of the 10-year process but we need to—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, Minister. I know we are at the beginning of the Closing the Gap 10-year process. But these Premier's Priorities have been in place for a long time. This is my point.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And the point is valid. I obviously cannot speak to the Premier's Priorities; that is a question for the Premier. But all I can talk to is, for example, each of the 17 Closing the Gap targets and ensuring that individual Ministers have at their highest level of priority a focus on those. Obviously, target No. 7, increasing the proportion of young people attaining year 12 or equivalent, is very, very important. It is something that we are focusing on. With that the data point, I was not trying to be cute there. It was saying that we do need baseline data. A number of the targets we do not have baseline data for. One of the predominant reasons for that is obviously because we need the updated census figures if we are looking at a 10-year period, so that will be very important as soon as we get the 2021 figures.

But my hope is that through the work that we are doing in association with CAPO, we have got the New South Wales joint council that I chair jointly with the heads of CAPO, that we have significant focus. Ms Foy mentioned that we are having individual meetings between members of CAPO, which are the peak Aboriginal organisations, alongside the Ministers in each cluster as well as all of the senior departmental officials to ensure that they are held to account on each of these priority targets. So, you are right; while it is not directly in alignment with the Premier's Priorities, there is significant focus on achieving those 17 priorities and, of course, the five

priority reform areas are for the New South Wales Government. That is something that I think about every day—every day.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Earlier in response to a question from me about the Creative Kids program, you said that \$216 million was allocated to the program and that \$149 million—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Could you just give me one second to get back to that?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: So two million vouchers have been downloaded which, obviously, if they were all redeemed would be \$200 million—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, \$216 million.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: But 1.49 million have been redeemed.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So \$149 million. Is that an underspend? What happens to that? Is that going to be reallocated? What is going to happen to the differential between the \$216 million and the \$149 million?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Good question. I will throw to Ms Foy.

KATE FOY: So these are allocation to a program.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

KATE FOY: The program continues. I will have a look at what the trend is around the expenditure to date and what we think will happen there. But, ultimately, if there are any changes to any program, regardless of whether it is Creative Kids, that is advice that is provided to Ministers and governments for decisions. But at the moment I am confident that we will just continue to roll out the program per the direction of the Government.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay. Minister, in your answer you were quite strident about the arts and crafts kits.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I have learned from you in the stridency.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay. In your opinion, were there abuses of the program?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Look, my view is that I need to look at what the direction of the Government is and enact it. It was quite clear that the Premier wanted to ensure that we return to normal life after as quickly as we possibly can, and that is exactly what I have tried to implement in all of the proposals that I have sought to do across all three portfolios. Obviously that has been extremely difficult. We thought that we were through it after COVID and now of course we have to deal with this natural disaster, which will have a significant impact on all three of my portfolios.

My overriding concern is to ensure that, with Creative Kids, we get young people in front of creatives so that they can develop a love of arts and culture in the way that I was able to do when I was a small child living on the Murray River. I was able to go to a sport and rec camp at Borambola with other creative kids and for the first time in my life I realised there were other people who were like me and cared about music and drama. But it was that interpersonal interaction that changed my life and changed who I was, and that is exactly what I am trying to do through Creative Kids.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I want to take you to some comments made by the previous arts Minister involving the Minerva Theatre at Potts Point.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: At the time he made comments to the people who had purchased the site that he was looking at compulsorily acquiring it to protect it. What has happened in the steps to protect the Minerva and preserve it?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I appreciate your raising the question. I am a passionate believer that Sydney needs more theatre space. It is just incredibly important for obviously arts and culture in this space where we know that every theatre, or major theatres, have often years-long queues of productions trying to get in. We know from a range of different reports that have been done that there is a market and an appetite for new theatres in this space. We know that a report from EY, for example, shows us that an 1,800-seat theatre would bring over 350,000 interstate visitors and almost 25,000 international visitors to New South Wales from 2025 to 2040, putting almost half a billion into the economy. These are—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But the Minerva—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am getting there. The point is, I believe what the former Minister believed, which is that we need more theatres. I believe we need another 1,000-seat, 1,500-seat and 2,000-seat theatre in Sydney. I am looking to do what I can there. In terms of the Minerva, I am a new Minister. I am meeting with the group. Have there been any steps to compulsorily acquire the land? No. But I am very focused and passionate about ensuring that the Minerva returns to being an extraordinary centre for arts and culture as a performance space, if at all possible. I will be doing what I can to see that happen. But I am not going to pre-empt those sorts of decisions, particularly those with budgetary impacts, otherwise I might get given a stern talking to by the gentleman on my right.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The previous Minister also asked Create NSW to prepare a report into the Minerva. What is the status of that investigation?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I will throw to Ms Foy.

KATE FOY: Yes, sure. That was in 2020. We co-funded a feasibility study with the City of Sydney into the restoration of the Minerva. Certainly, that study found that it could reopen and operate sustainably as a performance venue. Certainly, the detail about whether that—it could accommodate 1,000 seats. So that is certainly possible. That is what the finding of that report was. Just to put it in context, we have Central Element, the current owner, who has lodged an integrated development application with the City of Sydney. That work is on foot, and we put in—Create NSW put in—a submission. While we did not comment on the nature of the development application or the specifics of it, we were very strong in asserting that—we countered Central Element's view by saying the restoration of the Minerva to 1,000-seat theatre was entirely possible.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But I understand that the project has been revised now and that there is now a proposal to put dining inside and reduce the stage and put in hotel rooms. It is a boutique hotel project now.

KATE FOY: That is a matter for the owner and what they put in their own DA and submit to the city. Our position has been, as you know, for some time that a 1,000-seat theatre is possible. We have a preference for the Minerva, as the Minister has outlined, to have a future as a performance space in Sydney.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You should also understand, Mr Secord, that there are a range of other things that need to be considered as well. Through this DA or any other process, there needs to be a review obviously by the Heritage Council of NSW because it is an item of State heritage. There is potentially going to need to be archaeological testing done for both historical archaeology and also Aboriginal cultural heritage due to any excavation that might be proposed. If the tenure of your question is "Will some other thing pop up like that?", the answer is no. I am conscious of this. In fact, I have raised it in a range of different meetings. We are looking to the future of this iconic building.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You raised it about the Aboriginal and/or colonial site underneath the Minerva. So how does that impact on the plans for the site?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: They need to be taken into consideration, obviously, and there needs to be a full assessment and appropriate heritage process undertaken.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you know what the heritage site underneath—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I do not have those details.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Does Ms Foy know?

KATE FOY: No. That is an assessment that is underway at the moment, I understand, or is due to happen. Sorry, I will get the timing correct. Any development application is subject to review by the Heritage Council as well. I understand it would take a couple of months for that archaeological assessment to be undertaken.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I just should let you know as well, Mr Secord, that I know in my diary is a meeting with the Metro-Minerva Theatre Action Group in the coming weeks. I will obviously be working closely with them.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you. I have met them.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I have no doubt that you have.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I might just ask a question. Minister, in relation to your Closing the Gap initiatives, I see you are basically focusing on Priority Reform 5—Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity. The first point there says:

We need to understand prosperity through an Aboriginal perspective.

I am not asking you for planning advice, obviously that is not part of what you are doing here, but how does the development of the Lizard Rock site in Belrose fit within that priority reform 5? How does property development sit in that area? I am not saying it from a negative point of view, but how does that work?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand. I do not know about the specific proposal of which you speak. Obviously, I am very proud of the fact that, as part of the New South Wales Government's focus on Closing the Gap, there are four nationally agreed priority reform areas and that we have added a fifth in terms of an economic focus, employment and so forth. I think that is very important because I believe that—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Do you want to take it on notice? Unless Mr Coutts-Trotter has an answer for that question.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I have a little more information here, Mr Borsak, which I am happy to provide.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Sorry.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is all right. I am aware of the article in *The Australian Financial Review* which suggests that the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council's proposal for a 450-lot subdivision of its land in Lizard Rock in Belrose is a test case for the State Environmental Planning Policy (Aboriginal Land) 2019. Can I emphasise, firstly, that Aboriginal land councils hold land and freehold title and may develop or use their land as they determine, subject to prevailing environmental and planning laws, obviously. I understand that the planning proposal is now open for public comment.

The development proposal has been lodged and will be assessed and determined in accordance with the Aboriginal land State environment planning policy, due to the size and significance of the proposal to the northern beaches region. Obviously, as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I do not have a role in that assessment process, but I fully support the Aboriginal land council in making its application to make economic use of its significant land assets to benefit its members and the wider Aboriginal community.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I think you have answered that part of the question. Just turning now to local community engagement in relation to the CAPO organisations, I see on the Aboriginal Affairs NSW website that you currently engaged with those organisations in or around March 2022. When can we expect to see a result from those engagements in terms of the priorities of those organisations for this year and perhaps next?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You are talking about the implementation plan for Closing the Gap?

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Yes. I am basically talking about the current consultation around it.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, I get that. CAPO, the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, are holding face-to-face community engagements in, I think, 30 locations across New South Wales. This is in order to finalise our next implementation plan, which we envisage being released by July 2022, in answer to your question of a specific date. I do not know if Mr Coutts-Trotter or Ms Gordon would like to add to that. Actually Mr Ireland might be appropriate as well. Ms Foy, did you want to say something?

