



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2009-2010

(Reference: Appropriation Bill 2009-2010)

Members:

MR Z SESELJA (The Chair)
MS C LE COUTEUR (The Deputy Chair)
MS A BRESNAN
MR B SMYTH
MS J BURCH

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 26 MAY 2009

Secretary to the committee:
Ms G Concannon (Ph: 6205 0129)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Committee Office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

APPEARANCES

Department of Territory and Municipal Services	927
Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Water.....	997
Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.....	1052

Privilege statement

The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and rebroadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to an Assembly committee are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution. Witnesses must tell the truth, and giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 8.59 am.

Appearances:

Stanhope, Mr Jon, Chief Minister, Minister for Transport, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Minister for the Arts and Heritage

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

McNulty, Mr Hamish, Acting Chief Executive

Kalogeropoulos, Mr Nick, Director, Strategic Finance, Office of the Chief Executive

Gertzel, Ms Dianne, Strategic Coordination, Office of the Chief Executive

Watkinson, Mr Russell, Executive Director, Environment and Recreation

Carder, Ms Jane, Acting Director, Parks, Conservation and Lands, Environment and Recreation

Hill, Ms Diana, Parks, Manager, Design and Development, Parks, Conservation and Lands, Environment and Recreation

Ware, Mr Chris, Manager, NoWaste, Environment and Recreation

Ryan, Mr Steve, Executive Director, Community and Infrastructure Services

Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT, Community and Infrastructure Services

Greenland, Ms Karen, General Manager, Transport Regulation and Planning, Community and Infrastructure Services

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, Libraries, Community and Infrastructure Services

THE CHAIR: Good morning, Chief Minister. Welcome to this public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates 2009-2010. This morning the committee is meeting with the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services and departmental officials from the Department of Territory and Municipal Services. I ask all the witnesses at the table to confirm that they have read and understand the privilege statement. Thank you very much. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I have no specific opening statement to make other than to thank the committee for the courtesy it extends to the department. I and my officials stand ready to provide whatever assistance we are able to in relation to the budget. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, the Kingston library shopfront—I think \$7.1 million has been allocated. Could we get a breakdown of how that money is going to be allocated?

Mr Stanhope: Certainly. Mr Ryan would be happy to go through the detail of that particular allocation.

Mr Ryan: I will ask Vanessa Little to explain.

Ms Little: The \$7.1 million is over several years and comprises \$890,000 of capital, \$3,290,000 worth of recurrent and \$2,929,000 for materials.

THE CHAIR: Are you able to take us through some of the detail of how big the

library shopfront will be and how it will operate?

Ms Little: Sure. The library shopfront will be approximately 200 square metres. It will be in the shops in Giles Street in Kingston. It will operate as a library in every sense of the word, on a small scale. There will be children's activities; there will be seniors' activities. There will be collections for seniors and children—adult fiction, non-fiction, magazines. There will be internet computers. Everything will be there—probably not a language collection, but everything else will be there, on a smaller scale than some of the other libraries.

THE CHAIR: I think there are a few questions around this.

MR COE: Two hundred square metres does seem to be pretty small. How does that compare to something like Dickson library or Erindale library?

Ms Little: It is about two-thirds of the size of Gungahlin library as it currently exists.

MR COE: What about somewhere like Dickson or Erindale?

Ms Little: I can certainly check that for you. Dickson is somewhat bigger. I will see if I can grab that for you straight up. Dickson is 1,044 square metres.

MR COE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: The parking situation in Kingston has been one of the concerns. What study has been done to see whether there will be adequate parking for people accessing the library?

Ms Little: We have sent staff down at various times of the day during the week, and there is generally very good parking. That is one of the reasons why we were attracted to Kingston as a site. The busy times at Kingston are Friday night and Saturday morning. We probably would open the library on Saturday, but anybody who wanted to come down who was retired or had young children would be able to come at any other time. We have gone down on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We have gone down at 10 o'clock in the morning and 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We are very comfortable that there is plenty of parking. There are also four buses that stop right outside that particular site.

THE CHAIR: And the Griffith library—how much did that cost to run? What would be the four-year cost of running the Griffith library?

Ms Little: I could tell you what it would cost if we were going to renovate it and re-open it as it was. It was going to cost us \$3.4 million to renovate it. It has some serious problems in terms of being a contemporary public library. And it was going to cost just over \$1 million a year to run in terms of staffing and around \$1 million to stock it.

