

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE ARTS
IN REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT GERALDTON
ON FRIDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2003**

SESSION 2

Members

**Mr D.A. Templeman (Chairman)
Mr L. Graham (Deputy Chairman)
Mr J.N. Hyde
Mr A.P. O’Gorman
Ms S.E. Walker**

[10.00 am]

McDONALD, MRS GLENYS
Manager, Community Development,
City of Geraldton,
examined:

SHOEMARK, MR GEOFFREY
Executive Manager, Technical Services,
City of Geraldton,
examined:

COPE, MR STEPHEN
Executive Manager, Development and Community Services,
City of Geraldton,
examined:

The CHAIRMAN: The committee hearing is a proceeding of Parliament and warrants the same respect that proceedings in the House itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you understand the notes attached to it?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you receive and read an information for witnesses briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Could each of you state your full names, and the capacity in which you appear before the committee.

Mr Shoemark: I am the executive manager of technical services with the City of Geraldton. My role in the arts is primarily managing and coordinating our public arts program.

Mrs McDonald: I am manager of community development at the City of Geraldton. My role is community development projects, a number of which are related to arts and culture, including seniors and youth, murals, and assisting the Sunshine Festival, the Australia Day celebrations and other community activities.

Mr Cope: I am the executive manager of development and community services with the City of Geraldton. In my role I have responsibility for community services, including some involvement with the arts.

The CHAIRMAN: I will provide some background. The committee, as you are aware, is conducting an inquiry into the arts in regional Western Australia. Part of our task in conducting the inquiry is to travel to regional Western Australia. We have so far been to a number of regions and by the time we have completed our inquiry we will have covered all the regions in the State. Our key terms of reference, which you may have seen, cover economic, cultural and social aspects of the arts. We are very interested in finding out exactly what sorts of arts outcomes are being delivered in regional Western Australia. We are very keen to understand, from your perspective,

the impact and the involvement of local government in delivering arts outcomes. We would then like to ask you a series of questions about elements relating to our terms of reference. You may like to point out to the committee in the process relevant issues you would like to bring to our attention. I thank you on behalf of the committee. We are a parliamentary committee, not a government committee, so we have representatives from both major parties, and we also have an Independent member. We report direct to Parliament, not to the Government. Our inquiry is expected to conclude by April next year, with a report being tabled in Parliament some time in April. We would expect that, as part of that report, we will have a series of recommendations, which is the normal result of an inquiry of this nature. I will begin by asking Mrs McDonald, from the local government perspective - in this case the City of Geraldton - what is the scope of the influence the City of Geraldton has in the arts.

Mrs McDonald: The city plays quite a major role in the arts. We are the support mechanism of just about every community group out there, such as the Arts and Cultural Development Council, which the city funds with \$25 000 a year; we fund the Give Me Geraldton Any Day program, and offer support to the program where possible. In the area of youth and seniors, we get involved in a range of art projects. At the QEII Centre, which is our seniors' centre, we have just hosted art classes fully funded by the city. A lot of youth interest is in art on skate parks and in art workshops. The city is really a facilitator of the community needs. The city has played a major role with community development projects including the HMAS *Sydney* memorial. The other major focus is on the Queens Park Theatre, the library and our public arts and roads programs, and of course the art gallery. We are a major facilitator. We have also just established a Geraldton cultural advisory committee, which includes the managers of the museum and the art gallery. It is seen as a way forward to facilitate this area a bit better.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the City of Geraldton gone through a cultural planning process?

Mrs McDonald: Yes, we have.

The CHAIRMAN: How long ago did you do that?

Mrs McDonald: Steve can answer that, he was there before me.

Mr Cope: It started in 1997. A regional cultural plan was completed in 1999, and a further grant was obtained to prepare an implementation plan in 2000. As Glenys mentioned, we now have a cultural advisory committee that is trying to progress those recommendations.

Mr J.N. HYDE: From whom did the grant come?

[10.10 am]

Mr Cope: The country arts network, I think.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Do you mean the Community Arts Network of Western Australia?

Mr Cope: Yes; that is right. I believe you are speaking to Pat Gallaher - she will be a full bottle on this.

The CHAIRMAN: Was that a regional cultural plan or a city plan?

Mrs McDonald: It was both. We did a regional one and then a Geraldton one.