KATE FOY: Consultations are undertaken as a really integral part of all of the Closing the Gap activities, certainly at the State level. They have been held over the last couple of years and have been a key input into the Closing the Gap strategy and implementation plan and to help us adjust the way we work. That consultation document becomes, as I said, an input to the June and July 2022 implementation plan, which is an update from the previous year. In terms of it being available, I am happy to take that on notice as to the status. CAPO commission the work and CAPO do the work; it is CAPO's document. I would want to respect whatever views they have about how they want that document treated. But I am happy to go back to them and come back to you, Mr Borsak, on that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Ireland might want to add something.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Mr Ireland, do you want to add anything to that?

TIM IRELAND: No, nothing.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, it is unclear how a series of regional alliances fit into the functioning of the New South Wales Government and the interactions between different agencies and First Nations communities. How many regional alliances are there?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You are talking about local decision-making, I assume?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes, Murdi Paaki et cetera.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: There are eight active Aboriginal regional alliances across New South Wales: Murdi Paaki, as you rightly say; Three Rivers Regional Assembly; Illawarra Wingecarribee Alliance Aboriginal Corporation; Barang Regional Alliance; Riverina Murray Regional Alliance; North Coast Aboriginal Development Alliance; Western Sydney Aboriginal Regional Alliance; and LPACA, the La Perouse Aboriginal Community Alliance.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Does the department have minimum standards to document community engagement and community buy-in for those regional alliances? Many of them have at least paper requirements for working groups, but do you ensure that that happens? What, if any, testing do you do?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I might throw to Mr Coutts-Trotter.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Who will, in turn, throw to Ms Gordon.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, we do have in place agreements with those alliances in terms of what they will be putting into place in terms of their relationships with the community as well as what they might be doing as far as milestones or outcomes that they would like to achieve for the aspirations of that community.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is one thing to have those agreements in place, but what, if anything, do you do to check that those working groups are alive and working and that these regional alliances have the support of the First Nations peoples in the regions which they purport to represent?

LILLIAN GORDON: I think I understand where you are going with this.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Why don't you just get there with the answer quickly.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, absolutely. Certainly we do work with the alliances around community working parties and the community working parties work to the main alliance. From that alliance we do then have those agreements in place about what they will want to achieve in terms of milestones for their communities, understanding that we work right across communities in a range of organisations in the way in which the communities choose to organise themselves. It is not always directly through an alliance or directly through a community working party; it is broader than that depending on the aspirations of community.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Put simply, do the alliance structures work? Are they achieving their proposed outcomes, which were to provide a genuine regional representation of First Nations communities? Do you have any evidence that they do that?

LILLIAN GORDON: They do work in a number of ways. I can say that in the last couple of years COVID has certainly had an impact on them in terms of them being able to work with communities and bring forth those aspirations and outcomes. I can say that from that perspective. Each of the alliances do report into those mechanisms by which they have achieved various things. I am looking at my notes in terms of which things they have achieved specifically for various alliances that are in place, noting that alliances have been in place at various times throughout the process. I can give you some understanding of what that looks like.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We might come back to some of the detail later.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, what do you understand the role of the regional alliances to be, as opposed to CAPO, the Aboriginal land councils, traditional owners and registered native title holders? Where do the regional alliances fit in terms of authority to speak?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is basically ensuring that Aboriginal communities have a genuine voice in determining what the priorities are for their communities—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No, we are talking about the regional alliances, Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: —I know, and I am answering the question—and what services are delivered. Obviously that is done through a range of things like, for example, the accords—and there are a number of accords which have been ratified—and a social housing agreement, which you will be well aware of, at Murdi Paaki.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, accords are one thing, but surely you would be aware of the very real unrest in First Nations communities about the way that these regional alliances work and their lack of connection to, and engagement with, community about the regional alliances. Surely you are aware of that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Of course. Let me pull out a little and explain what my view is. My view is that the thing that needs to be put front and centre of any interaction between government and Aboriginal communities is genuine, honest and true collaboration and empowerment of Aboriginal people to make decisions

about their own futures. Obviously that is something that you agree with. We are trying to do that through a range of different ways. If you have a look what we are doing with CAPO—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But I am asking you about the regional alliances. By all means, let's talk about CAPO at a different point. How much funding was given to regional alliances in the last financial year?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: We allocated \$2.4 million to support that local decision-making.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What did you get for it?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That included each regional alliance having access to up to \$200,000 for its operational costs and to support local governance.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, what did you get from the \$2.4 million that went to the regional alliances? What did a young mum out of Brewarrina looking for a house get out of the \$2.4 million that went on regional alliances?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: For example, the community at Weilmoringle has benefited from the placement of solar panels and tenant education on 21 homes. That will reduce electricity costs on those homes in that region. I hear what you are saying; I understand. We need to try a range of different things in government in order to ensure that Aboriginal people are empowered and that they are able to take decisions that reflect what their community wants and what can be—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can we finish? I know we have run out of time.

The CHAIR: Last question now.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not just \$2.4 million this year; it was a similar amount the year before. Is there any kind of rigorous analysis of whether or not this structure that sits between land councils, government and CAPO is returning value for money for the First Nations peoples who desperately need that \$2.4 million spent on their needs?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Ms Gordon?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, there are a number of valuations that have been done, Mr Shoebidge. Partly the funding goes towards how government and alliances work together, so it builds that relationship. You need to have funding that actually funds Aboriginal people to participate around the table, as it does for Closing the Gap; that is the same realm that occurs for Closing the Gap. Inside some of those alliances are CAPO organisations as well. When we talk about land councils, we might talk about AMSs. They are inside those local decision-making entities. That arrangement of communities being able to be represented by those are absolutely represented from that perspective. In terms of those particular evaluations, firstly the aim was around building the relationship between government and those organisations. That negotiation through to the accord is then done between that alliance and those government organisations to bring forward possible activities that can then meet the needs of those communities. We could certainly provide you with a list of those different outcomes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: With all the pressing needs in the community, if anybody—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Perhaps we can continue this this afternoon.

The CHAIR: Yes. We are out of time, David.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —and there are in so many in desperate need of assistance—heard that answer—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is actually Government time. I have two quick questions. There was a question from Mr Secord about Music in the Regions and how it was being paid for. Is it the case that Music in the Regions is being paid for out of the Arts and Cultural Funding Program, as enabled by the 10 per cent increase in last year's budget for the Arts and Cultural Funding Program?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think you know the answers to these.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I think you might know the answer to this.

The CHAIR: Why don't you just tell us?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, and can I strongly endorse the leadership of the previous Minister, Mr Harwin, in seeing that 10 per cent uplift, one of the most significant uplifts in funding for the arts that has been in existence for decades in this State?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The second question was more as a follow-up to a question that the Hon. Robert Borsak asked earlier. I felt that there was perhaps some more detail that could be teased out to enable that member to have a full understanding of what is happening. Since 4 July 2020, when it was announced that the Ultimo museum was staying, what interaction has there been with the original architects on the design of the museum back in the 1980s?

Did that precede any detailed work starting on the actual design? Where did the conservation management plan fit into that process? Did that work or the work with the original architects precede the business case? There was talk of a design competition. Where is that up to? Is that preceding any particular work?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is, like, six questions.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: They are all related.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I might actually ask Ms Pitman if she could start. Perhaps if she could take Ms Ryan's seat and then, Ms Havilah, you might jump in at the end if that is alright.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Just take it on notice.

ANNETTE PITMAN: Thank you, Minister. We have been consulting on an ongoing basis with a variety of stakeholders of the Powerhouse Ultimo project. Lionel Glendenning, as Mr Harwin specifically mentioned, is the architect of the 1988 extension of Powerhouse Ultimo. Lionel is part of a group that we call the master planning dialogue. We have had ongoing sessions with this group, and those look at the opportunities that present for the renewal of the Powerhouse site. The other parties that are involved in that master planning dialogue are Abbie Galvin, who is the State Government architect, Richard Johnson, Peter Poulet, Alan Croker, Aspect Studios and Powerhouse staff. Those sessions have been ongoing and a wonderful opportunity to get a perspective of the original intent of Mr Glendenning and some of the other folks who were involved early in the establishment of the museum on the site.

In terms of looking forward, this project is a State significant development. We will be undertaking a two-stage planning process—a concept DA followed by a detailed SSDA. That process was initiated late last year and we have received a secretary's environmental assessment requirements for the concept DA in January. We are currently preparing documents for the concept DA and the target for lodging our concept DA is in April. We are hoping for a determination of that concept DA around September, but, of course, we are in the hands of the planning department in terms of that.

The design competition will be a national design competition and it will be a multistage competition that starts with a registration of interest and then an expression of interest and then the final stage two concept design, which will be developed by the short list from that expression of interest. That process, the registration of interest and the expression of interest, will commence mid-year and stage two of that design competition will start after we have received the concept DA determination, so hopefully around September. Then the detailed SSDA—that is that sort of second stage of the planning process—will be completed with the successful designers.

The CHAIR: Before we wrap up, the Committee has had a quick discussion about some witnesses that we might be able to excuse. There is one question for Ms Herron.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Don't build your expectations up too high, Ms Herron.

LOUISE HERRON: Really? I am hoping for a cracker.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I assure you this is not the whole reason you are here. Thanks for coming, Ms Herron.

LOUISE HERRON: Thank you for having me. It is rather a long time to sit here for just one question, I have to say.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I thought you should get one question. It is about going forward. In the past 12 months, have you had any further approaches from Racing NSW in relation to putting images on the Opera House sails? I will ask you what, if any, other approaches—

LOUISE HERRON: No.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There were none?