MR COE: Why would it cost \$1 million to stock it?

Ms Little: Because it would be a bigger space and you would have to put more stock

into it there.

MR COE: So \$1 million on top of the original stock.

Ms Little: We do not have the original stock.

MR COE: I realise that, but, had you continued operations at the old Griffith library, how much would it have cost to stock it?

Ms Little: We would have topped up.

MR COE: And what would the top-up be?

Ms Little: We usually replace a book every five years; a book has a cycle of every five years. You are looking at about 20 per cent of the collection.

MR COE: That is the same for any library, though, isn't it?

Ms Little: Yes, it is. The problem with that collection at Griffith—I stress that I was not here at the time but I have done some reading—is that that collection was particularly old. There were a considerable number of items that were older than 10 years old, which in library terms is a concern. I think what might have happened is that some of the books from other libraries were being sent down there because they had more space, so a lot of that material had to be weeded out.

MR COE: You said you have given that material to other libraries.

Ms Little: No. What we did when we closed Griffith was look at the collection and weed out or discard a lot of material that was out of date. We gave that material to Lifeline. The material that was not out of date was then dispersed back into the other libraries. They took that opportunity to then also weed their collections and get rid of their old material and send that to Lifeline as well.

MR SMYTH: In terms of usage, was the stock at the old Griffith library being used?

Ms Little: No, not as well as the other collections. No, not as well as the other libraries.

MR SMYTH: In what way? What is the comparison?

Ms Little: The loans were lower and the cost per capita was higher. We measure loans, costs and population catchment.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said that it was going to cost \$3.4 million to renovate the Griffith library to make it to contemporary library standard. I am sure that is correct. But the people who were happy with Griffith as it was were not complaining that the building was not a contemporary library. How much would it have cost, if anything, just to re-open it as an old-fashioned library, as it were?

Ms Little: Perhaps I could refer you to Steve Ryan, with his knowledge of property,

on that one.

Mr Ryan: My normal role is as director of ACT Property Group. We had a look at that space for the French-Australian preschool at one stage, and that is where a lot of the costings have come from. The school is incredibly old; it does not meet the standards of the Building Code of Australia. So a lot of that cost that Vanessa has indicated is not about fitting it out for a modern library; it is about things like the fact that the air conditioning is shot. The windows do not meet the Australian standard any more; there is a complete wall of glass along one side of the old library space. The carpets had to be replaced; the toilets have to be reinstated. There is just a whole raft of things that need to be done to that space to bring it up to Building Code requirements. No matter who we put into that space, it will be a large cost. It will be a case of where we can find the money to do that.

MR COE: Would you perhaps take this on notice: what were the recurrent costs of the last full year of operation of the old Griffith library?

Ms Little: I can take that on notice rather than shuffle through papers for you, yes.

MR COE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Are there other questions on Kingston library?

MR COE: Have you actually done a parking study or is that just on—

Ms Little: No. We just sent staff down at various times of the day. There is an extraordinary amount of parking available during the day at Kingston.

MR COE: Are you confident the traders think that as well?

Ms Little: I am not sure what the traders think, but we have been down and had a look. Those car parks opposite that particular shop are invariably free. I have never gone down there and needed to circle around, apart from on a Saturday.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you looked at providing dedicated parking spots, a parking token or something along those lines?

Ms Little: We are looking at that and talking to the parking people about that. It is not going to be easy, because, of course, it is a matter of how you police it; but we are in conversations with the parking staff about how we might do something.

MS LE COUTEUR: Even if it was just one or two disabled parks out the front, because the people who are most going to be affected are the older people who could park easily at Griffith. And disabled we can police. It is a common problem anyway.

Ms Little: It is.

MS BURCH: What services—can you just remind me, because I might have missed it at the beginning—will be on offer at Kingston that perhaps were not on offer at Manuka? Or is it a more up-to-date service on a small scale?

Ms Little: Yes, it will be a much more up-to-date service. And, of course, with it being in a shopping centre, we are very confident that we are going to start picking up people who would traditionally not actually walk through the doors of a public library because they might see it as threatening or not see its relevance. It will have all of the collections of all of the other branches, just on a smaller scale. We are putting staff in there who have got a really good understanding of Canberra and the community; they will be topping up the collection almost on a daily basis, so there will be a very vibrant collection there. We will be having story time; we will be having activities and speakers for seniors.