Mr J.N. HYDE: In New South Wales the local councils agreed to the Local Government Act being amended so that every council had to do a cultural plan. Being a local government and an arts person, I think that is a great idea, and I also know, from my experience in local government, that it is not overly arduous. In fact, most good councils are probably doing it already, or carrying out a whole suite of policies. Have you, as professional officers, any view on this? Obviously, you have been through all the planning, but would making the plan compulsory be beneficial or not?

Mr Cope: We obviously regard it as -

Mr J.N. HYDE: You already have to do principal activities, planning and other stuff like that.

Mr Shoemark: I suppose there has to be a benefit to the process. In other words, most of the things we do that are not forced upon us but are part of processes, need to be done in such a way that they achieve something at the end. They are either management or development strategies. Something comes out of it at the end. It is not a file that sits on a desk. It must have some implementation in it, to make it workable.

Mr J.N. HYDE: What about in terms of transparency? In Australia local government is the biggest funder of the arts and yet, if we walked down Marine Terrace and asked people what the City of Geraldton does for the arts, many people would scratch their heads. They do not see the link between the Sunshine Festival, community buildings and the arts and so on. I argue that there is a need for transparency. It is one of the good things local government does.

Mr Shoemark: You are right, yes. People do not understand what is done.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Libraries take a lot of funding and they are integral to the arts and to communities.

Mrs McDonald: In Geraldton people are aware that art is an integral part of our life, and Geoff's department should be given accolades for that, because of the public roads and roundabouts program. People get quite excited about what sort of public art is going into the roundabouts in their area. We are getting quite a name for the fact that we have a lot of public art around the place.

The CHAIRMAN: How much of the public art is local content?

Mr Shoemark: Probably 90 per cent. The only time it has not been is when the State Government, through a per cent for art project on a major capital structure, has preferred to use a Perth or outside-based artist.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you give an example of that?

Mr Shoemark: Stage 1 of the Batavia Coast Marina was done through LandCorp. Major artworks there were done by a guy named Tony Jones, who is a Perth-based sculptor and artist. I think the public art at the front of the police station was done by the same artist.

Mr J.N. HYDE: That public art still goes out to tender, though, does it not?

Mr Shoemark: Yes, they usually involve a public art consultant - help me here Steve -

Mr Cope: Malcolm McGregor.

Mr Shoemark: Malcolm McGregor seems to be used by agencies quite regularly, and we use Malcolm too, in some of our capacity, where he goes through a process of selecting artists, putting a brief together and that sort of process. One of the problems we find in Geraldton in relation to public art is that there are a number of creative people, but not too many who can put that creativity into the practical side of things. You have to have some engineering and structural background to create public art, hence that is why I am involved in things. Two or three artists in town are quite good at that. The other type of public art is probably more in the area of community art, involving murals and things like that, that can be done by an artist rather than a public arts-type person.

Mr J.N. HYDE: You have made quite a strong point. It is certainly my experience in local government. To have technical services involved in the art is amazing; it is wonderful. Today, in terms of graffiti damage and other issues like that, those engineering issues are just so important.

Mr Shoemark: Correct.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Does your council have a per cent for art policy itself?

Mr Shoemark: Yes, we have developed a policy or a procedures manual based on the State's per cent for art process. We have been told that that is currently being reviewed, and the minister is about to release a revision of the process. I think it is to be released on the sixteenth of this month.

We are waiting for that, because we want to review our procedures manual to try and fall into line with whatever those principles are. The procedures manual we adopted was a variation on the State's original program, which I think came out in the late 1990s. However, based on our experience of actually doing art-type projects, we had to vary it a bit to make it a little bit more flexible and quicker, in some instances, where we are doing smaller projects.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Do you have a compulsory percentage for art for private developments above a certain level?

[10.20 am]

Mr Shoemark: No, that policy has not been introduced.

Mr Cope: Do you mean on development applications?

Mr J.N. HYDE: Yes.

Mr Cope: No, we do not.

Mr Shoemark: I suppose we would like to encourage people. If you have any ideas about how that can be achieved, that would be wonderful.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Does Mandurah also do that?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr J.N. HYDE: We have made it compulsory. I do not know whether it is quite unchallengeable, but most times, through negotiations, if it involves a \$2 million or \$3 million development, developers these days see the benefits of public art and want to do it anyway.

The CHAIRMAN: Steve, this might be a question for you as the manager: could you provide a ballpark dollar figure of how much of the City of Geraldton's overall budget is allocated to arts and culture?