LOUISE HERRON: No.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you understand that the policy that applies currently for the use of the sails would exclude entities like Racing NSW going forward?

LOUISE HERRON: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Have you had any applications in the past 12 months, either from within government or outside of government, that the Opera House has thought was inappropriate?

LOUISE HERRON: From outside, yes, we have.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: When you say "outside", you mean outside of government.

LOUISE HERRON: Outside of government—yes, we have.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can you give an indication of where the line is drawn and what matters you are objecting to?

LOUISE HERRON: Yes. The sails are protected. The Opera House is a World Heritage listed building—State and national and World Heritage listed, and it is really important that to maintain that status we retain the very highest heritage standards, and the Opera House cannot be used as a billboard. We have a very strong policy that aims to make sure that we use the sails appropriately but that we do not overuse them. Often people will say, "What would you think about this?" and I will go back and say, "This is never going to happen," and it just falls away. Sometimes people are a little more insistent and it takes a little longer to get the desired result because we always need to make sure that we preserve the integrity of the sails. If that happens, I will often ring the person up and say, "It is just not appropriate because you understand what we are trying to do and how important the heritage of the sails is," and generally that does dismiss the issue. I feel that the sails lightings that we have had have all been appropriate. For example, it was great to be able to light the sails in support of Ukraine.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Indeed. I think we all supported that. But have there been any directions from government to put materials on the sails in the past 12 months?

LOUISE HERRON: No, there have been no directions from government to put material on the sails. We do work very closely with government to determine what is appropriate and what is not appropriate.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could you, on notice, provide a link to the current policy settings that apply?

LOUISE HERRON: It is on our website. Go "Sydney Opera House policy sails". There it is.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do not put them up on the sails. Thanks, Ms Herron.

LOUISE HERRON: Thank you.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: "Shoebridge for the Senate"?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My guess is that might breach the guidelines; I will explore it later today.

The CHAIR: On that note, no campaigning in budget estimates. Thank you, Minister, for your attendance this morning; we appreciate it. For most of the rest of you, we will see you at 2.00 p.m.

(The Minister, Louise Herron and Michael Brand withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

The CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody. We will continue with questions this afternoon from the Opposition.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Just so I know, do we direct the questions to individual officials or do we go through Mr Coutts-Trotter?

The CHAIR: That is a matter for Mr Coutts-Trotter, but they are all here as witnesses.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Whatever the Committee would prefer. If you want to come through me to start with—why don't we try that and see how it goes?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This will probably be through Mr Coutts-Trotter to Ms Gordon. At the height of COVID we had an Indigenous response to parts of western New South Wales. I just wanted to know if any work has been undertaken involving, as Minister Hazzard said several days ago, the "variant on the variant". What preparations are underway to ensure that we do not have a repeat of what happened in the Northern Territory? And have any steps been taken to prepare remote Indigenous communities?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Lil, why don't you start and then I will come in if need be.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, sure. In terms of the groups that we have set up as a result of COVID, we continue to have those groups. We have an Aboriginal response group that is set up that has government partners

as well as Aboriginal leadership as part of that. With that group what we do is we hear about issues or things that might not be happening or happening in communities and then we are able to then work out what initiatives we need to put into place for those communities, whether it be around food security, possible accommodation—all of those things. That is all still in place as far as COVID and then what will come in terms of those areas. It is very much place based and we work with each of those communities. I often hold a number of community meetings specifically with communities right across, so we will continue to do those. We work directly with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Centre, which is the peak health body across the Aboriginal mental health services that are up there as well, so we are very much aligned with everything and we will continue to do that work.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Gordon, you would have noticed that the health Minister several days ago said that there was a chance that we would have another spike. Are we seeing parallel transmission rates, parallel patterns in Indigenous communities in New South Wales?

LILLIAN GORDON: To be honest I do not have that data right now, but it is certainly an area that we want to focus on to make sure we are ahead of it as much as anywhere else. The work that we did previously was making sure that we could drive vaccination rates up in Aboriginal communities. That has been quite successful, particularly for western New South Wales, to be able to make sure that they are on par if not surpassing those.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That was my next question, Indigenous vaccination rates. Is there anything that you could provide the Committee in relation to that?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, I will find that for you. In terms of 16 years and over, the first dose for Aboriginal people is about 86.6 per cent and for the general population it is about 95.9 per cent. For the second dose it is 84.4 per cent for Aboriginal people 16 and over and 94.4 per cent for the general population, so differences of about 9 per cent or 10 per cent.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: As at 8 March.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What about movement on the booster? I understand in the wider community we are hovering around 50 per cent.

LILLIAN GORDON: The data that we have is about 41 per cent for Aboriginal people and around about 60 per cent for the broader population, so probably up closer to a 19 per cent difference. The work that we continue to do is to absolutely drive those as much as possible through communications particularly, which is generally at the community level, for community people to be able to enact and help other community members get those boosters as much as possible.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: These questions will be directed to Create NSW, so probably to Ms Pitman, in relation to community-based concerns, community-based campaigns involving the Roxy Theatre at Parramatta. Has any work been undertaken in that area to preserve and protect the Roxy?

ANNETTE PITMAN: Obviously the Roxy is a very important building and cultural component for Parramatta, architecturally and culturally. Having sat unused since 2014, there is really strong community and cultural sector support for the restoration of the Roxy, which we do strongly support as well. Increasing the number of theatres in Sydney, as we have said, is a really key priority for the Government and, in particular, in western Sydney as well. We are committed to working with the community and the cultural sector and Parramatta council and the owner on the future development of the site and future use of the site.

It is currently in private ownership. The site is listed on the State Heritage Register. As such, its heritage values are protected under the Heritage Act. This means that the Heritage Council of NSW is an approval party for future development applications on the site. In 2017 the owner of the Roxy did submit a development application to the City of Parramatta Council for a 33-storey commercial tower, but in June 2019 that application was refused. The Roxy Theatre Action Group comprises several theatre practitioners and historians. It is campaigning for the Roxy Theatre to be fully restored to its original configuration and former glory, including the addition of full stage facilities on the site, and we are continuing to look at options to support those endeavours.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Coutts-Trotter to Ms Havilah, I want to take you to the board meetings involving MAAS, the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Has the board been meeting regularly during COVID?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Trust meets every eight weeks and every eight weeks we also have a finance and audit committee meeting, which is made up of members of the trust.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Is there a quorum requirement for the number of board members to attend a particular meeting?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, there is.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Since the change of leadership from the president—I think it is president, or is it chairman?

LISA HAVILAH: President.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Since Mr Peter Collins has become president, replacing Professor Barney Glover, have they met quorum every eight weeks?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, they have.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You probably would not have it with you, but could you provide the attendance figures for the board members? I think it is Mr Collins, Mr Borger, Mr Carney, Mr Hassell—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Ms Carney.

LISA HAVILAH: Ms Carney. Paddy Carney.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Sorry.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Aren't they in the report?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But I want to know, up until the most recent one, a year from there.

LISA HAVILAH: Very happy to provide those.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you very much. I understand from materials from Infrastructure NSW that the projections for the Parramatta site are to have up to two million visitors a year. What is that based on? The population of Sydney is about 5.3 million, so are you operating on the premise that half of Sydney is going to visit the Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta per year?

LISA HAVILAH: The way that the museum has been designed and the way that it was tested through a very thorough business case process is that the museum will support a very dynamic and changing program that will support high visitor numbers. The other thing that is very distinctive about Powerhouse Parramatta is that it will be open in the evening because we also want the museum to contribute to the night-time economy of Parramatta as a really vibrant CBD. We want arts and culture to be very much part of that. The level of visitation was tested in the business case. It has also been tested through design development processes with the design team in partnership with Create Infrastructure and with INSW. It has been tested in multiple ways.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Are those unique visitations, though, or are they total?

LISA HAVILAH: No, they are repeat. The idea is that people come—instead of coming three times in a lifetime like they have in Ultimo, where you might come as a child, bring your child and then come with your grandchild, the whole idea about Powerhouse Parramatta is that it is embedded into the cultural life of the city and western Sydney. You might come two or three times a week for different reasons.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: My understanding is that the visitations at Powerhouse Ultimo were about 175,000 to 200,000, depending on the year.

LISA HAVILAH: No, the visitation in Ultimo has been, pre-COVID, between 800,000 up to a million.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay.

LISA HAVILAH: COVID numbers—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are significantly reduced. Okay.

LISA HAVILAH: —significantly have impacted that. Actually, when the Powerhouse in Ultimo opened, in its first year it was over a million visitors.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have a couple of very basic questions first. What is the total EFT for Aboriginal Affairs at the moment?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I might go to either Kate or Lil for that one.

KATE FOY: I am sure Lil can fill in on any further detail, but as at December 2021 the EFT was 134.2 for Aboriginal Affairs. That is across a number of sites, including the head office in Mascot as well as Batemans Bay, Bourke, Broken Hill, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Newcastle and Tamworth.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. Some of this, I think, will be in the annual budget, but if you can give me an update: the total annual staffing budget, not including contractors or consultants?

KATE FOY: Sure thing. Lil, do you want to handle that one?

LILLIAN GORDON: The total staffing budget is 28.6.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to give us the most up-to-date figures in terms of the amount spent on consultants?

