

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE ARTS IN REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

SESSION 2

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT ALBANY
FRIDAY, 30 APRIL 2004**

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]

DAVIS, MS ANNETTE

Freelance Art Curator and Member, Albany Arts Advisory Committee, examined:

KIRKLAND, MS BETH

**Artist/Lecturer, TAFE and Edith Cowan University,
PO Box 1647,
Albany, examined:**

HAINES, MR IAN

Member, Albany Arts Advisory Committee and Town Hall Theatre Production Committee, examined:

DU BIGNON, MS SHAARON

Practising Artist and Art Lecturer, Great Southern Regional College of TAFE, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome the next witnesses appearing before this committee. I need to read through some preliminary comment and statements, and I will ask each of you to in turn respond where appropriate. This 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 a contempt of Parliament. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form and do you understand the notes attached to it?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Did you receive and read an "Information for Witnesses" briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your attendance this morning. As you are aware, the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee has been conducting an inquiry into arts in regional Western Australia. We have set five key terms of reference, and part of our deliberations has involved visiting regional WA and ensuring that we meet with as much of a cross-section of the regional community as we possibly can in the time we have to conduct this inquiry. As the terms of reference indicate, we are very interested in the current state of the arts in regional Western Australia and the issues surrounding the contribution that the arts make to regional communities. We have included in our terms of reference issues such as the economic and social contribution the arts make. There is also a term of reference relating to festivals and their value to the activity within regional communities. There is also a term of reference that relates to the interface between government agencies and communities, and we are very interested in your perspective of and reaction to that.

I would like to acknowledge the local member for Albany, Mr Peter Watson, who has been in attendance this morning, listening with great interest to this hearing. The committee would like to thank the member for Albany for his advice, contribution and good guidance, particularly last night

when he gave us, in great detail, an excellent overview of arts activity in the City of Albany. We acknowledge and thank the local member, Mr Watson, for his contribution.

First of all, as we have a group of four witnesses this morning, I would like each of you to in turn give a very brief overview of your perspective of the health and wellbeing of the arts community here and to make some preliminary comments and perhaps raise issues that you feel need to be highlighted. Then we will pose a series of questions for you to respond to. Perhaps we could start with Annette. Could you give us an overview of your role and then make some preliminary comments?

Ms Davis: The main focus of the activities and vision of the Albany Arts Advisory Committee, of which I am a member, is the Vancouver Arts Centre. It is the City of Albany's major community arts facility. The committee would have visited the Vancouver Arts Centre yesterday, so you would have an idea of the facility.

The CHAIRMAN: Please thank your officer, Sue, for her time. We were very appreciative of it.

Ms Davis: Thank you. The Vancouver Arts Centre performs an important role in providing a venue for a large range of user groups. It is very important that those user groups have a venue for their activities. Some of those user groups have been meeting at the centre for a very long time, so it is a very important part of the structure of the arts and crafts in Albany. In my view, the arts centre suffers from a lack of adequate staffing to ensure the utilisation of the facility and to create a stronger vision or future for the arts. That view may not be shared by everyone, but my observation is that if there were another salaried person working specifically on arts, the centre's function could be greatly improved. Apart from that, I think the arts in Albany are fairly healthy. Many artists work by themselves and do not necessarily have a lot of contact with the arts centre or each other. That is my observation; I have been here for about 18 months. There is no longer an arts council to bring those people together. Generally I would say that the arts is quite healthy. There is certainly room for improvement. I must say I am speaking from the point of view of interest in the visual arts rather than in performing arts.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Annette.

Ms Kirkland: I speak first as a coordinator/lecturer for the Edith Cowan University degree program. I need to give some background. The program is contracted by Edith Cowan to great southern TAFE. It has been very supportive of this degree program. The managing director -

Mr J.N. HYDE: What area of the arts is the program about?

Ms Kirkland: Visual arts. It is a degree program in the visual arts that started this year. Our facilities are basic. We do not have enough HECS places, but we have a lot of support from staff. We would like more HECS places as it is a growing area.