Already, for the first six months when we open, we have got a six-month program of events and activities for people. There will be internet computers for people to come and use; there will be casual reading areas; there will be magazines and newspapers. We hope to do a bit of a deal with one of the coffee shops so that we can put tables and chairs out the front so that people can have a coffee and read the paper as well.

THE CHAIR: Can I just get a picture of which space it is? What was it following?

Ms Little: It is the former Essential Ingredient space; it is between the Vietnamese restaurant and the Thai restaurant, just up from Silo.

THE CHAIR: All right.

MR COE: It would seem to me that this very room here, from my quick estimation, I reckon, might be, say, 150 square metres. You have rattled off a lot of services that you are going to fit into a room about this size.

Ms Little: It is a bit bigger; it is a bit bigger than this.

MR COE: How many computer terminals are there going to be, for instance?

Ms Little: Five.

MR COE: Five computer terminals.

Ms Little: Yes.

MR COE: How does that compare to other libraries?

Ms Little: It is about the same. In fact, it is one more than Gungahlin at the moment.

MR COE: How does it compare to the old Griffith library?

Ms Little: I cannot tell you that, I am afraid, because I was not here, but I could certainly check that for you.

MR COE: Yes; please take that on notice. How many books will it—

Ms Little: We have not yet decided, but it will be a decent collection, somewhere

between 15,000 and 20,000 items.

MR COE: How many books did the old library stock?

Ms Little: Again, I cannot tell you that off the top of my head, but I will take it on notice.

MR COE: Yes, please.

Ms Little: It is in here somewhere.

MS BURCH: And bearing in mind that some of that old stock was indeed old stock.

Ms Little: It was very old stock.

MR COE: It is the size I am after.

Ms Little: Yes. Remember that big libraries run on a just-in-case model. What we are doing with the Kingston library is much more vibrant and much more moving the collection around.

MS BURCH: And access to other catalogues?

Ms Little: Absolutely, yes. At all of our libraries you can order anything online and pick it up at any library you select or you can come in to us and order it and we will have it delivered to that library as well. That is, in fact, one of our biggest services. With Civic library, in the last 12 months, their increase in the order and request system was 71 per cent.

MR COE: How long is the lease at the new premises?

Mr Ryan: On the lease itself, we have reached agreement with the landlord but the actual lease document, as I understand it, has not been signed. We can confirm that tomorrow. ACT Property Group is on for estimates tomorrow. They come under a different part of the estimates but we can confirm that tomorrow morning.

MR COE: But for the certainty of library users, they can be assured that it is three-ish years?

Ms Little: Or more, yes.

MR COE: And what sort of access is there for deliveries and getting the stock in and out?

Ms Little: There is a back entrance to that particular shop and we are looking, as part of that fit-out, to make sure that that has got easy access for our library van. Our library van goes, as you probably know, around all of the libraries every day.

MR COE: So that laneway, on your assessment, is appropriate?

Ms Little: Yes, our library van will get in there. It is not a truck; it is a van.

MR COE: The old Griffith library site, I understand, has been proposed as an art centre. Is that something for the Property Group?

Mr Ryan: Again, that is an ACT Property Group matter, not a library matter.

MR COE: I will save it for tomorrow.

MR SMYTH: Giles Street is the street where the newsagency is. It is that side of the Kingston shops?

Ms Little: Giles Street, the newsagency is, yes, near the corner.

MR SMYTH: Yes, and Essential Ingredient is a couple of shops up from the newsagency. You said that staff have gone down on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings at about 10 o'clock. Did they think to go down at 9 o'clock?

Ms Little: Yes, we have been—

MR SMYTH: Traditionally, in retail, the busy periods are seven to nine, 11 to one, four to six?

Ms Little: Yes. We are aware that—

MR SMYTH: Were those periods surveyed?

Ms Little: Yes. I actually live locally, for my sins, and I have popped down there on the way through to work at half past eight, 9 o'clock.

MR SMYTH: Not to be disparaging, but popping down is different from doing a proper survey. You also said that you went down on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Traditionally, the busy times in retail are very early Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday—

Ms Little: Yes.