LILLIAN GORDON: I do not currently have that at hand. I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And for contractors as well?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. If you can take that on notice, would you be able to provide that for the last four financial years, please?

LILLIAN GORDON: Sure.

KATE FOY: Year on year?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry?

KATE FOY: Year on year, I am assuming?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, thank you. That would be good. Is Aboriginal Affairs subject to any efficiency asks from Treasury?

KATE FOY: I think the secretary is probably best placed to answer that.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: That is a false assumption! I think the short story is yes, along with every other government agency that had to absorb efficiency savings. There are efficiency savings locked into Aboriginal Affairs' budget but there were no additional savings in the 2021-22 financial year.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There were existing ones but no extra ones.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How much was that?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: We can get it for you on notice if we do not have it to hand. That is no problem.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that is fine. I want to ask about the Local Decision Making evaluation, which is done by the ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research; is that correct?

LILLIAN GORDON: That is one of the evaluations, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do they do an annual evaluation? How does that work?

LILLIAN GORDON: I think they are doing one evaluation. There are evaluations that different alliances will enact for themselves and there are evaluations that we do from an Aboriginal Affairs perspective.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The ones that they are responsible for—sorry, the information I have got is they have been doing them since 2015.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to tell us how much money has been paid for these?

LILLIAN GORDON: Again, I will take that one on notice. Thank you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No worries. Can you do a breakdown for each financial year?

LILLIAN GORDON: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That would be great. We touched on some of the Closing the Gap stuff earlier this morning, but I am particularly interested in the work for redirection of funding to Aboriginal community controlled organisations. Can you explain what work Aboriginal Affairs is doing and how that is coming together?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Lil, I will let you start on that if you like.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, sure. Currently there has been some mapping that has been completed in terms of the draft Indigenous Expenditure Report that looks at what the spend has been out there, programs that have been evaluated and so on.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I will just stop you there. The mapping—are you lead for that? Who is doing the mapping?

LILLIAN GORDON: We work with Treasury, clearly. Treasury is the lead.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And is this part of their—

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Indigenous expenditure review or report.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is it all part of the same thing or is it a separate thing?

KATE FOY: It was something that I understand was agreed to in the national agreement to do this work. Treasury leads it but we have a senior—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, you need to talk into the microphone, Kate.

KATE FOY: Beg your pardon. It is a requirement under the national agreement. Treasury leads the work but very much in partnership with ourselves and the senior officials group that oversees and works together with CAPO on Closing the Gap. It is a piece of work sponsored through that particular group and we report to the NSW Joint Council, which is co-chaired, I think the Minister explained this morning, between himself and the CAPO. We also report, as I suggested this morning, to the Secretaries Board on that particular work. That will be refined and developed as we go along, but certainly the expenditure review report had a look at what expenditure goes to and is specific to specific First Nations programs. It does not reflect what might be expenditure in general things, for example, a hospital that provides a broad level of service to the community. It will not capture, say, what benefit is derived specifically for Aboriginal people.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That report was the one that found that 45 per cent of programs had not been evaluated. We are talking about the same thing?

KATE FOY: That is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So there is mapping being done and Treasury is doing that. Sorry, can you just take me through which departments are on the senior officials group?

KATE FOY: Tim might be able to fill in. It is chaired by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. I have been chairing it and handing that chairpersonship to Lil Gordon, co-chaired with the chief executive of NSW Aboriginal Land Council, who represents CAPO. The clusters that are involved in it are really from all of the clusters: Transport, Planning, Justice, Education, and Family and Community Services people as well. All of the clusters are engaged in that—also Treasury, and the Customer Services department.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I might get you just to take on notice specifically who comes to those.

KATE FOY: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am interested in what level, and I am interested in which part.

KATE FOY: Deputy secretary level.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Deputy secretary level.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So it will be deputy secretary?

KATE FOY: Where there is not a deputy secretary, there is an executive director.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Transport is very different, obviously, from DCJ.

KATE FOY: Of course. For example, for DCJ, it is the deputy secretary that comes along to that. For Transport, it is the executive director.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think that is right. I want to ask some questions about Solution Brokerage. Are you able to give me the current status of the Bowraville Solution Brokerage project?

LILLIAN GORDON: That is one I will take further on notice. In terms of Bowraville, we continue to work with Bowraville particularly around their healing from that perspective and working with them around memorials and so on that they want to put in place and the healing that is happening in Bowraville. That is where we are at at this stage. Any further detail I will provide on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In that case, could you also provide for me how much has been spent—this is the brokerage project specifically—on that project to date and information about the key performance indicators, all the monitoring of the outcomes?

LILLIAN GORDON: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: This is a similar one and you might have to take this on notice as well. What is the current status of the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council land and economic participation accord?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes. Same again, I will take that on notice and provide you with that detail.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Okay. It finished in September 2019, but there is very little information about the outcomes of that.

LILLIAN GORDON: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: One of the agreed actions was that was to progress the title transfer of an area of the national park adjacent to Davidson Whaling Station. Can you provide an update on what the status of that is and whether the transfer has occurred?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. This is all to do with the Eden participation accord. Essentially, the issue is that there were a lot of things signed up to. There is very little information about whether they have been delivered and we are just trying to find out. There was also a collaboration to develop a planning and assessment tool for Eden LALC's land holdings, primarily focusing on the realisation of specific parcels to generate capital and support activities identified in the community, land and business plan. Can you give us an update on where that is up to too?

LILLIAN GORDON: We will take those on notice. We will aim to try and get you some information before the end of the day.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Terrific. Thank you.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I suppose through you, Mr Coutts-Trotter.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Thanks, Mr Borsak.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Are you aware of the Ngurang-gu Yalbilinya program at Orange?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I am not but perhaps one of my colleagues is.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: It is a culture-based and an intensive Indigenous education program tailored to re-engage students, with a focus on holistic development of high school age Indigenous boys.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes, that does ring a bell. I know I have previously spoken to the local land council about that program in its instigation phase.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I might continue then. Given the Orange-based initiative is relatively new but is already showing positive outcomes, Tim Bennett and his team are passionate educators from the Canobolas Rural Technology High School who have been critical to the program's growing success and have hopes of developing the program into an Indigenous centre of excellence and to roll the program out across rural and regional New South Wales. The question is: Can you provide advice if funding for the Ngurang-gu Yalbilinya program will be extended after 2022 and, if so, what resources will be provided to ensure the ongoing success of the program?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I think we will take that question on notice and respond as soon as we can to you, Mr Borsak.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: All right. Once you have the answer, you might also look at whether it would be considered to be available to be extended to other regions of New South Wales.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: All right. We will take all that in the response on notice as well.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Thank you. I refer to discussions that my colleague the member for Barwon has had with your Minister regarding the repatriation and secure storage of culturally significant scar trees to the community of Collarenebri. While this work is being led by the local Aboriginal council, the member for Barwon, on behalf of the local Aboriginal council, has asked the Minister for his support and is seeking funds for the construction of a secure, suitable facility at Collarenebri to house these assets. Specifications and locations should be in consultation with the local Aboriginal land council. What representations have been made by the

Minister to the department on this matter, and will the department agree to pursue funding or to commit funding to house these assets for the community?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I will take that on notice unless we can provide any information here and now. No?

LILLIAN GORDON: No, we will take it on notice.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: We will take that on notice. There are various elements of it.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: All right. Thank you. Has the department had discussions with the Minister about the significant cultural values among our Indigenous people regarding fishing?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes. Lil, do you want to elaborate?

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: You have? Okay. Well, then—

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Sorry, Mr Borsak, you keep going.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Sorry, that is just the opening shot. Is the Minister or your department aware that the non-commencement of section 21AA of the Fisheries Management Act has caused serious issues for Indigenous people in New South Wales?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes. Would it be helpful to provide something of a response to the question of what has delayed the commencement of the Act?

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That is where I am going, yes.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: All right. Kate, do you have that to hand?

KATE FOY: Yes, certainly. I think Lil will be able to fill in quite a bit of detail. Sorry, Mr Borsak, I won't be a second. I know there are currently two pilots for cultural fishing underway.

LILLIAN GORDON: Tweed and Hastings.

KATE FOY: In Tweed and Hastings. I might get—actually, Lil, you better pick this up because you have the detail in front of you.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Who is running those pilots? Are they coming out of Ag or is it run in conjunction with Aboriginal Affairs? Where are we going with this?

LILLIAN GORDON: In terms of Aboriginal Affairs, we are alongside that work, ultimately. The Minister for Agriculture obviously has carriage of that work. From our perspective, what we are doing is making sure that, in terms of that Act, obviously it has not commenced so the pilots are in place in terms of local management plans around those two pilots for Hastings and Tweed. It will be trialled over the coming two years, commencement in early 2022—obviously that is this year—the Hastings local management plan to inform best model to take forward, including potential commencement of section 21AA. Obviously there is the parliamentary inquiry into the commencement of the Fisheries Management Amendment Act, and it was announced by the New South Wales Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 4 on 25 November last year. Obviously we would welcome that inquiry.

Currently, what we are doing is that—it is clear any cultural fishing, given that I come from a little town out west called Brewarrina with the fish traps that are out there, is incredibly important for our communities, ultimately. Our aim is to continue to work alongside our communities, particularly around the Aboriginal Fishing Advisory Council, which has both NSWALC and NTSCORP—so the native title services corporation and NSWALC is the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council—representatives on that committee to be able to keep working through that with them.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: So you think it will take a couple of years to work through that process, do you?