The CHAIRMAN: How many do you have?

Ms Kirkland: We have 10. We are capped at 10, and I do not see that negotiations by me and my manager to get a few more HECS places are being very successful. We get given those places by Edith Cowan and not directly from the Government. I am not knowledgeable enough to understand how that works, but I know we are taking Edith Cowan's Perth campus places rather than our own places. It would be terrific to get more. We have very limited facilities because of various other funding arrangements between TAFE and Edith Cowan that are restrictive for us. I do not know whether it is within the realm of this committee to deal with that, but there are things happening above me that I know put restrictions on our physical facilities. There is a lot of support. I must keep saying that because we get it, and it is great. As a visual artist, I find the local art scene definitely active and supportive, if very conservative. There does not seem to be a great outlet for contemporary approaches to art. Having said that, it is all happening musically as well as visually; that is, in the visual arts and music. Like Annette, I would like to see some improvement in standards and in the widening of the vision of artists and art appreciation. There is a small bit of

gallery space in which to put contemporary art, which seems to be a problem. However, I am new enough to Albany that I realise I have not been involved in what appears to be a long discussion about a gallery space, so I will not go down that road for too long. That is all I would say.

[10.10 am]

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Beth. Ian?

Mr Haines: I am a consumer and participant, mainly, in the arts, although prior to Albany - I have been in Albany 21 years now - I have a professional arts background. My involvement has been mainly through working and volunteering in community arts, and I am a participant in all the other arts. Annette's point about the Vancouver Arts Centre is very much focused on community arts and on developing partnerships within and with all sectors of the community. It has had quite a good track record in the past few years. The history of the arts in Albany has been rotten at times. It has changed dramatically in my time. It has changed dramatically from the Albany Arts Council, which was a volunteer body struggling to restore the Vancouver Arts Centre as a home for groups that are still in existence today, to being far more out there in the community and working with all sectors of the community, whether it be disabled people, Aboriginal people and so on. Some well-documented projects have happened in the past few years. I am very much impassioned and believe that community arts are to involve and empower the people, to give it equity and access, whether it is for young people. I am very concerned about giving young people in both the education system and, more importantly, their young teenage years access. That, in a way, is our culture. It is not always cool to be involved with the arts, especially in the young teenage years. I very much believe, although I agree that the arts centre is under resourced - there is always room for improvement in that way - that there is great support from within the community and from the staff there. They are continuing with their plans to put forward really good community projects that can involve all the community and develop people's creativity. Their personality and the people they end up being can be influenced by what happens in their younger years and then can be developed in the later years. I think back to my own personal development. I was fortunate to be exposed, and not always willingly, to cultural events. Now I look back at the things that happened to me as a young person that were absolutely incredible and were opportunities and I want to create those opportunities for our young people and build on that.

The CHAIRMAN: Thanks Ian. Shaaron?

Ms du Bignon: From my point of view as an arts lecturer at Edith Cowan University and at Great Southern TAFE, a practising artist and a mother of two children, it is interesting seeing them involved in the arts as well. How I see the arts in Albany is that it is a great community of artists and people who support the arts. However, I find the energy that is there is a bit spread out all over the place and is lacking a little in unity. From my experience working at the Vancouver Arts Centre as a workshop artist doing workshops with children, and as a lecturer and practising artist, I would like to see more communication between the different groups of artists and more partnerships established. One of the things I have been working with as a professional artist is a collective in Albany called MIX. This is a very fluid collective. It changes in terms of who is involved in the group, depending on what people are up to. It is not set in concrete and we are not incorporated and things like that. It is just a very fluid, loose group of artists who get together and put on shows occasionally. Recently we developed a project in partnership with the Perth International Arts Festival and the Vancouver Arts Centre, and the Great Southern Development Commission, which is in partnership with PIAF, supported that project as well. That seemed to be evidence of a way forward in developing partnerships with the wider community. We made links with other communities within the great southern as well - Katanning, Denmark and Lake Grace - and had people from those communities involved in the project. It was a visual arts orientated project and it was a very successful event in that it showed that partnerships could be developed and that the arts could broaden horizons, because it was very focused on contemporary art. A lot of the people who have come through the arts degree course at ECU - or previously known as the associate degree course - were involved in that project as well as people from the community; that is, artists who