MR SMYTH: And what you have said to me does not give me a great deal of confidence that a proper parking study is being done. What, for instance, are the visitation numbers if we compare it to Gungahlin, and how many places have you assessed as being required? What is the length of average stay and is there long-stay parking available? All of that parking in that area is metered parking.

Ms Little: As it is at most of our libraries. We only have one library that does not.

MR SMYTH: That may be the case but the clientele from the inner south, I suspect, is slightly different from most of the other areas.

MR COE: Especially Gungahlin.

Ms Little: Kippax library gets 395 people on average a day, visits a day, and Gungahlin has 420 on average a day. So we are expecting it to be somewhere between those at Kingston.

MR SMYTH: And what is the average length of visit?

Ms Little: Sometimes it is 10 minutes and sometimes it is half an hour; it is difficult to know. People will come and use a library as they wish. I think the pertinent thing is that we ran a survey, a telephone survey, last year in relation to the new Gungahlin library and 73 per cent, just over, of Canberrans told us that they want to go to the library and shop in the one visit. It was a very clear message from that survey. So we have—

MR SMYTH: The library will open from what hour?

Ms Little: We have not finalised that yet but it will certainly be open on Saturdays, given the place that it is in and the fact that we are open in all of our branches on Saturdays. I imagine it will be open one night, maybe two nights, a week.

MR SMYTH: But during Monday to Friday, standard hours are what?

Ms Little: During the day, we open normally in the other branches at 10.

MR SMYTH: Till five?

Ms Little: Sometimes we open at 8.30 one day a week in busy places like Woden but, on average, about 10 o'clock in the morning.

MR SMYTH: Do you have any results as to what is the mode of transport of customers? How many come by car, how many come by bus?

Ms Little: Very astoundingly, more by car than any other way. And that was again a study that we did for the new Gungahlin library.

MS BRESNAN: I was just going to say that not all the parking there is actually metered parking; there is parking on two side streets that actually is not metered parking. It is along the street which is just directly across.

MR SMYTH: It is not easy to park there.

MS BRESNAN: I usually find a park when I go there. On Saturdays you can actually park on both sides of the street.

MR SMYTH: If you did a parking study for the new Gungahlin library, why did you not do a parking study—

Ms Little: We did not do a parking study; we did a community—

MR SMYTH: Sorry, I thought you said you did a parking study.

Ms Little: We did a study; we did a community library survey on the development of the Gungahlin library.

MS BURCH: Is that the one that showed—

Ms Little: No, we did other consultation on the library plan with the people in the inner south.

MS BURCH: Is that the survey where you found the majority of people wanted to shop and go to the library at the same time?

Ms Little: Yes. It is actually an international trend; it is actually quite a strong international trend.

MR COE: Just going back to the fit-out cost, what did you say that was?

Ms Little: It is \$890,000 and that includes the radiofrequency identification technology that we are putting into the other libraries at the moment. It also includes all the information technology. So there is the building fit-out—

MR COE: The radiofrequency technology, that is being rolled out in all the libraries?

Ms Little: It is, currently.

MR COE: Of the \$890,000, how much is taken up by that?

Ms Little: About \$50,000 or \$60,000.

MR COE: Perhaps \$838,000 or \$840,000 is the rollout cost separate to that?

Ms Little: That will include all of the building fit-out, the shelves, the membership desks, the computers for internet access, that kind of thing.

THE CHAIR: Who is handling the fit-out?

Ms Little: Property Services and Procurement Solutions.

THE CHAIR: No, in terms of the contractor?

Ms Little: We have not selected one yet.

MR SMYTH: And the opening date, it is due to open—

Ms Little: We have not got an opening date yet but it will be some time between now and the end of this calendar year.

THE CHAIR: We are probably done on that issue, are we? All right, we will move on to other issues. Ms Bresnan?

MS BRESNAN: I am hoping I am asking the right people here. This is to the Office

of Road Transport. Looking at the road capital works program, in budget paper 4, page 55, there is some discussion about it.

Mr Stanhope: It is actually Mr Gill as well as Ms Greenland.

MS BRESNAN: In terms of looking at annual investment and road capital works—and it has gone up in the last five years—I am just wondering how the rate of growth in terms of capital going to roads translates to the growth in public transport related infrastructure. That is also capital works for buses, pedestrian access and those sorts of things. How does that relate to the investment in road capital works as well in the outyears of the budget? How much is that investment?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Ms Bresnan. Mr Gill, who is known as a walking encyclopaedia, may be able to answer those questions.