Mr Cope: We could certainly research it for you and give you a figure. I have some figures that I can give you now. We contribute \$25 000 a year to the Arts and Cultural Development Council of Geraldton, which Glenys mentioned.

Mr Shoemark: Queens Park Theatre.

Mrs McDonald: And \$5 000 for youth projects.

Mr Cope: The council provides \$5 000 to youth projects and provides community group grants.

Mrs McDonald: Some of them are sports related, but for some of the others it is about \$80 000.

Mr Cope: An amount of \$80 000. The council gives \$6 000 to the Give Me Geraldton Any Day initiative.

The CHAIRMAN: Does Give Me Geraldton Any Day have a more tourism-related focus?

Mr Cope: It is activities related.

Mrs McDonald: It is a vibrant town-type activity. They get very involved in the welcome mural and multicultural days - that type of thing.

The CHAIRMAN: So there are some specific Give Me Geraldton Any Day activities that are programs for the year?

Mrs McDonald: Or it provides administrative support to other smaller groups that wish to get involved.

Mr Cope: It is also the convener of the WA State Coastal Conference. However, that is an unusual one for that group. Most of its activities are fairly events based.

The CHAIRMAN: So Give Me Geraldton Any Day is actually a committee?

Mr Cope: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: It is overseen by a committee. It is a project-based committee that has a budget of \$6 000.

Mrs McDonald: From the city. It is probably wider than that.

The CHAIRMAN: Does it also receive some tourism money?

Mrs McDonald: It gets whatever grants it can from wherever.

The CHAIRMAN: Is its focus to provide for Geraldton and to get Geraldton people involved?

Mrs McDonald: It is about life in Geraldton and the good things about Geraldton.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr Cope: The city this year contributed \$12 000 to the Sunshine Festival. That is currently being held - it is happening this week. Money is also provided for Australia Day.

Mrs McDonald: That is about \$10 000. We actually give \$3 500 in cash, plus a lot in kind.

Mr Cope: Yes, plus in kind. The council contributes \$5 000 towards Christmas decorations.

Mrs McDonald: This year.

Mr Cope: Some of the big budget items are the library, the Queens Park Theatre and the regional art gallery. The city's contribution to that would be in the order of \$250 000 this year.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Is that to the art gallery or to those three?

Mr Cope: To the art gallery.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Do you have a figure for the library?

Mr Cope: No, I do not, but we can supply it.

Mr J.N. HYDE: One reason I am an advocate for the cultural plan is that many local government budgets do not seem to be able to quarantine or be transparent about how much is actually spent on the arts. Is Queens Park Theatre a profit-making business unit? If not, what is the subsidy in ballpark figures? Having performed at the opening in 1982 I know from the very early days that it can be a massive drain. The State Government builds these beautiful buildings for you and then you are left to fund them for eternity.

Mrs McDonald: A bit like the Queen Elizabeth II Centre for seniors. I know about the seniors' centre.

Mr Shoemark: From memory it is not running at a huge loss. They have scaled things down. What happened was that the people who run the Albany 3 Cinemas set up a business here called the Geraldton 4 Cinemas. The cinema used to run out of the Queens Park Theatre, so that part came out. It continued for a while by running alternative movies and things like that, but that has been scaled down. The theatre is now focused mainly on picking major live shows and ones from which it can generally make a profit. It holds some events that do not make a profit, but those are picked for cultural reasons, just to provide some variation to the community. It may be a musical or various things to which large numbers may not go. The theatre also supports the schools that run concerts, and its own events.

Mr J.N. HYDE: We are talking to the Queens Park Theatre person later today. Is there a council budget - an entrepreneur fund - for the theatre as part of that?

Mr Shoemark: It is run as a separate business unit.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it overseen by a board?

Mr Shoemark: There is a management committee which reports to council.

Mr Cope: The structure is that the management committee has an advisory role. You are speaking to the representative this afternoon about that. Those committees generally report through a standing committee of council - in that case the finance committee - to council.

Mr Shoemark: To explain the flexibility of these management committees, they can run themselves within the budget that has been set. However, if they want to shift funds around in a major manner or to do something outside that, such as get a loan for money to do something, they must go back and report to council to get that adopted as part of the budget.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the subsidy figure that council gives to the Queens Park Theatre?

Mr Shoemark: I do not know off the top of my head.

Mrs McDonald: They will provide that for you.

The CHAIRMAN: I am very interested in that because we have a similar model in Mandurah.

Mr Shoemark: It is not quite as large as our Aquarena.