were doing their own thing in the community. For Albany it is about raising awareness of contemporary art and what is possible within art. It is not just specifically commercial gallery orientated. For instance, Denmark has lots of little commercial galleries and Albany has a couple, but it would be great to be able to broaden our understanding of how art can operate at a professional level. It is not just about selling; it is about developing audience awareness, and that can happen from an early age within the schools and getting artists within schools to do workshops and inviting high-profile artists to work with VAC and maybe to work at ECU. The link with the Perth International Arts Festival is helping to establish that approach as well. There may be possibilities that that is something we could do in partnership with it. For me the issue is how do we draw together some of the disparate elements of the arts within our community.

[10.20 am]

Mr J.N. HYDE: Can I cut to the chase? I want to perhaps play devil's advocate a little. You are all professional, educated people. When the Government came to power, I helped write our arts policy and we chucked an extra \$100 million into the arts. The money is there and money has gone out into the community. We have been all around the State. My bread and butter before politics was in the arts. The contemporary art forms in communities such as Broome or Denmark are thriving. Government committees and education bodies are not running the show and it is being stimulated by the market. Being a socialist, I take great umbrage at that. The evidence seems to be that a lot of the private galleries are stimulating the most contemporary and provocative art in WA. If we go around a lot of communities and a lot of the artists who are on the edge and creating great art, it is the market that is providing them with the wherewithal to do that. Professional artists who are subsidised through education, universities, politics or elsewhere would still call themselves artists; we have the safety net of something else there. We have the structure of education, local government or whatever to supplement our art, so we have a vested interest in keeping those structures there. Yet in Western Australia, Broome and the Kimberley were without a professional theatre. We have built massive theatres in Karratha, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Bunbury and they end up having Gilbert and Sullivan put on at them or showing commercial films. That government interference and government subsidy has not worked.

The CHAIRMAN: You are being provocative!

Mr J.N. HYDE: We can all justify what we are doing. What we are interested in with this hearing is to find out how government is hindering and how government can help, rather than just giving more money to the Vancouver Arts Centre or funding another bureaucrat in the arts centre. If you want more bureaucrats, justify to us how that will help with outcomes and better communities. Anybody should tell me why I am wrong and what the Government could do better. Here you have a minority of government members who see the value of the arts in a healthy community. I can see the value of investment in the arts. A healthy community that values the arts is less prone to crime, bad health and those other issues. We are living in a society that says education, police and health is what government should be doing and that you are wasting your money by spending it on the arts.

Ms Kirkland: We need HECS places. It is a growing community, so we need HECS places.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Who are the we? Are children bashing on the door demanding a tertiary education in fine arts?

Ms Kirkland: We turn people away when they apply. That is all I can say, because I take in the applications and do the enrolments. We turn people away. I am charged with developing this degree program, not just having it take over. I find that we can grow only if we have HECS places, because that is the nature of the university. With TAFE it is different; we can over-enrol and do all sorts of things, but with HECS places we have HECS prices and we cannot. The years go by and I am charged with this job of increasing the value of the degree, but we have no more places for people, so it could start to just stifle and die. That would be unfortunate. I am not saying that that

would happen, but it is one area in which I do not have a clear understanding of where these HECS places are and all the things that happen, but I know that with a cap of 10 we are turning people away. At the same time we can be competitive, which I like. However, we are turning people away.

The CHAIRMAN: I will just go on with the theme of the member for Perth and will pick up a comment from you, Shaaron. You mentioned the need, from your perspective, for communication partnerships, and that there is an opportunity to strengthen, build on, encourage and improve these. If \$100 000 were presented to Albany and the arts community were asked how it would best spend it, what would you spend it on to achieve what you are after?

