



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Mr Mark Parton MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Asked by Leanne Castley MLA on 26 July 2023: Andrew Barr MLA took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Uncorrected Hansard Transcript 26 July 2023, PAGEs 85-87]

In relation to: The Enlighten Festival.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you.

I have some questions about Enlighten. And this last—yes, Enlighten, basically. Wondering if you have had any complaints or concerns from vendors, food vendors, and what the nature of the complaints were for this year's Enlighten Festival? The Food Forage area?

Mr Barr: So I think the slip at the last part of your question is implying something in relation to the procurement of the food—an element of the food component of the festival.

MS CASTLEY: Yes.

Mr Barr: So where you are in fact going is why did the Forage not win the tender?

MS CASTLEY: Yes. Again, yes, just want to get clarification on that.

Mr Barr: Yes. Well may as well just as the question. Who would like to deal with that, Mr Triffitt.

Mr Triffitt: Yes, Ross Triffitt, Executive Branch Manager, Events ACT. So for Enlighten 2023 we ran an open process for food vendors. They were food vendors for a variety of events across the festival and a curated food experience that would be provided during Enlighten Illuminations. Considerations around the assessment of those applications were in relation to value for money, the experience that could be provided at the festival and how they may add to the festival. There were some other criteria that I unfortunately do not have in front of me, but that was certainly some of the key criteria.

Through that process, through Street Food Live, were successful, a Sydney-based company for the curated food experience. Street Food Live, so it was a number of food vendors with a theming and experience to effectively replace the night noodle markets that had been operating previously at Enlighten.

MS CASTLEY: were the Canberra food vendors unable to give that same street food experience?

Mr Triffitt: Well, we did have Canberra vendors in addition to that. I believe 71 per cent of the food vendors that operated at the Enlighten festival were local.

MS CASTLEY: Can you confirm that for me?

Mr Triffitt: I will confirm the exact number for you.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you. Have you had any complaints at all or have they just come to my office? Have you had any complaints from other Canberra food vendors that missed out or have they just complained to me, or have you heard from them as well?

Mr Triffitt: Yes. Yes, it is a highly competitive process, so it is not unusual for us to get complaints from local businesses that do miss out through the process. I think yes, you know, there are definitely food vendors that are disappointed that they do miss out on the opportunity to trade at Enlighten. It is a highly competitive process.

MS CASTLEY: Then, I just wonder about the—and I know this is not this portfolio but I know part of the secure local jobs talks about giving preference to the ACT and how does this stack up then if—I know it is highly competitive, I know we wanted a curated version, so what do we say to Canberra businesses when we end up going to Sydney?

Mr Triffitt: One of the criteria is a consideration as to whether they are a local business. So, local businesses are favoured through the process.

Mr Barr: Yes. I guess the counter-balance to that is obviously there is a commercial element to this. Just speaking hypothetically, if a particular set of vendors come for free and another set of vendors wish to be paid a significant amount of money, that would be a factor that the procurement would need to take into account. So the dilemma in this is should taxpayers be subsidising the operations or not beyond the subsidy that is already provided to stage the event, and so there is a competitive element to this and part of that is price, it has to be value for money or else the set of questions that would be asked in Estimates would be, why did the government go with the most expensive provider.

MS CASTLEY: There can I ask you what was the cost—how many of them came for free, and what was the cost that the Canberra—

Mr Barr: I do not know, I am just using a hypothetical example, I am not referring to this particular procurement.

MS CASTLEY: Well, can you confirm whether that occurred or not?

Mr Barr: Look, I think there is some commercial issues that need to be understood in the context of the procurement process. What information I can provide I will, but in a hypothetical example, which does occur from time to time, there will be a cost differential for the taxpayer between the local provider and indeed often between certain local providers and other local providers as well.

MS CASTLEY: Sure.

Mr Barr: So, value for money has to be a factor in this consideration for the department.

MS CASTLEY: And would that feedback have gone back to our local vendors?

Mr Barr: Again, that is a hypothetical example, so I cannot comment—other than—

MS CASTLEY: Can you give me something concrete as to—

Mr Barr: —what I can—well I can—I will take on notice what I can provide to you without revealing commercial in confidence elements of the procurement, yes.

MS CASTLEY: Yes, I do not need to know business names, I just want to know whether they were ACT or New South Wales, were they offering free services and could that be something our Canberra vendors learn. I just would like to understand how we can help ACT businesses win at this.

Mr Barr: Yes. To be absolutely clear, that was a hypothetical example-

MS CASTLEY: I understand, no, I understand.

Mr Barr: —I am not suggesting that that was the case in this particular procurement, but it has been the case in other procurements in the past.

MS CASTLEY: I completely understand, I just want to help Canberra businesses win in their own home town.

Mr Barr: Sure.

Andrew Barr MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

The number of local food vendors for the Enlighten Festival was 41 out of a total of 58 (71% local and 29% interstate), inclusive of the curated food experience. All successful vendors paid a fee to the Territory to trade at the Enlighten Festival, including curated food experience. No fees were paid by the Territory to vendors, including the curated food experience.

Inclusive of the curated food experience, almost all vendors were willing to pay the Territory fees to participate, one requested the Territory pay fees to them for their services. None were offering free services.

Unsuccessful vendors were from both the ACT and NSW, and a debrief is provided to unsuccessful vendors, if requested. The debrief includes feedback on their application, its assessment and any commercial considerations relating to their application.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024

Signature: 

Date: **3.8.23**

By the Minister for Economic Development, Andrew Barr MLA