Mr Cope: Can we perhaps go back to your question about a compulsory arts and culture policy?

Mr J.N. HYDE: The plan?

Mr Cope: Yes. With the regional cultural plan that was prepared, what tends to happen with these projects is that they start with themes and set out a range of things. In the case of Geraldton it was things like the natural environment, regional identity, the arts, townscape and urban design. As we worked through the process we found that many of the more than 100 recommendations were already being picked up in different ways by different elements of the council or community groups. It became an exercise of trying to identify whether there were overlaps and who should be responsible for picking up particular things. The current cultural advisory committee has become very much a project-based committee. It does not assume a hands-on, motherhood role; it is more a project-based role for specific things such as signage. They have identified where there are gaps and they are picking up on those.

Mr J.N. HYDE: That is often the benefit of planning; it shows where the gaps are. You do not worry about the things that are working beautifully, you pick up the gaps.

Mr Cope: I think the City of Geraldton would have no difficulty whatsoever with the plan. We already have it. However, I wonder about other smaller councils or those that are not so well supported by their communities.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I would like to touch on that. You mentioned regional issues. In New South Wales the arts are pretty much based on regional councils, which tend to involve four to six councils per region. Here in the mid west there are 19 councils. Obviously, the cultural plan for some of the tiny councils that have only two staff would be two lines. Is there much liaison within the regional council model for cooperation on arts, or is it not a priority?

[10.30 am]

Mr Shoemark: Probably not. The majority of people from those local government areas probably come to the city of Geraldton for culture, because it is where everything is.

Mr Cope: There are, of course, some very successful events such as QFest.

Mr Shoemark: There are smaller festivals and shows. You could probably call the agricultural shows cultural festivals, such as the one for Chapman Valley.

Mrs McDonald: They are cemented in the identity of the people.

Mr Cope: There are some very strong and ongoing partnerships between the city and the Shire of Greenough, and to a lesser extent Chapman Valley, because there are a number of joint committees on cultural issues. Do we have a shire representative on the cultural plan?

Mrs McDonald: Yes, we do, and also on seniors and youth and those sorts of things.

Mr Cope: The partnerships are strong in the greater Geraldton region.

Mr Shoemark: The other thing that has happened recently is that we have started to set up a voluntary regional organisation council between ourselves, Northampton, Irwin, Greenough and Chapman Valley, because we are the coastal councils that are a part of a regional road group. That is the way we act. Our initial thoughts in those areas have been strategically around plant and construction activities and contracts, but that is not to say that it will not move into other areas in the future.

Mr J.N. HYDE: There are ROCs everywhere.

Mr Shoemark: It has not been given a name and it is not formally set up as such. It is in its infancy at the moment. However, there is nothing to say that it could not be extended to other activities in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: What organisation does the City of Geraldton recognise as being the peak arts body?

Mr Cope: In Geraldton?

The CHAIRMAN: Both in Geraldton and the region.

Mr Cope: The Arts and Cultural Development Council of Geraldton.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the interface between council and the ACDC? The council provides \$25 000 in funding a year. What does the council expect from the ACDC?

Mrs McDonald: It provides a report.

Mr Cope: We have some work to do in perhaps identifying strategic expectations of the ACDC. Broadly, the city expects a range of programs to be delivered to as wide a cross-section of the community as possible. That appears to be happening. The city has been funding that group for five or six years fairly consistently at \$25 000 a year. The feedback we have had from the ACDC is that this funding has enabled it to attract substantial funding from elsewhere, which has contributed to a growth in membership and programs. I think you saw some of that last night.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr Cope: That is the ACDC. Of course, that is a voluntary group. It has grant-funded employees in terms of a programs officer, a curator and a secretary. Prior to the ACDC, the city funded the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery in partnership with the Western Australian Art Gallery. The city's contribution to that is to provide and maintain the building, and to provide information technology support. The Western Australian Art Gallery provides the staff. We can provide you with figures from the current budget which show that the overall contribution of the city is around \$250 000 at present. The art gallery has a role and ACDC has a role. They are different, but clearly a lot of networking takes place between the two.

Mr J.N. HYDE: What is the benefit to the council of this art gallery relationship? It is unique in WA.

Mr Cope: It brings exhibitions to the city, which can then be displayed in the required environment. You might want to explore this point with the art gallery curator.

Mr J.N. HYDE: We know all that. I am just interested in why the council, as the administrator of public money such as rates and everything else, still bothers to do this. I was here when the building was kept. A solution to keep this silly old building was to turn it into an art gallery.