Ms du Bignon: The tricky part of the equation is how to get things happening in the community. There are people out there with ideas. I guess it is a question of how to draw on those ideas and to harness the energy. There is energy here, there and everywhere but it is not in one individual who is doing all the work. The Vancouver Arts Centre has someone in that position who helps to facilitate events. The MIX project that I spoke about earlier, which was actually called "Welcome", was harnessed through the Vancouver Art Centre, which facilitated that process. It provided a supportive network for that process by providing information about how to apply for funding and providing administrative support and that kind of thing. I think it is about those really nitty-gritty aspects of how to make things happen. The VAC was very supportive of or initiated the partnership with PIAF as well. PIAF was developing a focus down there for its festival, and they asked how they could link in with that.

The CHAIRMAN: Who did PIAF come to first? Who did PIAF approach and say that it wanted to do something in Albany? Do you know?

Ms du Bignon: The Great Southern Development Commission. They formed a partnership.

Mr J.N. HYDE: But what? We keep talking about bureaucracies and structures. Why do we want to do this? If the State Government said to the people of Albany that it would subsidise their Foxtel fees by \$50 a month or would give the equivalent money to the arts centre and PIAF and all these other bodies, what would the people of Albany want?

Ms Davis: They would say that they want a 50-metre swimming pool. There is an argument again about where money goes - to sporting facilities or art facilities. There is a constant dilemma.

Ms du Bignon: The arts are still a minority.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Yes, but we have set up this inquiry and one of its main aims is to raise the level of awareness of the arts. Arts people are too nice and say that the sportspeople do very well and are good. We have to thump our own chests. Tell us why.

Ms Davis: Some of us met yesterday to discuss some of the issues we are venting today. One thing that Shaaron suggested, which I think is worth pursuing whether or not we get any money, is that we should try to get together the different groups that exist in Albany to talk about a bigger vision, because Albany is quite well resourced as a regional centre. We have a branch of the state museum here. We have TAFE, we have ECU, we have Southern Edge Arts, which has had a long history of being successful in youth arts, and there is the Vancouver Arts Centre. We all work. As some of us have mentioned before, a lot of individual artists are working, or pursuing their practice, pretty much on an individual basis. As Shaaron mentioned earlier, we need to harness some of that energy and those ideas. It is really just trying to find a way of facilitating that process, which I think is perhaps the next step. Albany is a conservative town. I guess it is not unlike other towns in which there are local government politics. Everyone has different priorities. It is a matter of those people who are more interested in cultural pursuits coming together and doing a bit more lobbying, or at least creating a vision and being able to articulate it.

Mr Haines: Not that it stops me from going forward, but contemporary art in its broadest form has had a very rocky road in Albany. We could talk forever about why. I have been around a long

time. Albany is the only town I know that has had a public referendum over a work of art, which is still there - the sculpture in the Alison Hartman Gardens of the late 1980s, which was an artist-led community project. It caused such furore. Please look at it if you have not already seen it and you will wonder what they were talking about. The city fathers actually held a referendum at election time as to whether it should stay or go. Fortunately, it stayed. These histories stay with us. When I first came to Albany the cry was because the Albany art prize had been won by a local artist and was in fact of a nude woman. The first prize was acquired by the town. The town voted to return the painting. The artist in her wisdom never collected it and it is still in the city's collection. Things have progressed. However, that feeling, I am afraid, is still there. Read the local paper of the past two weeks and you will find that the latest Albany art prize winner has upset members of the community. That empowers me.

[10.30 am]

Mr J.N. HYDE: That is one of the roles of the arts.

