



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY  
Ms Leanne Castley MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA

### **Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021** **ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE** **3 March 2022**

Asked by Leanne Castley MLA on 3 March 2022: Emily Springett, Executive Branch Manager, Engagement, Compliance and COVID-19 Response, Access Canberra took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Uncorrected Proof Transcript 3 March 2022, Pages 67-69]

In relation to:

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. So my next question is around, I think—I have got a couple of things in one subject here, on page 20 of the report, there is talk about education sessions, visits to businesses affected by public health directions, 4,500 of these. Are these education sessions different to the targeted compliance inspections?

**Ms Cheyne:** Thank you, Ms Castley. We have Emily Springett on the line, who is an executive branch manager responsible for compliance and she will be able to go to the detail.

**Ms Springett:** Thank you. So Emily Springett, Executive Branch Manager, Engagement, Compliance and COVID-19 response with Access Canberra, I have read and understand the privilege statement. So through the COVID compliance, we undertake a number of different engagements with business, some are pure compliance checks, some are education related activities, for example, when there was a change in restriction we would have particular webinars, and other activities that were often pinpointed.

So for the hospitality sector, the retail sector, gyms for example and to provide them with information, targeted information, directly around what it meant for them and how it could relate to their business. So in terms of those particular figures, they relate more to that educative element. In terms of compliance checks, overall, since the beginning of COVID, we have undertaken more than 22,000 of those.

**THE CHAIR:** And how well attended were the webinars for the businesses to be educated?

**Ms Springett:** So it would depend on the sector, and it would depend on the timing and the extent of the restriction lift. So depending on the comfort level at a particular point in time, the webinars would have various numbers of participants. And what we always did, noting businesses are incredibly busy, is ensure that the webinars were recorded and placed on the business hub on the COVID-19 website so sectors could go back and watch them at their leisure.

We would also cross-promote them through the business EDM that went out to different sectors, and also, through direct correspondence from Access Canberra to those business sectors.

**THE CHAIR:** So can I get numbers on businesses that attended the education sessions and just to be clear, so this is—you are educating businesses on where the restrictions were up to and to CBR check-ins, that sort of stuff? Or was this around business doing business during COVID.

**Ms Springett:** It would depend on when the different webinars were held, so some were very specific, it was around after restriction lift and it very much went into the detail around this is the change to the restriction, this is what it means, here is some ways and practical tips where you can come into compliance with this particular restriction.

All our efforts through the compliance work always had an element of providing information around supports available across government, so it was never just a one approach to our activity. We are very mindful that we—all our engagements are multifaceted, they cover both compliance, support, any government support available to really reduce the burden on business in terms of multiple visits.

**Ms Cheyne:** And Ms Castley, just to add to that though, the webinar is, of course, not the only way that we are communicating the restriction changes to businesses, so whenever there are those restriction changes, Emily partners with the executive branch manager of the health protection service and they issue a notice to businesses that puts that in writing to them as well.

But we appreciate that different people and different businesses want to engage with government in different ways, so that is why there is different service offerings there.

**THE CHAIR:** And so, not just webinars, they were on site sessions that people could attend. And with the targeted compliance inspections, what justifies a targeted inspection, was it people complaining from the community, was it tip offs, why would you target businesses?

**Ms Springett:** So just circling back first to the minister's comment around the direct emails and engagement. That is correct, we have sent 244,000 direct emails to businesses advising them about what the restriction meant to them since the beginning, in terms of what makes a targeted engagement, or compliance check, we operate through a risk-based approach and we operate through an engage, educate and enforce framework.

We also have a compliance engagement and enforcement framework which is publicly available on the health website, which sets out our compliance approach when it comes to COVID there is a range of reasons we might attend a particular business, one is if a restriction lift particularly impacted on a particular sector. So for example, if there was a change primarily affecting hospitality through occupancy changes, we would go out to that particular sector to provide them with information support advice on how they calculate their occupancy, et cetera.

We also perform a function if there are complaints against businesses, we will risk assess those and attend particular businesses following that. Others are incidental engagements if we are out doing some reactive checks in a particular area following complaints, we will call into other businesses. Our work is always data led and it is risk-based.

There are times when we would engage very closely with the Office of the Chief Health Officer as well, around what particular areas of focus might need to be applied, based on what we were seeing in the community based on restriction changes. So there is a lot of data assessment and ...(indistinct)... [2.09.09] that goes underneath how we target our resources when it comes to COVID compliance.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Just to be clear, my question taken on notice was about getting those figures, but how many people attended the webinars in total, that would be great, thank you. I see Mr Cain; you have a supplementary.

**MINISTER CHEYNE:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

In 2021, Access Canberra held four COVID-19 Public Health Direction changes webinars with a total of 258<sup>1</sup> attendees. These webinars were promoted via direct email to industries and through the Economic Development Directorate e-newsletter (Business EDM). A recording of each webinar was placed on the [ACT Business Hub website](#) for those who could not attend the live webinar.

Attendance at each webinar:

- 13 October 2021 – Webinar for the Hospitality, Fitness and Personal Services sectors
  - 119 business representative attendees
- 21 October 2021 – Webinar for Retail sector
  - 3 business representative attendees
- 28 October 2021 – Webinar for Real Estate sector
  - 112 business representative attendees
- 10 November – Webinar for the Hospitality sector
  - 24 business representative attendees

Online views via the ACT Government Business Hub:

- Webinar for the Hospitality, Fitness and Personal Services sectors – 34 online views
- Webinar for retail sector – 19 online views
- Webinar for Real Estate Sector – 26 online views
- Webinar for Hospitality Sector – 1 online view

In addition to the business webinars, the Access Canberra COVID-19 Compliance team presented at the Gema Group (hospitality/event catering) supervisor training sessions on 3 March 2022 to a total of 28 participants. The COVID-19 Compliance team educated the participants on current Public Health Directions in place and provided an overview about COVID-19 compliance inspections.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality

Signature



Date:

16/3/22

By the Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Tara Cheyne MLA

<sup>1</sup> Number of participants include the total number of business representative attendees. The number of businesses in total cannot be provided as an exact figure due to: some business having multiple attendees, some attendees being industry body representatives, participants registering with personal email addresses, and some participants not providing details of the business they represented.