Mr Cope: It makes travelling exhibitions available to the public.

Mrs McDonald: That is an opportunity that we possibly would not otherwise have.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I will ask some more leading questions. Does the community value it? Has anybody conducted an economic analysis of it in terms of tourists and whether it makes Geraldton more attractive? Is it a community building, or is it just a prestige thing to the council on the web site?

Mrs McDonald: I see it as being really a community building, because it has been opened up for a range of launches. We have had classical music events in there as well as art. People who normally would not walk in the door of an art gallery have gone there for some other function, such as school art competitions, musical soirees or what have you. Culturally appropriate exhibitions are sometimes held, so people are there. The city has quite a large amount of lovely art in its own right. Some of the community activities are getting people in the door. If there were ever a thought of it not being there, I am sure you would hear the reaction of how valuable it is in the community. These guys would perhaps know the economic side of things better.

Mr Cope: I do not know whether we have done that analysis, but we are actually doing a survey of visitor numbers over the next six months, so that will turn up some information. That is due to start very shortly. That is to do with the opening hours, but we are also asking people questions about where they come from. The gallery runs programs during school holidays, which brings school kids in. Also, the people who have been in Geraldton a long time say that it is great to have the art gallery to counterbalance the sporting and recreation side of things, and that it is the type of service that the city should provide as well as maintaining all the sports grounds.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Great.

Mr Shoemark: It also records cultural heritage. Part of the arts is that, as we purchase pieces of art, stories and information obviously go with that. It is retaining the heritage.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery the custodian of the city's collection?

Mr Shoemark: Correct.

The CHAIRMAN: Has that collection been valued?

Mr Shoemark: It would have been. Mark would be able to give you details of that.

Mr J.N. HYDE: In the 1970s and 1980s some of the things local councils did to attract doctors, nurses and teachers were such basic things as providing swimming pools. That was really important. The Government created the community sporting and recreation facilities fund and has funded amazing swimming pools and sporting infrastructure all over the State. There are regional sports officers all over the State. It is certainly my strong belief that something like a gallery and the arts is an incredible way to attract people to areas. If I were a teacher looking at somewhere on the map on which to put a dot, something like the arts would be a big attractor.

Mr Shoemark: It adds to that package. Geraldton is starting to get a package. There is the maritime museum, which has cultural plus other information such as heritage information and so forth. Basically, there is a lot of information there. There is the sporting side of things. Geraldton has Aquarena and other great sporting and recreation facilities. That is the other balance. The theatre provides other facilities. There are seniors' facilities. It is another part of the jigsaw puzzle.

Mrs McDonald: The HMAS *Sydney* memorial has had an incredible impact on visitor numbers to Geraldton. It has been absolutely phenomenal.

Mr Shoemark: It is a world-class piece of public art. It is quite impressive.

Mrs McDonald: It is impressive. It is sort of cutting edge technology as well. It is fine to have a concept, but then you have to turn the concept of a dome into an engineering feat in a very short space of time, plus there was the sandblasting of the photographs on the wall, which is reasonably new technology. That has made quite a difference to Geraldton. We have to try to quantify visitor numbers. We did not do that initially. All we know now is that the Geraldton visitors centres are

saying that the first thing people who walk in the door want to know is where the memorial is. Visitor numbers have increased quite substantially.

[10.40 am]

Mr J.N. HYDE: It would have the figure for visitor numbers to the memorial.

Mrs McDonald: Yes, it has. I can provide you with the amount by which that figure has increased in the past 12 months because we just put it in an application form for the top tourist town.

Mr J.N. HYDE: That would be useful because one of the things we are hoping to do out of this inquiry is to show how valuable the arts are in regional Western Australia. That would be great.

Mrs McDonald: One of the things that was said to us at the beginning when we were trying to get funding for the memorial was that old icons like the Big Apple and the Big Banana and those things that councils did were not on because people wanted a visitor experience. That was used against us when we tried to get funding for the memorial. All along we said that the memorial is an experience in itself, whether or not you have a relative there. That has proved to be the case. I would like us to somehow document the visitor numbers and to see where they go from here. We can get the tourist figures, which are the only ones we have to go on at the moment. There are always cars up there no matter what time of day or night.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Cope, you mentioned council funds for the Arts and Cultural Development Council of Geraldton Inc youth projects, "Give me Geraldton any day" and the Queens Park Theatre. There is quite a range. What happens if a small group starts up a literary program? Some councils have a seeding grant or a project grant. Does council support any of those one-off initiatives?