Mr Haines: Absolutely. It is not an easy ride for many things. You talk about the priorities of government - police, health and those sorts of things. They are all priorities. However, I actually believe that the arts can be integrated with that. The arts are great for mental health. The arts are great for reducing the crime rate. Are you aware of an interesting project that took place in Albany prison - the SALT writers? That was an Albany artist-initiated project. SALT stands for Silenced Authors Lavish Tales. It is one of the programs run within prisons. It is basically a prison creative writing workshop. It ended up as a full production involving professional people. It was held in a decommissioned block in the prison, about 15 months ago, and was one of the most moving things I have ever been to in all my life. It caused a great deal of outcry in the paper because public funding was being used, and we had all those social issues. One of the participants in that has subsequently been released. I know that he has actually acted in a fringe theatre in Melbourne. He has done creative writing. There are numerous other examples of how the arts have turned people's lives around. It is still continuing at the prison. It has a low profile. It is not palatable to the general public. We had screaming front-page headlines in one of the state papers, when it had no better story. That is a huge success story within the Albany community. There is an arts plan in the prison. My children play the piano. One goes to the annual concert at the home of the music teacher, which is a wonderful community event. A couple of years ago, one of the performers was an adult - a young man in his late twenties. Nothing was actually said about him. He got up there as the last one after all the school kids had played, and he played a Chopin prelude just totally without sheet music. He played it beautifully and passionately. That man had learnt the piano from scratch in three years within the Albany prison. That music had changed his whole life. He was made a better person for that. There are numerous stories. They are a bit extreme, I know, but -

Mr J.N. HYDE: No. That is what we need to hear.

Mr Haines: That has made a big difference. I do not know what the situation is with the prison, but I have heard that the visual arts and the music part of the prison have been cut down. This is where we need to put resources. We are talking about education. This is where I believe the arts can change a person's direction in life and make us all fuller and better people. I think it is wonderful that it brings out the passions. It is wonderful that people either love or hate the winning prize in the Albany art competition. It is great, because people will actually go to the Albany art competition, if only to hate it. It gets people talking about more than just the result of Saturday's football. They are actually talking about a work of art. It is a part of all our lives and it is great that it happens that way.

The CHAIRMAN: It seems to me from what you have told us that you have the Vancouver Arts Centre, which is the former hospital, so you have got some spaces. There are two amateur theatres in Albany. There is a larger performance space at the town hall, and there is the planned entertainment complex, which is currently up for discussion and you are looking at progressing it.

Would it be true to say that some good infrastructure is in place, but, as you have already mentioned, it is the human resources that is of concern - the education and training aspect - and from your perspective you need coordination in improving the human resources that can deliver outcomes in the Vancouver Arts Centre? One of the things that has been suggested to this committee previously is that the State Government should put in place a structure like the one in the Department of Sport and Recreation, in which every region has a regional office with an officer or officers, and their role is to coordinate, support, nurture and encourage the development of the arts in the regions. What is your reaction to that proposal?

Mr J.N. HYDE: And who can have access to funding that is Australia-wide from private sources, government sources and local government.

Mr Haines: That vision is very much what we try to do at the arts centre. The one person who runs that is our resource - I think that is very important - for other groups, whether it be the mixed artists or whether it be someone in creative music, dance or what have you, to point them in the right direction from which they can get support or funding. I was at the Karratha regional arts conference last year. This idea of a regional-based person, such as a development officer or what have you, was a prime thing that came out of that conference, especially in the areas in the State that are far more widespread than we are. We are very fortunate in that we do have resources and people, but there are areas which, because of their spread, are very badly resourced. Personally, I think it is a very difficult role to fulfil. It has been tried before with community arts officers in the 1980s with limited success and downright disaster in some areas. Albany first appointed a community arts officer in about 1983 or 1984. That position certainly put support and effort into promoting and developing various aspects of the arts scene. I am not sure how it would be structured and what the duties of that person would be. I am aware that there is one in the south west.

Mr J.N. HYDE: But not real ones. In New South Wales it is devolved. In Western Australia at the moment we have Country Arts in King Street in my electorate of Perth. All the country people are in there. Healthways is in my electorate. Lotterywest is in the city. If you are happy about their going out on missionary work in regional Western Australia, and if that is a better model, tell us, but if it is not -