MS BRESNAN: There you go, excellent.

Mr Stanhope: It may be that he will have to take some parts of that question on notice.

MS BRESNAN: I have asked the right person.

Mr Stanhope: It may be that we will have to take some parts of that on notice.

MS BRESNAN: Yes, I understand that.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Gill, with that introduction.

Mr Gill: Thank you for that introduction. Your question is quite a challenging one. In terms of the capital works program that you are seeing for 2009-10, you will see that a lot of the capital investment is actually associated with land supply programs and it is about future development. So that is where the substantial road investment for 2009-10 is. In terms of investment for cycling, pedestrian and public transport infrastructure, that is identified against the Roads ACT component of that. That has seen an increase this year and into the forward years compared to previous years.

MS BRESNAN: Is it possible to get figures as a comparison between the two?

Mr Gill: We can take on notice a comparison for, say, the last five years and for the forward years, as identified in that program.

MS BRESNAN: That would be great. In the last five years the annual investment in road capital works has gone up?

Mr Gill: Annual investment has gone up. There have been some larger projects. For instance, Gungahlin Drive extension is a larger project. For that, total expenditure for stage 1 is \$120 million. That would encompass several years of a normal program.

MS BRESNAN: Putting aside major projects like Gungahlin Drive extension, has there been an overall increase—

Mr Gill: The increase in recent years primarily is linked with the land supply program.

MS BRESNAN: So that is where the major investment is happening?

Mr Gill: That is where the major investment is. In terms of maintenance of the existing road system, that has been relatively static. There has been investment but it is fairly similar from year to year.

MS BRESNAN: So you will get back to us with the figures on a comparison of the public transport infrastructure?

Mr Gill: We will provide some advice in relation to that, yes.

MS BRESNAN: That is also, as I said, pedestrian access and bike?

Mr Gill: Yes.

MS BRESNAN: In relation to road capital works, has there been any climate change impact analysis of the roadworks? Has that been a part of development?

Mr Gill: There has not been a detailed assessment in terms of climate change.

MS BRESNAN: Has there been any sort of assessment at all?

Mr Gill: As part of, for instance, the current project we are progressing, the Majura Parkway, as part of the environmental impact assessment for that there is a section covering climate change. For any major road investment projects there would be an assessment from a climate change point of view.

MS BRESNAN: But not for overall works; there has not been an assessment?

Mr Gill: Not in the sense of overall program delivery. At a very specific level, for instance, in terms of provision of street lighting, where there is a very specific relationship between the project that went forward and the climate change strategy, that has happened.

THE CHAIR: How is that done? You talked about a general assessment with road projects. How is that done? What is the analysis that is done?

Mr Gill: In terms of climate change, to focus from a roads investment project point of view, in terms of an increase or reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

THE CHAIR: So what factors are looked at—how many cars are likely to use the road, what the emissions will be, what the construction phase is? Are they the things that are taken into account?

Mr Gill: When you look at any major project, the sort of things that are costs or benefits to a project basically relate to vehicle travel time and operating costs. From a climate change point of view, that can basically give us an increase or reduction in

greenhouse gases and that can be translated into financial or economic terms.

THE CHAIR: Presumably when you do that you would do plus and minus in terms of potentially more cars on the road but potentially less congestion, and you would offset those two?

Mr Gill: Offset those, but also you are taking into consideration the impact of the likely increase, or in terms of public transport, cycling and walking, in terms of a model split.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur, do you have a question on this?

MS LE COUTEUR: It is a broadening of it; it is on half of it. Talking about climate change, and given the government's recent, very welcome commitment to zero net emissions, how do you work that out over the whole of the TAMS portfolio? TAMS clearly is responsible not only for roads but basically for looking after our city. How are you progressing towards the zero net greenhouse gas emissions and how is it taken into account?

Mr Gill: That is probably not a question that I could answer.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am addressing that principally to the minister.

Mr Stanhope: Thank you. Mr McNulty would be happy to respond.

Mr McNulty: The answer really lies in our relationship with DECCEW, who have responsibility for climate change strategy. We work closely with them in terms of our operations and the government strategy going forward.

THE CHAIR: Does the department have a target for when it will have zero net emissions in its operations?