Mr Cope: Council has a system in which community groups can request donations. It is built into the budget process. Donations are called for and there is formal advertising early in the calendar year. We receive requests and council evaluates them. Beyond that there is a system of which I am not very informed of self-supporting loans, certainly for sporting clubs. I am not aware whether we have used any for community groups.

The CHAIRMAN: I refer to the seniors centre. You mentioned that you recently had a project in which seniors were involved in arts-related projects.

Mrs McDonald: Council is changing the philosophy of the seniors centre. Once upon a time council provided the building, which ran at a loss as a result of all the maintenance etc. It was available to senior groups to hire and run their own activities. Council has become involved in trying to attract more seniors in the wider Geraldton region to utilise the centre and we have looked at gaps in services. The city is hosting a number of activities to make seniors in retirement active. One of the activities that we are piloting is free art classes for seniors. We also provide a free cup of tea and free newspapers. We are trying to get people in there so that they can join the fitness classes and walking groups and be involved in table tennis and bowls.

The CHAIRMAN: Do they have to be a member of a seniors group to join?

Mrs McDonald: No. In the past they had to be a member of the particular seniors group that was running the activity. However, now they do not; they can just walk in the door. We are hosting art classes and covering the costs to get the idea entrenched. Perhaps later on if we do not have the funding we will charge for the art classes. At the moment we want there to be a whole range of things that people can do.

The CHAIRMAN: Yesterday we visited Theatre '8', which is unique in many respects because it owns its own property. In terms of art asset infrastructures, apart from Theatre '8', which owns its own, I assume that most community groups and organisations utilise council facilities - that is, their halls, meeting rooms etc. Is that correct?

Mr Shoemark: Except ACDC, which leases.

Mr J.N. HYDE: And Sydney Fong.

Mrs McDonald: Yes. The city contributes to the Theatre '8' budget. I think in this budget we are supplying new curtains and the like.

Mr Shoemark: Or we might seal their car park. They are little things or in-kind-type activities that can be added to the budget as value adding. They probably would not support a total reconstruction of something unless they were doing grant funding or something like that through another process. It is where it can help with activities.

Mrs McDonald: They usually go to their own venues. One of the issues, I suppose, is that although the city funds so many art things it is not a bottomless pit. We charge community groups to hire halls etc and that can be a barrier to some of those less-funded groups. That causes me some concern in community development, but I can see that we are not a bottomless pit, so we have to have some issues. By the same token, people want to run arts festivals or things like that and because of our duty of care and public liability we have an events package which can put some people off because it is seen as very regulatory and full of red tape; some people walk away from it. They are two areas that we are addressing to try and make it as user friendly as possible without putting people off. However, we also have to make sure that there is the necessary duty of care, public liability and risk management. We cannot have fireworks displays and the like if we do not go down that track. The costs that we have to recoup and the red tape that people proceed through are of concern.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Mrs McDonald, you mentioned seniors quite a bit. Have you any specific programs with regards to youths and bringing them into the arts, or do you allow that to happen through ACDC and Theatre '8'?

Mrs McDonald: Yes, we do. At the moment we mostly address youth needs through the Geraldton-Greenough Youth Advisory Council. We budget \$3 000 for that council and we leave it to the council to come up with a plan as to how it is used. In the past it has painted murals on the skate park and organised holiday workshop art programs. Sometimes it has been involved with swimming pontoons, so it depends on what it wants to do. We also have a \$2 000 budget for youth week and, again, the youths choose the programs they want and sometimes their art. We recently got the schools involved in a mural on the side of the Women's Rest Centre, which is a little building on the foreshore. We are hoping to fund a youth development officer to involve the youth in consultation on the foreshore redevelopment, the central business district redevelopment and a number of other things around town. At the moment we have a community development project officer who looks after youth as well as myriad other things, so we will have a designated person. That is about the limit we can fit in.

Mr Shoemark: Other things have happened in relation to public art. If you have a look at the roundabouts, I have engaged an artist to go into the primary school that is near that intersection of that area. We develop a theme and the artist works with the children to come up with sketch items. Sometimes the artist creates stencils from that and they may use a bit of literacy to get the interpretation right so that we can understand what they are trying to translate. Those stencils are then used in pattern paving as a community art-type project. Our foreshore project, of which I can provide details, is a community art-type works plan as part of that project that will involve the youth to the extent that they will design facilities for themselves.