Mr Haines: They provide that service at the moment with a limited amount of resourcing in terms of staff. I think it is good that they are based up there, because at the end of the day for regional areas that is a neutral area, and clearly it is the place in which they will interact the most with all the other agencies. If people are based in the regions, they need to work with some central organisation; whether that be a local art group or a government body is, I imagine, a big debate. However, for their own mental health and networking they need to have a central body that they all work to so that they can feel part of a team. One of the problems with community arts officers has always been that they are working in isolation. Albany has very much developed in isolation. Country Arts is a new thing in relative terms - eight years, or maybe nine years. I am the old Methuselah here; I go back to the days of the eighties when we had a department for the arts. The operation of that department meant that it worked in isolation because there was no real consultation; there was no budget. It had a great touring program but we had no choice. We would be told we were getting *King Lear* on Friday, whether the community wanted it or not. That has all changed. It has developed immensely. Now we have choice. I am on the Town Hall Theatre production committee. We have choice of product. We do not always get it, because it depends on other resources, funding and what have you. Of course, one of our limitations is that we do not have a centre that can take it all. There are huge theatres in other places that can take shows that we cannot.

[10.40 am]

Mr J.N. HYDE: A lot of people tell us that in the eighties you used to get *King Lear* because the Perth Theatre Company, the Hole in the Wall Theatre Company and other big state-funded theatre companies travelled regionally. There was so much more product. Because we had a voluntary arts council and one regional arts bureaucrat in Perth, all the money was spent on product.

Mr Haines: We certainly did, but the reality was that they were few and far between. There is no doubt that we now have a regular theatre touring program that is streets ahead of what it was before. The theatre would be dark for three or four months at a time. Certainly there is a problem with getting some of the Western Australian groups out. Perth Theatre Company undertakes tours. Can anybody tell me the last time that the orchestra came? I cannot tell you. The last time I can remember was 1984 or 1985 at the mayor's reception after a concert, when the leader of the orchestra stood up, thanked the mayor for her hospitality and told her that he would never bring his orchestra to Albany again until it had a venue. That was 19 years ago.

The CHAIRMAN: He was true to his word!

Mr Haines: Exactly. The theatre is an improvement on the facility we had before and which is still there; that is, the Centennial Hall, which is a absolutely wonderful corrugated barn where we still hold our arts prize.

Mr J.N. HYDE: You have one-handed, two-handed or three-handed plays.

Mr Haines: We are not getting the big productions.

Ms Davis: The basis of the argument for the convention and entertainment centre is that it will enable us to get these bigger productions.

Mr Haines: If I may just comment on that? They are available, and it is up to us because we have not seized the opportunity. Why? It may be that because we have places like the theatre we have not, for example, taken Oz Opera, which is doing *La Bohème* this year, but we can go and see it at Borden.

Ms Davis: We did have the option.

Mr Haines: We did have the option, but, as I said, we did not seize that option. We did not take it up because it was all too difficult.

The CHAIRMAN: I notice that Ian, Annette and you, Chris, are members of the Albany Arts Advisory Committee. To whom does that committee answer and what is its role?

Ms Davis: It is City of Albany committee and it reports back to the local council. We have monthly meetings.

Mr Haines: The secret is in the word "advisory". That is all it is. The arts centre is part of the City of Albany's program. It is a Town Hall Theatre production. The city gave it great autonomy. Our main focus is on discussing the program and helping whoever is the arts officer of the day to achieve it. At the end of the day it is an advisory committee, because all decisions are ratified or not, as the case may be, by council.

The CHAIRMAN: That is separate from the Town Hall Theatre production committee.

Mr Haines: Yes, they are two separate entities.

The CHAIRMAN: The Town Hall Theatre production committee is really the filter and decision-making body that decides what goes on in the Town Hall Theatre. That is provided with a budget from the City of Albany to act as entrepreneur for shows and other events in the town hall. The Albany Arts Advisory Committee has an advisory role. Does it have any input into making submissions or advising council on public art?

Mr J.N. HYDE: County Arts WA shows?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. Do you have any of those sorts of things?

Ms Davis: There is a separate City of Albany public art committee. The Albany Arts Advisory Committee's focus is on the Vancouver Arts Centre. Do you have a copy of "The Vancouver Arts Centre Annual Report"?

The CHAIRMAN: No. We will be happy to receive it.