LILLIAN GORDON: I do not have a time frame in front of me but happy to come back to you, yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: If you could, please. It would be good to get something. What representations has your Minister made regarding prosecutions against Indigenous fishermen that have been fined and/or prosecuted for their cultural practices because of the Government's failure to implement section 21AA of the Fisheries Management Act?

KATE FOY: I think the Minister's representations are probably best directed to the Minister, but I am happy to go back and check what representations may have been made.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Thank you. In the *2021-22 NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap*, "Priority Reform Three: Transforming Government Organisations" states that "Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge in school learning in NSW" should be a priority. Given that cultural fishing is as much about the catch as it is about understanding our rivers, estuaries and oceans, what representations has the Minister or your department made to the education department regarding the importance of cultural fishing being included in the school curriculum and as recommended in the Closing the Gap implementation plan?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Lil, over to you.

LILLIAN GORDON: I am happy to take that on notice. When we talk about cultural fishing, it is the element of—part of the bigger cultural enterprise, I guess, in terms of Aboriginal cultural knowledge. So we could need to take that on notice specifically for any schools that have been teaching that.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Is there any particular reason why it has taken so long—maybe this is a question for the Minister or through to the Minister—for proper recognition of cultural fishing for Aboriginal and Indigenous people to actually occur?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Not that we can readily answer. We will take that on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Through Mr Coutts-Trotter to Ms Havilah, this morning I asked about staff departures from the Powerhouse and I think you said there was a 3 per cent departure rate.

LISA HAVILAH: Over the three years that I have been there, yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Three per cent?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I just wanted to make sure my memory served me well.

LISA HAVILAH: I am very happy to provide the exact figures.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay. You said around a 3 per cent departure rate. The response to a question in the Parliament where we asked the number of MAAS staff that had left in the period between January 2019 and November 2021 was 41 staff members—and I have the material provided to the question in the Chamber. Forty-one staff members is not a 3 per cent departure rate. Are these part-time positions? Is there an explanation behind the figure and the discrepancy between your data and what was received on notice?

LISA HAVILAH: The material that you were given—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will give it to the secretary to provide to you.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I think that would be helpful, thank you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will also seek leave to table that. It was actually a question to Minister Harwin, which was taken as a written question at the end of question time, and it was provided by your office.

LISA HAVILAH: I am no expert on mathematics, but I think that calculation is the total over three years and the percentage is per year. I can very happily take it on notice and give you further detail.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: My question went to morale at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, that there is a problem with morale at that institution and departure at a senior level. Would you dispute that claim?

LISA HAVILAH: We have an incredible team of staff at the Powerhouse and they have gone through a lot of change. With the renewal of the museum there was some uncertainty, but we have moved through that and everyone is very excited and engaged with the renewal of the Powerhouse. In reference to the executive team, it is a big project that we are delivering and it is my job to make sure we have the absolute best and appropriately skilled staff. As the project changes, I need to make sure that the team has the ability to deliver what the Government expects us to deliver, so of course there are going to be changes within that team.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: There is a second page to the document, so I will table a second page, which is the covering page, but please excuse my scribbles.

KATE FOY: May I make a point with respect to morale?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

KATE FOY: One of the things that is quite important to us is staff engagement. That is why every year, through the Public Service Commission, we conduct the People Matter Employee Survey and, given that the cultural institutions are part of my family, if you like, that I care for, we do look at the results of all the PME

surveys to see what the issues are, what is making people happy at work and what are the things that we might need to focus on. Certainly I have had a look at their PMES results and—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What were those?

KATE FOY: I cannot remember off the top of my head. They are publicly available I think, in a general sense, but Lisa Havilah might want to pick up on that.

LISA HAVILAH: I can say that staff engagement has increased 6 per cent in the last 12 months, so with the confirmation of the renewal and the scope of the renewal there is a much higher level of engagement in the future of the Powerhouse within the staff.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What are your observations involving staff morale at the Powerhouse?

LISA HAVILAH: My observations are that we have incredibly skilled and engaged staff that are excited about the future of the museum, not only the renewal of Ultimo but the creation of Castle Hill and the creation of our new flagship in Parramatta. They are engaged in that project in a whole range of different ways, from the digitisation to the relocation of the collection to the conservation. We have been able to undertake extraordinary levels of conservation on the collections part of this project. So we have a highly engaged professional team that are really committed to the museum and I am very proud to work alongside them.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I do not expect you to have this on hand, although if you do that would be fantastic, but I will understand if you have to take this on notice. The period that is part of that written question without notice where 41 staff departed, from January 2019 to 1 November 2021, can you provide the total remuneration package for the departure of those staff? There would be, I guess, the usual entitlements and things like that that occur at the end. You do not need to break it down individually, but just a global figure.

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, very happy to provide that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the current status of OCHRE?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: I might pass to Lil, if that is okay.

LILLIAN GORDON: In terms of OCHRE at the moment, it is still progressing, so LDM is part of OCHRE—Local Decision Making is part of OCHRE—and there are a number of other programs that are part of OCHRE, which include Connected Communities, the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest, the Opportunity Hubs, and a few others in that which I will get to shortly. They have gone to the various departments that they are attached to—mostly Education, from that perspective—and continue through that realm—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Just to be clear, they have devolved to those departments?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, to continue that work.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So what role do you have?

LILLIAN GORDON: We ultimately have a monitoring role in terms of how they are going. Obviously they will then embed into Close the Gap, so that work will then contribute to the outcomes in Close the Gap for those particular realms.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When the programs were devolved to the other agencies, was that funding protected and did it go with them?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, so the agencies that they have gone to, the clusters they have gone to, provide the funding for those programs, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: They were funded previously out of a separate bucket of money? What I am asking is: Has that money gone across to the departments or have the departments had to pick up the funding for these projects within their existing budgets?

LILLIAN GORDON: I will take that on notice, but I believe that they were part of their existing budgets already.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: OCHRE exists, but it has not reported since June 2018. Are there annual reports that I have missed?

LILLIAN GORDON: No, that is correct, and currently there are the evaluations in the evaluation that has been done by the Ombudsman's office, the Deputy Ombudsman, which we are providing a response to around that evaluation.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When was that done?

LILLIAN GORDON: In 2019.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So the evaluation was done in 2019 and Aboriginal Affairs is responding to that now in 2022?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes. I guess as part of the evaluation response a number of recommendations come out, so we need to be able to work with our communities around those recommendations, and obviously COVID plays a part in some of that as far as those recommendations. We continue to work with the Deputy Ombudsman's office around any of those recommendations. What we, as Aboriginal Affairs, have carriage over is the local decision-making as part of one of those particular realms as far as the OCHRE is concerned. What we need to have a look at then too is, given that we now have the national agreement on Closing the Gap and we have OCHRE, how do we align both of those and ensure that they are working towards the same goals really.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: OCHRE was supposed to be the design that actually meant that there was one way through in terms of consultation across government. Now it seems to have been sidelined for Closing the Gap. Is that fair? You have an evaluation which was done in 2019. You are responding to that in 2022, but events have kind of overtaken it. Is that a fair analysis of what is happening?

LILLIAN GORDON: I would not say that it has overtaken it; I think they are working alongside each other.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are they not duplicating?

LILLIAN GORDON: Not necessarily, no. Things like Connected Communities move into obviously Education, and Education takes that up, so that continues as part of Close the Gap. In terms of something like Opportunity Hubs, it does the same thing—continues as part of meeting the targets for Close the Gap as well. In terms of local decision-making, the alliances have a number of agreements in place already with various government partners in a place-based mechanism, so those will also lend themselves into what will be Closing the Gap outcomes as well. So it is all working towards the same thing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So all of that is being monitored together to the same senior officers group across government that we were talking about in terms of Closing the Gap?

LILLIAN GORDON: I get what you are trying to say, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am confused.

LILLIAN GORDON: They will form part of what will be monitored as far as Closing the Gap. That will move into that space, yes. So that is a partnership working group level when we talk about the senior officers group and within Closing the Gap there are a number of mechanisms that will look at how those programs continue to work.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And just to go back to the evaluation issues, the evaluation was done in 2019. You are responding to it now. What does that response look like? Quite frankly, why has it taken so long to respond to?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Blame me.

LILLIAN GORDON: I think to be honest, certainly—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not blaming anyone. I am just asking the questions.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Just blame me. It is my fault. Leave Ben alone.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ben will blame you.

LILLIAN GORDON: COVID does play a role in that. Like I said before, in terms of the recommendations that flow out of that, it is important for us to work with community on those recommendations to understand where things are at. So COVID has played a major role in terms of that delay in that report. What we need to understand across those elements is with those recommendations what has been met and what maybe has not and what can continue to be improved. But that work would also be moving into the Closing the Gap national agreement realm.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, I should know the answer to this, but I do not. Is the OCHRE evaluation 2019 a public document?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So the response to that—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I tabled it, didn't I?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes. We did table it, yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I was not sure. I was just checking. All right. What happens after you have responded to the 2019 evaluation?