[10.50 am]

Mr J.N. HYDE: In Geraldton, the State Government funds a free bus service downtown. It is \$250 000 worth. In terms of senior's access to the seniors' centre and youth - I do not know whether the route takes in the memorial - are there any benefits in this bus service for arts and community development?

Mr Shoemark: In access there is, because it is designed in a way to go past the two hospitals, two large retirement villages, it stops in a central spot in the city, it stops at the Queens Park Theatre, it stops at the seniors, and it stops at the theatre in town.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The cinema?

Mr Shoemark: Yes. The gallery is just across the road from the main bus terminal or the exchange spot. It goes to the shopping centres - the two major shopping areas. Therefore, it picks up those facilities - it includes medical, shopping and the cultural-type things that people want to go and see.

Mr J.N. HYDE: So, it is beneficial, value-adding to your community development -

Mr Shoemark: I would have thought so. It is given a lot of use. I have noticed in recent times that the queues at the Anzac Terrace transfer station are so large that the people cannot find a seat. Where there used to be half a dozen people, there are now 20 or 30. Therefore, people are starting to use it and, as you know, unless bus services are regular - that is, if they run more than 10 minutes apart, they are not worth catching. That is why this one works.

Mrs McDonald: It started off slowly because it was a cultural shift. People were used to having two cars and being a car society. They have suddenly become a bus society. It is hard for seniors to get out of one habit and get into another habit. It seems to be well accepted.

The CHAIRMAN: One final question. In terms of the valuing of arts in Geraldton by the minor population, first, are you at a stage where it is very strong or growing coming from a low base? Where would you see the population in terms of the continuum? Secondly, how is indigenous involvement in arts locally reflected in assistance to them by the city?

Mr Cope: They are two big questions.

The CHAIRMAN: Right at the beginning you mentioned that there are some very good things happening in the arts field in various places. Where would you put that in terms of the wider community's understanding and valuing of it? Are you still evolving or are you a very strong arts community or do you still have a way to go?

Mr Cope: I think we are on a growth curve. I think the ACDC growth has been very significant and while I think that can be traced back to council's financial support, when we look at the figures on that financial support, it jumped significantly in 1998-1999 from \$5 000 to \$25 000 and has been maintained at that level. Now that that group is doing 35 or 40 programs a year, the community is very aware of what it is doing. Even though it does not participate necessarily, the community regards it as a good thing because it brings vitality to the city. It is also having quite a reach in terms of the people who have been involved, including school kids, and even adults have basic programs. That has been a very positive thing. In recent times, that has been the most obvious thing about Geraldton. Everybody's appreciation of arts has lifted across the board and that has been a great thing.

The CHAIRMAN: What about the indigenous issue?

Mrs McDonald: We have quite an excellent partnership arrangement with the indigenous groups around town in most of our community committees. There is an indigenous representation on the Geraldton Cultural Advisory Committee. We have going to council this month a memorandum of understanding between Geraldton, Greenough and the Aboriginal communities. There has been extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities in the cultural redevelopment. One of the problems that we have is that there are so many Aboriginal organisations in Geraldton and we try to have across-the-board consultations with all of them. I suppose that we go to a number of main ones and as far as the memorandum is concerned, we invited all the Aboriginal groups for a yarn around the table and asked them which group we should go to to find out which group should sign the memorandum of understanding. They came back to us and said that they would like the

Bundijarra Aboriginal organisation to sign it. Therefore, there is certainly a structure out there for ongoing partnership and work. We have a lot to do also with street workers. Bundijarra and the street workers have lots of youth dance groups. Geraldton is just coming into line with welcome to country type issues which have not been good before. It is very evolving.

The CHAIRMAN: One of the communities we visited in Derby had a number of issues specific to young people. We looked at a couple of programs that use the arts as a vehicle to address the social and economic type problems and challenges. Therefore, it has been recognised that the arts are a vehicle -

Mrs McDonald: We have been working on project strategies along that line; that is, getting indigenous people here that the young people can look up to. We are trying to get Ernie Dingo here to do arts and dance-type things. There are a number of excellent indigenous dancers. We are working along those lines.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any views of evidence of the impact that this investment in public art, streetscape, community activities, festivals - the Sunshine Festival - has on antisocial behaviour, graffiti and other issues for which youth might be blamed? Last night walking back from QPT, I was quite stunned by the lack of litter and graffiti on Marine Terrace. It was not the way it used to be.