Ms Davis: May I just read out what is stated as its purpose? It reads -

The purpose of the AAAC is to:

- Develop a program reflecting the principles outlined in the Vancouver Arts Access and Equity Statement and to meet community demand.
- Develop partnerships across the community.
- Provide professional expertise.
- Provide opportunities for the community to work with professional artists.

We recognise the need for:

- A program that is responsive to community needs, desires, aspirations, and creativity.
- Involvement from a broad cross section of the community in every aspect of the program.
- Development of community skills.
- Providing facilities/services at the VAC and through the outreach programs.

It focuses very much on community arts partnerships within the community, using its role as an advisory committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that delivered through the Vancouver Arts Centre?

Ms Davis: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Therefore, those who are interested in the arts and would like to have a performing arts input into the City of Albany are not part of the advisory committee, are they?

Ms Davis: Generally not, I would say. Performing arts is part of our brief but it is not a major focus.

The CHAIRMAN: Are the representatives on the arts committee mainly concerned with visual arts?

Mr Haines: No, we do have performing arts people, a cross-section of the community and practising artists.

Ms Davis: For example, Stewart Gartland, who is the Town Hall Theatre manager, is on the Albany Arts Advisory Committee. Councillor Jan Waterman is the chair of our committee. Peter Madigan, whom you will be meeting later, is on the committee. It has a broad cross-section, but its focus is very much on the facility of the Vancouver Arts Centre, what happens there and activities that might be initiated from there. It may involve further areas outside the Vancouver Arts Centre building, but our focus is not on activities that happen only elsewhere; they need to have some connection back to Vancouver Arts Centre.

Mr Haines: If I may go back to one of your previous points, an initiative of the Albany Arts Advisory Committee was the establishment of a public art policy for the City of Albany. That came from within the committee, was written by the committee, was submitted to council and was accepted by council. That is a really good step forward for Albany. We now have a public art policy.

[10.50 am]

Mr J.N. HYDE: Do you have a per cent grant through council?

Mr Haines: Yes, we do. They started it with received funding of \$55 000 and they have a one per cent art allowance for all council developments. We are slowly working through, bringing it back into their vision in all aspects, whether it be roadworks, toilet blocks, drainage or what have you.

Mr J.N. HYDE: And private developers?

Mr Haines: And private developers, indeed.

The CHAIRMAN: I am just conscious of time, but I would like to ask two questions. One relates to festivals in Albany. Are any of you involved in organising any festivals in Albany? If you can make a comment on the effectiveness of those, I will then ask a question on employment. What happens in Albany in terms of festivals?

Mr Haines: Not a lot at the moment. Over the years festivals have come and gone. Our only festival as such is the Christmas pageant, which is a large affair. It happens just before Christmas. I would not really call it a festival but it is certainly a community event that is run by the city but not by the arts centre and encompasses all groups in the town. We do have our own mini-festivals. For example, I do not know whether you have heard of the Sprung, which is something the Albany Arts advisory committee initiated a few years ago. It is coming up to its fourth year. It is a creative writing festival. Over four years, it has grown from a small event to a three to four day event that attracts people from all over the State, including headlined authors. I suppose we from the arts centre point of view have concentrated more on narrower events rather than the large festivals. We have certainly talked about it, and of course the partnership with PIAF is now in its second year and we have better years to come. PIAF, through the Great Southern Development Commission, the Vancouver Arts Centre and the teaching institutions is spreading really well throughout the region. What I like about it so much is that it is not just developing as passive entertainment - it is fantastic as passive entertainment, just to go and see something - but it is developing and working. Shaaron's exhibition that she worked on and curated in conjunction with artists from all over the region held its head high with anything that you might have seen in the city and was a great achievement. I suppose, if anything, Albany is now building its own festival around the great PIAF festival.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Are there any community driven fringe festivals?