LILLIAN GORDON: I will take that on notice. It is work that we are doing at the moment to understand how two different policy realms—well, not two different ones—or two policy realms where we are working with Aboriginal communities can actually come together in alignment ultimately.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am sure you are far more familiar with this than I am, given the amount of time you spend out in communities, but the greatest frustration I get when I met with Aboriginal people—it does not matter where they are across New South Wales—is the amount of time they are expected to be involved in consultation—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: —the number of times they are expected to be in consultation, the various different agencies that they are required to be in consultation with over every single thing that the Government is doing. I had thought that OCHRE was supposed to address this. Closing the Gap clearly is a slightly different process because it is about trying to meet targets. Maybe it is a question for the Minister, but I am concerned about this over consultation. That is, as I said, the biggest issue that is raised with me about how Government interacts. I am concerned that OCHRE seems to have stopped. Is there going to be another OCHRE plan? How is this going to be resolved?

LILLIAN GORDON: Again, I will take that on notice because it is work that we are currently doing, ultimately, to have a look at the alignment so that we have not got a heap of different things happening at any one time, particularly for community. Ultimately, place based is very much what we are looking towards and some of that has been local decision-making; in other places, that has been other mechanisms. So it is entirely up to communities how they want to organise themselves. But every single person in community is an authority in terms of their own voice.

So how communities might organise themselves, some of that has been through local decision-making alliances, some of it has been through things like land councils, some of it has been through a range of other elements, and that is up to community to be able to do that. I absolutely appreciate what you are saying in terms of consultation. That is a big part of that. So OCHRE was working towards how can that be best where community works with government and how can that best align. I cannot say it is perfect. In various places it works incredibly well; in other places there is room for improvement, absolutely.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Foy, at the very end I asked the question about how the Powerhouse runs. You talked about how it appeared against other cultural institutions. How does it appear in staff morale when you compare—I think it is called People Matters—to other cultural institutions involving morale?

KATE FOY: I would have to look at the data but my impression was there is a reasonable level of consistency. There are obviously some that perform where the level of staff engagement is very high. The Create Infrastructure team have very high engagement scores. There was nothing, from memory, that concerned me, but I do want to make a point about the structure of the organisation and the questions you are asking about retention and people leaving.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

KATE FOY: The Powerhouse program is a massive program. We have Ultimo and the work that is happening around Ultimo. We have the investment in Parramatta and the work that is happening there.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Castle Hill.

KATE FOY: It is going through everything from a concept to a design, to procurement, to a delivery, as well as operating an existing museum and planning for the operation of not just the Powerhouse at Parramatta but also the way Castle Hill will operate. In any of those larger programs—and, you know, drawing on my experience, whether it was in Transport at Opal or whether it is a telco authority or whether it is in Premier and Cabinet—when you have large programs, you have to make sure your organisation is arranged and structured in a way—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I understand.

KATE FOY: —if I may, to deliver on the priorities at this time. I have worked with Ms Havilah around the organisation arrangements of her leadership team and the way the organisation then is pulled together so that

it can meet the priorities and the demands of those different projects at the time as well as continuing to operate both Ultimo, the Observatory, and planning for the operation of Castle Hill and Parramatta. It is not a binary about people in, people out. It is actually about how you organise your team and then attract the best talent to do it. I know that there have been questions raised about staff morale. I am happy to look at those issues more carefully with Ms Havilah and with the trust and with other relevant people. I am very happy to do that but if there is something specific, I am very happy to answer that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: On that, have you, in fact, as a senior official in the Premier's department raised with Ms Havilah the turnover of staff, not just at the junior level but at the director level? I will not name the names of the individual because I do not think that is fair to them.

KATE FOY: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The positions are the director of design and delivery left; the director of the Parramatta project left; the CFO left; the director of collections, curatorial and exhibitions left; the director of engagement left; and two executive assistants to Ms Havilah have left.

KATE FOY: Ms Havilah and I meet, I think, at around a monthly or bimonthly basis. We meet quite regularly, just the two of us really, to talk and support as a peer relationship, if you like, about her management and leadership and how, you know, I bounce ideas around. We talk a lot about those issues. Some of those positions we may have discussed in specific; some of them not. Like, I would not dive into—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, I am not asking you to dive into the individuals.

KATE FOY: We have had discussions around staff arrangements as a mechanism to support Ms Havilah in her decision-making, not to make decisions on her behalf.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So you think maybe I am being unfair to her.

KATE FOY: I would not say unfair or not.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It might not actually be Ms Havilah's leadership but it could be the direction of the project or the Government or it could be a myriad of other things.

KATE FOY: No, I think you are thinking of—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It might be as simple as the fact that—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Come on, you are not the Minister.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you. You are not the Minister. You have a lot to answer for.

KATE FOY: It is a large organisation. It has to change and alter with what the demands and the priorities are of the both the program and the operations. We talked because that is what leaders in government do in the public sector. We talk with each other; we seek advice and guidance; we provide support, where possible. I would not be the only person that Ms Havilah seeks support from, nor is Ms Havilah the only person I seek support from. She is a very valued part of our executive team in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and now moving over to the new department. We do talk about those structures. We do talk about how she might address issues more broadly in the organisation as well as leveraging the strengths of the organisation. From time to time I will come and present to staff on the various things that are happening across arts and culture in New South Wales or People Matter issues or diversity issues and things like that, but we have a very strong and close working relationship. I am certainly here to provide advice, support and guidance, where possible.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you, Ms Foy. Ms Pitman, when were you appointed head of Create NSW?

ANNETTE PITMAN: I was appointed 17 days ago.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Welcome.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Welcome.

ANNETTE PITMAN: Thank you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Were you in an acting position prior to that?

ANNETTE PITMAN: I was the head of Create Infrastructure prior to that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Did you, in fact, see the departure of senior officials in Create or Create Infrastructure under your time?

ANNETTE PITMAN: There inevitably is turnover in all levels of the organisation, as you would expect in, frankly, a hot job market and a growing team with plenty of opportunities outside of government. So, yes, I mean, there has been turnover in my leadership team, absolutely.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Havilah said there was a 3 per cent turnover at the Powerhouse. What was the turnover of your workforce and how many people are FTEs in Create NSW?

ANNETTE PITMAN: The short answer is that I do not have all that information in front of me, and I do not want to give you the wrong information. So I am happy to take that on notice. But there have been a number of staff at many levels of the organisation that have turned over over the 2½ years that I was in that role.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Now that you are head of Create NSW versus Create Infrastructure, how does that interface with the Powerhouse Parramatta project?

ANNETTE PITMAN: We work very collaboratively with the Powerhouse. In my previous role, we provide project management support for the various Powerhouse projects. We work very closely on a day-to-day basis together, as in my new role as interim chief executive of Create NSW. That relationship will continue. I am still responsible for all the cultural infrastructure projects as well as, more broadly, across the arts and culture and screen parts of our organisation. I enjoy a very collaborative relationship with all of the cultural institutions and the various parties that we support.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What are the projects that you have sight over at the moment?

ANNETTE PITMAN: We provide support across the entire cultural infrastructure portfolio. That includes the projects that are currently in construction, like the various Powerhouse program projects, as we discussed. We just finished Walsh Bay Arts Precinct, which we are very proud of, and we are working with the gallery on Sydney Modern. We recently finished the Theatre Royal project, and we are also doing some work on master planning for the National Art School. I can keep going; there are quite a few.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How much of your activity is centred around the Powerhouse? Is it the lion's share of your work?

ANNETTE PITMAN: No. The Powerhouse is by far the largest program of work that we are working on and, certainly, the scale of that program is impressive, but overall the portfolio of projects in the infrastructure pipeline is also significant. It would not be the lion's share of the pipeline that we have.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You have run through the Powerhouse, Walsh Bay, Sydney Modern, Theatre Royal and the National Arts School—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: All part of the Regional Cultural Fund.

ANNETTE PITMAN: All of the Regional Cultural Fund projects.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: There are about 100 of those.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you, Don. I was going to go to that.

ANNETTE PITMAN: And Creative Capital—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You get 15 minutes at the end, Don.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Sorry, I could not hear your answer, Ms Pitman.

ANNETTE PITMAN: I am sorry. I should not have interrupted.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, he was talking.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I was talking.

The CHAIR: You can interrupt him all you want. You can have the floor.

ANNETTE PITMAN: There is the Creative Capital program, which is a \$60 million program for the provision of grants across New South Wales; the Regional Cultural Fund, with 146 projects across regional New South Wales; and a large program of maintenance and upgrades works to various cultural facilities. I am happy to keep going.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, that is fine. You mentioned Screen NSW when I asked about the duties that you undertake at Create NSW. What is the state of international filmmaking in New South Wales? Prior to COVID, the Government sold New South Wales as a safe destination to make films. Then we had the handling of COVID, where all international production stopped. Have American and other international companies—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: We had 90 films put through.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But then your Government's handling of the crisis—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That is garbage, Walt.

The CHAIR: Can we direct to the witnesses, please.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: He is just asking filler questions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Don, go and have a cup of tea or something.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: He has got nothing to ask of any significance. I am just trying to help him out and fill the time, honestly.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I want to know what the state of international filmmaking in New South Wales is.

ANNETTE PITMAN: Sure. New South Wales is a leading State for screen production in Australia, with over 1,500 screen production businesses employing 9,600 people and generating an annual income of more than \$1.6 billion.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Pitman, thank you for the overview, but I want to know what the state of filmmaking in New South Wales is in the Omicron COVID situation. Has it ground to a halt internationally?

ANNETTE PITMAN: No, not at all.

KATE FOY: It is fantastic.

ANNETTE PITMAN: We have enjoyed a very healthy screen sector throughout the pandemic and before and continuing on. We have been seen as a safe place to bring productions and progress filming and progress post-development as well. So it is a very healthy screen sector that we continue to feed and continue to support.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I just want to come back to OCHRE responding to the evaluation. Again, where is the strategic plan for Aboriginal Affairs up to? Is there a new one coming?