Mrs McDonald: The city has an excellent anti-graffiti policy. We have won the Tidy Towns anti-graffiti award for a while. The memorial was such a community initiative - we have prisoners working on it; we had whole-of-community support for it - that graffiti up there is almost non-existent. There is pride in the community. I think as that pride evolves - it is certainly happening in Geraldton - any graffiti is instantly jumped on by community members, but these guys probably know more about that than I do.

The CHAIRMAN: And the fact that the community has been involved right from the start.

Mrs McDonald: Absolutely. It is a grassroots development in which everyone has had an involvement.

The CHAIRMAN: And I suppose that will be important with the redevelopment of the CBD and of the foreshore?

[11.00 am]

Mr Shoemark: Yes, that is all part of that strategy and getting back to tying that in with the indigenous people. I will give you some copies of the public art master plan that we have created for the whole project.

The CHAIRMAN: That would be very good.

Mr Shoemark: Part of that is looking at a heritage trail of the industry side of Geraldton as well as of the indigenous side of Geraldton, because the original development of indigenous people into the area was more ocean based. They were a coastal group, so we are trying to relate some of those stories into artwork as well as telling a story for the community. We have come up with some pretty standard ways and practices to deal with graffiti. Basically, these days the artworks that we have put in place are covered in materials that make it easy to remove any graffiti. We have a principle that it does not last more than 24 hours. Graffiti artists survive only where their artwork survives. If you keep painting it and removing it, they will go somewhere else.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Your division would be the one that is picking up broken bottles, kicked in pot plants and that sort of damage. Do you have any empirical evidence of changed behaviour?

Mr Shoemark: There are still hot spots with those problems and they are obviously near nightclubs and places like that. That becomes another management problem. As part of the strategy for this whole CBD development, conduit and everything has been put in and the CCTV process will go in at some point that will assist in managing that.

Mr J.N. HYDE: What about preventing that? Is lighting, public art and streetscapes preventing it?

Mr Shoemark: Yes. Basically the lighting that was put into the development here was designed for future CCTV but it has created an atmosphere that is not bright; it is an atmosphere that you feel comfortable in and you can recognise someone 100 metres away. It becomes a safe environment. It is a soft light. It is using those techniques. The design for the whole project has been based on a road safety audit to ensure that those principles are in place.

The CHAIRMAN: You have some documents that you are able to provide us with.

Mr Shoemark: Yes. This is a paper I presented at a public works conference.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you read the title for Hansard?

Mr Shoemark: It was the public works engineering state conference in 2002 and it was a paper I presented on our public arts program. The title is "Value Adding Aesthetics to New Infrastructure Projects". It basically talks about how we started the whole process. In that is access to our web site. If you go to the public arts link on our web site, which is www.geraldton.wa.gov.au, you can look at every piece of our public artwork, who developed it, the history of it and photographs of it. I think we are up to about 80 at the moment and it is growing.

The other document I have is the "Geraldton Foreshore/CBD Redevelopment and Revitalization Project: Public Art Masterplan", which is the CBD area here, the foreshore and the streets adjoining. That has been produced by the city in association with our public arts committee using a consultant by the name of Malcolm McGregor. It shows you what the development is all about. There are some plans on the concept and a copy of our cabinet submission, which we are hoping to deliver and get some funding support to keep that going. There are art components in that project. Some of it is city based and some of it is, hopefully, funding based from others. The whole project aims to create an experience. It is not just infrastructure; it is trying to create an ambience and somewhere that people can come to and enjoy and to add those art type things to it. There are places in that design where you can have concerts, open domes -

The CHAIRMAN: Creating places and spaces.

Mr Shoemark: Places and spaces.

Mrs McDonald: Poetry days.

Mr Shoemark: Somewhere you can walk, so you can recreate as well as learn as you walk along those cultural trails. There are recreation facilities and then the links back into the CBD.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your attendance this morning. We appreciate your input. For information purposes, a copy of the transcript of this morning's hearing will be made available to you and you are most welcome to peruse it. If something is glaringly incorrect, there is a contact number to let Hansard know. As I said at the beginning, our report is expected to be tabled in Parliament some time in April next year - probably towards the end of April. The City of Geraldton will certainly receive a copy of that. If you wish to make a written submission to the committee, that is up to the city. We thank you for your attendance this morning.