Mr Haines: Yes; you will probably hear from Douglas Walker of Southern Edge Arts that they has youth festivals. There is the HarbourSound festival, which happened this weekend. There are other good traditional ones, and we must not knock them. The eisteddfod, which is a four or five day event across all musical values and choral work, involving young people and those of more mature years, is still very much a part of the community. However, they are fragments; there is no Albany festival. This comes back to Shaaron's point - we have no festival. We are not all as one body. Maybe this is part of human nature or maybe it is to do with our area. Maybe it is people's own resourcefulness. In many ways it is just a matter of getting on and doing it yourself.

The CHAIRMAN: Employment is one of our terms of reference. I assume tourism is a very important part of Albany's economy. What partnerships are being established between the arts community and tourism as an economic driver? How do you interface with the information centre for example? Is there an active partnership of making sure that your events -

Ms du Bignon: I think that might be the role of Arts South WA.

Ms Davis: Yes; at this stage the Vancouver Arts Centre does not have that established relationship with the visitor centre. PIAF is a major tourist drawcard.

Mr Haines: There is an organisation called Arts South and it has resulted in an art trail map - the same way we have a wine map - which is really good. For example the Arts Centre has done its mosaic trail and there have been various other programs of that nature. We do not have a deep working relationship with the tourist bureau, but we do have a relationship. They are kept fully

aware and they are great promoters of things like Sprung. They are included in the annual calendar of events, not just arts events.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Having positions at the university there is a very good catalyst for employment. Do you have any comments?

Ms Kirkland: Because of the lower numbers of HECS places - not that that is a problem for this - we have fewer positions for teaching. We have TAFE as well, where there are opportunities for teaching.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Your very existence, surely, is an example or a role model to students and others in the community that the arts are a viable option.

Ms Kirkland: Yes, we have recently had two new students come from Katanning to this campus, choosing not to go to Perth.

Mr J.N. HYDE: That is excellent; yes, that is what we need.

The CHAIRMAN: When there is an exhibition there is obviously sale of work and that sort of thing. Is that growing? Is the number of exhibitions you are holding at the Vancouver Arts Centre, for example, growing? Has a full program been developed and established, and is it producing results for artists in sales of work and exposure?

Ms Davis: There is a full program, and it gives opportunities to artists. The program consists of a mixture of touring exhibitions that come through Art on the Move, for example, and exhibitions by local artists. Those exhibitions are, in most cases, initiated by the artists, so it is a venue that they come and hire. They set up their exhibitions and they can sell works. Sales are not necessarily increasing; there is opportunity there to sell but Albany is not a big buying market.

Mr Haines: I do not know about that. I know of a local artist who had an exhibition at the arts centre and she enjoyed good sales. There was the Viewpoint Craft Exhibition. Viewpoint is an organisation. That came about with support from the Great Southern Development Commission from the late 1980s. When there is an exhibition at the town hall they seem to enjoy good sales and the standard is high.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Justin Clappin's works are amazing.

The CHAIRMAN: I contributed to the economy by purchasing one of his pieces yesterday.

Mr Haines: He has appeal, and he is enjoying good sales both in the region and outside it, which is wonderful.

Ms Davis: If you look at the history of small commercial galleries that have tried to make a go of it in central Albany, they have not succeeded. There are probably a lot of facts about that. I do not know whether you will have time to visit Gorepani, which is outside Albany. Annie Brandenburg who runs Gorepani is doing a fantastic job because of her commitment to the arts and promoting local artists. She was saying sales are not high, and she has an established venue and changing works.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It is probably fair to say that in Denmark it does work.

Ms Davis: I think there may be more sales in Denmark. It is a different kind of tourist destination, perhaps.

The CHAIRMAN: We have unfortunately run out of time. We have a number of hearings this morning. I thank each of you for attending this morning and for your contributions. Quite often in certain starters like this there are issues you wish you could have explained to us. You are most welcome to make a written submission to the committee. One of the research officers he will give you details for that. We would welcome any additional comments you would like to make through a written submission to our proceedings. The transcript from today's hearing will be available to you through Hansard. In your various capacities we wish you the very best and thank you for your

commitment and contribution, not only to this hearing this morning but also to the arts in regional Western Australia.

Proceedings suspended from 11.00 to 11.16 am