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, currently in the context of OCHRE and then Closing the Gap in terms of the national agreement, yes, we are working towards the new strategy for Aboriginal Affairs.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the ballpark time frame on that?

LILLIAN GORDON: I would have to come back to you on that and take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is it one month, six months or end of the year?

KATE FOY: I think there are probably a couple of things to consider. It is also—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There has not been one since 2019. I do not think it is an unreasonable question.

KATE FOY: It will be certainly this year because we want to match it up—Lillian, sorry, I am probably speaking out of turn now that I am moving out of the building. But you have the strategic work, whether it is OCHRE or Closing the Gap. There is a lot of work that Aboriginal Affairs has done over the past couple of years, particularly in supporting local communities in crisis and events. It is a very important and legitimate role they play in working with the community. That needs to be reflected in those kinds of regional relationships and the emergency management relationships. They have some really important policy work that is being done and driving those five priorities as well as an integrated part of its business. I am sure it will be, you know, out as soon as they can get that done. But, certainly, they are the things that they need to consider.

LILLIAN GORDON: I would think in line with the new financial year at the very least.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. That is helpful. Hopefully you will know what your budget is by then. That will be good. There is the OCHRE evaluation, Closing the Gap and we have got Treasury doing the Indigenous Expenditure Report. Is there anything else happening?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Just to further complicate it, there was actually a self-initiated—or rather a community-initiated and co-designed—evaluation of OCHRE, an interim report and then a final evaluation report, and then there was the Deputy Ombudsman. So, yes, there are two significant rounds of evaluation of OCHRE. You make the point that often members of Aboriginal communities say that they are too consulted, but you often hear quite the reverse, which is inadequately consulted.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, you do hear both of those things, but I think that a lot of it is that they feel that there is a lot of consultation with no outcome. So I think that translates into not consulted because it is not considered what changes as a result of the conversation. I accept that, but I think we are actually talking about the same thing.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: But, in its essence—seemingly, as an outsider looking back on it—OCHRE was about trying to generate means by which Aboriginal communities and community leadership were legitimate and genuine partners in the delivery of social and economic opportunity in their communities with government. That is very much at the heart of the Closing the Gap approach and the reforms. When we describe this, it sounds like a very complex landscape—and, in many ways, it is—but at the heart of it is seeking an expectation from Aboriginal community leadership that government change itself in a way that we can work in partnership and support the aspirations of Aboriginal communities, whether it is through Closing the Gap or the local alliances. As a non-Indigenous person, of course—we work with whoever emerges from community wanting to work with us. It is kind of impossible not to.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I do not want you to see my questions as being particularly harsh about it. I understand it is a very complex environment.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think government generally does not do well with co-design with any communities, let alone Aboriginal communities. I want us to do better. Hence the question, I think it is a very complicated environment. So we have got that, then we have the Treasury doing—

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: The *Indigenous Expenditure Report*.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes. It is developing methodologies which OCHRE, Closing the Gap and others will be evaluated against. Is that what is happening?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: You go.

LILLIAN GORDON: I might give it to Tim to talk to in terms of Closing the Gap.

TIM IRELAND: Treasury is responding to clause 1.13 of the national agreement, which is committing all jurisdictions to undertake a review of Aboriginal-specific expenditure within their jurisdictions. I believe that in November last year Treasury released the interim *Indigenous Expenditure Report*. It raised a number of issues to do with centralised evaluation figures and the like. All of that is being worked through at the moment in terms of what we include in our next implementation plan for Closing the Gap around how we create a centralised view of evaluation data on Aboriginal programs across government.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And that will be trying to pick up the fact that a lot of the data is not there and that the evaluation has not been done. One of the criticisms is, of course, depending on who does the evaluation—I have a quote from a session with one of the peak Aboriginal bodies that talks about how there is no community voice in the evaluation process. So the service delivery items go, "Yes, this was all terrific and we did all these inputs," but if you ask the community on the ground, they might have quite a different view. How is that going to be picked up?

TIM IRELAND: Absolutely, and that is what the National Agreement talks to, around embedding an Aboriginal voice within evaluation approaches and having that level of independence.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How in practice do you see that happening? Again, sometimes these things are easy to say but less easy to deliver.

TIM IRELAND: It is probably a conversation that we need to continue to have as part of our Closing the Gap governance groups, including the New South Wales Joint Council and the Partnership Working Group. It is really about involving Aboriginal voices when evaluation programs are contracted across government, and ensuring that service users are involved in evaluation approaches in programs that are delivered for them.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think that is right. I wanted to ask about an emergency management issue. Some of the issues that were raised during the bushfires—which now seems a long time ago but really wasn't—were around what Aboriginal communities and individuals faced in some of the recovery centres in terms of culturally inappropriate practice and frankly blatant racism. With all the people in evacuation zones, obviously on the North Coast particularly, has there been specific work around working with Aboriginal people in these circumstances, given the issues that were raised during the bushfires?

LILLIAN GORDON: This continues to be approached through COVID and now through the floods. A lot of the work has been through local emergency management committees that are there. We certainly make

sure that there is an Aboriginal voice on those. We are ensuring that we have the mechanisms that I talked about before in terms of what we were calling the COVID Response Group but which has now become the response group for just about every emergency there is.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Everything, yes.

LILLIAN GORDON: I can say that Aboriginal Affairs are on most high-level committees now, particularly on the State Emergency Recovery Committee and so on, at this point. So we have made sure that those voices are very much embedded into those. From the bushfires, for example, with the Department of Customer Service and Service NSW, some things were happening there. We worked closely with Service NSW to understand how those voices needed to be heard and what of their initiatives needed to be put in place with that. I can say that with us now being part of the centre of government in DPC, where previously we have had a solution brokerage role, being in the centre of government means that we are able to pull together government very quickly when it is needed, and we certainly influence right across government in terms of hearing the voices of Aboriginal people—not only hearing the voices but putting in initiatives that then make sure that things are put into place.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I will quickly come back to the solution brokerage issue. Funding was allocated to that, and you have taken on notice how much that was.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Does that mean that that program has now finished and that there is no longer funding for solution brokerage?

LILLIAN GORDON: No. We do not find the need to have a specific solution brokerage role in that way because we are now part of the centre of government.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: DPC.

LILLIAN GORDON: So we are able to enact that in the same way that you would if you put the solution brokerage into play to bring government and communities together fairly quickly on any issue. I think we have proven that certainly through COVID, the bushfires and now the floods as part of that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So there is no separate funding for it, you basically see it as part of your role?

LILLIAN GORDON: No, it is part of our role.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Core business.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you, ex-Minister.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am trying really hard but it is not working.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Former Minister, thank you. You can sit over there if you want to but I do not think you are allowed to.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I remember several years ago there was a lot of consternation and anger in the community under the previous Minister about the lack of funding for a gaming industry. I think they actually—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Fixed it—sorry.

The CHAIR: Let's direct the questions that way, thank you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I think they burned an effigy of you in the street.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Have you got a photo? I would love to see it.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will get one.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: We fixed it, didn't we?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is fixed.

The CHAIR: A Harwin poker machine.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Pitman, is there still the same level of consternation and anger in the gaming industry?

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: There is a right and a wrong answer here.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Or was it with the replacement of the Minister that it has subsided?

ANNETTE PITMAN: I am very sorry to say that at day 17, I do not know that I am prepared to answer this question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Take a swing at it.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You are asking the wrong person. Kate will know.

KATE FOY: Mr Secord, I am very happy to say that that consternation no longer exists because the previous Minister fixed it.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Hear, hear!

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I'm a fixer.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is the—

KATE FOY: It is the PDV rebate—post-digital video production—of 10 per cent. I am happy to give you the figures around that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, can you.

KATE FOY: That now includes gaming as well as incorporating obviously screen. It is very welcome. We are delighted with that policy decision to be able to increase the gaming industry in New South Wales.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I understand that it is growing so much that they are looking at forming their own guild.

KATE FOY: I beg your pardon?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I said that I understand it is an industry that is growing quite rapidly and the designers have actually set themselves up as a guild. It is quite a burgeoning industry.

KATE FOY: Yes. I am happy to give figures, given this is budget estimates.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

KATE FOY: In 2021-22 the rebate has already supported—this is in total—over 1,160 jobs and close to \$160 million expenditure in New South Wales. That is not PDV—that is the post-digital video production—that is something else. We have gaming in there, and I am happy to come back with any breakdown on gaming.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I just wanted to ask a question specifically—there was an issue of the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund, the Youpla Group. Basically it was a funeral fund. You may have to take it on notice, if anyone could let me know what the current status of that is. My understanding is that basically people had paid up to \$10,000.

MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You are nodding.

LILLIAN GORDON: Yes, we are aware of it, but we would absolutely take it on notice to provide you with more information.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: They were Queensland-based but basically signed up a bunch of New South Wales people. Are you able to tell me anything in terms of what has happened as a result of this coming to your attention and what needs to happen next?

LILLIAN GORDON: It has more recently come to our attention. We are certainly looking into that now. We will be able to provide that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I wanted to go back to the Regional Youth programs. There is \$10.3 million; \$1.5 million is for the small grants. We established this morning that seven have been signed off by the department and will be announced in due course and then there is \$3.6 million which is for the flooding-affected communities. Is that right? Does that mean that this \$5.2 million is the bucket for the rest of the Regional Youth funds? Is that correct?

CHRIS HANGER: That is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: To be clear, in terms of the Minister's sign-off, you have got delegation for anything under \$10,000, but anything over that, the Minister needs to sign off on. Is that correct?

CHRIS HANGER: We will clarify because the sign-off differs—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, there has been a lot of discussion at the Public Accountability Committee about what "sign-off" means.

CHRIS HANGER: I know; I have spent a lot of time there.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, so please tell me.

CHRIS HANGER: In this particular program there are three streams, and Julia will be able to elaborate. Essentially, there is a small grants stream for projects less than \$10,000. There is a stream that is for flood and storm-impacted grants, which is from \$10,000 to \$50,000. And then there is one specifically for regional grants, \$10,000 to \$50,000. As I have indicated, the sign-offs differ per stream. For the two larger streams, there is an evaluation panel that includes representatives from Regional New South Wales. I understand for storm and floods—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are they departmental people?

CHRIS HANGER: They will be departmental people, yes. The Office of Regional Youth will lead that, but it will bring in the expertise relevant to the stream of grants that are being considered. I think Health as well is represented there and Resilience NSW with the storm and flood-impacted grants component. That panel makes a recommendation to the Minister and the Minister signs off on those larger grants. For the smaller grants, as Ms Ryan indicated this morning, they are within the departmental delegation and so they are signed off, I believe, actually by either the deputy director or the director. Ms Ryan will confirm.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think it is the deputy in the stuff that I read. That is not really a policy choice; that is just about the delegation the Minister has given you in terms of sign-off of dollars. There has not necessarily been a policy decision; they are the delegations that you work with.

CHRIS HANGER: We have departmental delegations and as we design every program we look to see what is the most appropriate, especially in instances like this where those smaller grants we want to make sure that the money is moving as quickly as we can. It is fair to say if we had done this as one entire round for the entire State we would not be signing off and having projects starting to be contracted and delivered within a month, which is basically where we are.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I understand the design of what you have done, which is basically monthly so it is more flexible. Again, there is no issue from this end around that. That seems to make sense given you have to get it out the door. I am interested in the larger stream that is the non-flood-related stream. In some of the announcements there was talk about mental health support. We know people had a difficult time and we know that there are particular issues in regional New South Wales in relation to the mental health part of it. Is this very much that the bucket of money is just sort of what comes in the door—obviously you assess it against the criteria, but there is not tagged money for mental health support specifically?

CHRIS HANGER: No, it is not by theme. Julia, you might be able to talk in more detail about the type of criteria and projects that we have called out in the program guidelines.

JULIA RYAN: Yes, that is exactly right. In terms of the program design, as Mr Hanger mentioned, we really were keen to reduce any load on already traumatised communities that have gone through such extreme events. As this design was created in response to the flood and storm, we were really keen to make it as collaborative as possible and as open as possible for people to self-determine what their recovery looks like. One of the big parts of our assessment is that these projects are collaborative and that they include the voice of youth. We are really keen that that is displayed in the design and that community groups are working with each other rather than competing against each other for the same fund to do similar projects. There is no delineated amount for particular project types. We really want them to be community-led with the youth design and youth voice in what those projects look like. We are hoping to get some really interesting and unique projects come through.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There is a lot of emergency recovery. There are obviously communities at the moment that are still in recovery; some are still in crisis really. I assume that the capacity for local government and a lot of those organisations to actually apply for the grants is basically nil because their premises are completely ruined and they do not even have a computer; they are lucky if they have a phone. Is there any more assertive outreach through your network of coordinators to try and assist people with that? Use Cabbage Tree Island as an example. It is one community; there is a whole range of different things. They are going to be looking for a bunch of money. The money is going to be coming from a range of different places. At what point does the community become aware of the fact that these grants exist when they are actually looking at their whole-of-community plan in trying to deal with these kind of matters? How does that work? Is it possible or does that not work with our systems?

CHRIS HANGER: We might start with the regional community coordinators—the youth coordinators. They play that critical role in engaging with those key community groups and stakeholders.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How many of them are there?

CHRIS HANGER: I am going to say there are seven.

JULIA RYAN: With two more just about to be employed.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You are about to have nine.

JULIA RYAN: Yes.

CHRIS HANGER: They are based across the State. Their role is to understand the community—in this case particularly the young people and those groups that are most important to young people across regional New South Wales, and make them aware of the range of programs, of which this Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery Initiative is one. Then they work with those community groups because, you are right, the capability and capacity of community groups, particularly those under stress, is one of those perennial challenges that we face in program design, getting the balance right between speed of funding to those groups. Rightly, we have already talked about an Audit Office review of grants processes. There has been the upper House inquiry and findings around how do you get the balance right to not overburden particularly community groups but still be able to say to the public of New South Wales that we have enough information to be able to accurately assess what it is that is being put forward.

In the other observation you have called out Indigenous groups. In my regional development team we have an Aboriginal partnerships team. Their role, similarly, is to connect in particularly around economic opportunities for Aboriginal groups. We are looking at a range of the major projects across regional New South Wales where there is the potential for Aboriginal businesses to contribute particularly in significant projects—for instance, like the Coffs Harbour bypass where you may have major Aboriginal businesses that have capabilities but what we need to do is help them understand the procurement requirements of someone like Transport for New South Wales. In both the youth space and the employment opportunities there, but more generally, that idea of we do need to invest and work alongside community to help them understand those opportunities, absolutely, and we design the way in which our programs are rolled out to make sure that that support is available.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: To go back to the children wellbeing recovery grants programs, in terms of working with community, if people get a grant are they required to do quarterly reporting?

CHRIS HANGER: Again, it will depend on the scale of the grant. So, a \$10,000 grant, clearly we want to know that what has been requested and funded is delivered. Absolutely they do need to report back but, like all things, you want to scale the reporting requirements proportionate both to the quantum of the funding but also the risk associated with the project. I do not know, Julia, if you wanted to say any more on that?

JULIA RYAN: Yes, I think that is exactly right. It is based on the length of the delivery period as well because, should a project be a one-off event, you obviously do not need quarterly reporting, but if it is something that is going to happen over a year, we want to have the regular check-in. So that is also part of the—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But these grants, even for \$50,000, it seems quite a lot. To require a \$50,000 grant to report quarterly, is that the standard reporting? You are saying there is some flexibility. My read of the small grants program was that people had to report quarterly.

CHRIS HANGER: That may be as simple as a project update on how the project is being delivered. I oversee programs from—I am going to say sub-\$10,000 is about as small as we would get because even the time for communities to apply at that scale, they may spend more time than the grant they are getting.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Correct.

CHRIS HANGER: But right up to projects in the tens of millions or larger, and clearly you need to scale the requirements of the funding agreement to the project that you are talking about. Most of the larger scale projects will be performance based. Particularly for community groups, though, they do need initiation funding, so often what we will do is provide payment up-front for a component, at least, of that project.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Madam Chair, I have a few more questions. I want to end with Ms Havilah. Ms Havilah, are you familiar with the NSW Creative Industries Residency Program at the Powerhouse?

LISA HAVILAH: I am, yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How does it operate and how do you determine who gets a residency?

LISA HAVILAH: The way that it operates is that we do a public expression of interest. It also depends on the space that is available at any given time. We do public EOIs, we do a call-out and then we put a panel together that includes an external and members of the Powerhouse team. We have criteria to that assessment process and then we negotiate and finalise a lease, a licence, a partnership agreement.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So it is a subsidised or reduced rent?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Providing space?

LISA HAVILAH: That is correct.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I understand there are about 21 groups, organisations or individuals who, in fact, are current Powerhouse NSW Creative Industries Residency Program participants. Is that correct?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, I can take you through some of them. We have the Australian Graphic Design Association; we have Queer Screen, which is a really great Sydney-based New South Wales organisation; and Romance Was Born, a renowned fashion design company.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Is that a commercial activity?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you have the full list of 21 there?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, I do.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can you read the full list, please?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes. The Australian Graphic Design Association, Ainslie Murray, Anna Tregloan, Cat Jones, Counter Magazine, Department of Homo Affairs, Dinalie Dabarera, Electronic Music Conference, FBI Radio, Filmmaking Collective, Julian Wessels, Kelly Doley, MAPA, Nell, Queer Screen, Romance Was Born, Rosy Deacon, Jordan Gogos, Studio KaaKi, Amanda Williams and First Nations Fashion and Design.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Putting it into a market perspective, what would be the equivalent of the rental space that you are providing to these organisations?

LISA HAVILAH: How much and how many square metres? It depends.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You would have to, as part of your reporting requirements.

LISA HAVILAH: Yes, we did a formal commercial evaluation and then we apply a 50 per cent subsidy.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is the value of the space you are providing?

LISA HAVILAH: I would have to take that on notice. I am very happy to provide it, though.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So there are 21 organisations and it is a public expression of interest to be involved in this. Could you provide on notice, for those 21 companies, the value of their subsidised space?

LISA HAVILAH: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That was my last question.

The CHAIR: Unless the Government has any questions and if there is no objection—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We are going to give you an early mark.

The CHAIR: Unless there is anything that anyone wants to confirm or anything that was taken on notice that you are ready to provide answers to now? In which case, thank you, everybody, for your attendance today. The secretariat will be in touch with any questions that were taken on notice, and responses will be due in 21 days. Thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.