Mr McNulty: Not at the moment, no.

MS LE COUTEUR: And is it doing anything to correct—

Mr Stanhope: Just to provide some context to this discussion and these questions of officers, the minister for the environment announced this particular aspirational target within the last two weeks. It was a position announced two weeks ago and Mr McNulty is suggesting that it is a policy initiative of the minister for the environment. Departments will, of course, respond very positively to the initiative, as they do, but it is a question, as Mr McNulty suggests, that might be directed to the minister for the environment.

THE CHAIR: I could be wrong on this, Chief Minister, and correct me if I am, but isn't there some discussion in weathering the change about this? What Mr Corbell announced was a zero net emissions target for the ACT and then there is a separate question of zero net emissions for government operations, which I understand has already been achieved by some councils, and there has been reference to this. Is there anything in weathering the change or any other government documents which

references government operations having zero net emissions?

Mr Stanhope: The policy that has been announced by the minister is a policy announced within the last two weeks. Certainly, through weathering the change—and these are questions for the minister for the environment and climate change, not this department; the minister for the environment and climate change is responsible for that particular policy and the questions would be better directed to him—the government outlines a whole suite of measures designed to reduce the government’s footprint, as well as that of the community. For instance, in this budget, I think—and this is the difficulty in asking me these questions—we have funded a significant increase in our purchase of green energy. The ACT government has proposed annually to move towards a circumstance where we buy every year an additional 10 per cent of our energy needs from renewable sources. But these are questions for the minister for the environment and climate change. I am not briefed to answer questions on another portfolio. This department is not responsible for the government’s policies in relation to climate change; the minister for climate change is.

MS LE COUTEUR: The point is, minister, if we are going to achieve any of these targets, every department is going to have to be involved, and TAMS more than most, because it is responsible for operating the city, in effect. DECCEW cannot do the job by itself. It has got to be part of what TAMS does if we are going to do it, and that is the reason. Yes, I will ask the question this afternoon, but it is relevant to ask it this morning as well.

MR SMYTH: Perhaps the question is: what is the TAMS contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and what initiatives do we see in this year’s budget to achieve that?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Ryan: From a property perspective, again, it comes under 2.1 but under property, for example. Tomorrow there will be a number of initiatives that will be able to be announced, including work we are doing on green leasing, work on sustainable government office building and the work we are doing on capital works in terms of improving the machinery that we use in buildings. For instance, there is some major work going on at some of the libraries at the moment to replace the air conditioning which will have major impacts on both reducing energy and use of water. So on the property side there is a lot of work, and Karen could talk about the work we are doing from a transport planning perspective.

MR SMYTH: That would be lovely. See, it is not that hard, is it? It is easy to get answers.

Ms Greenland: Certainly, we are in close contact with officers from DECCEW in the work that we are doing around transport planning issues. So we have got involvement from that organisation as we go forward in relation to planning for public transport, for example. In terms of issues that are in the budget, obviously there are initiatives in the budget around things like park and ride facilities. To the extent that there are initiatives in the budget that are encouraging greater utilisation of public transport and alternative transport modes such as walking and cycling, they will obviously all

contribute to reducing emissions. Certainly, we are working very closely with DECCEW as we go forward in relation to a range of initiatives that we are working on.

MS BURCH: I wanted to go to some of those alternatives, if I could. Tony Gill, in response to Ms Bresnan, mentioned cycleways, and there is a budget initiative around cycling. Can you expand on how those cycle path sites will be selected and where they will run?

Mr Stanhope: We are happy to provide a full list of those initiatives which, of course, will be headed up by our significant commitment to planting trees—a significant climate change initiative, the million trees proposal. I would very much like to go into the detail around that.

MR SMYTH: How many are we chopping down, though?

Mr Stanhope: Pardon?

MR SMYTH: How many are coming out?

Mr Stanhope: This is the whole point. This is why it is very important actually—

MR SMYTH: Well, it is. So how many are coming out?

Mr Stanhope: over the next 25 years. I think Mr Watkinson could probably get back to you on that. But I have digressed. We should perhaps answer Ms Burch's question and then—

MS BURCH: Don't worry, I can get to that one.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Watkinson would be happy to give you details of the urban forest renewal program.

THE CHAIR: We will stick with Ms Burch's question for the moment. We are happy to talk about trees later.

Mr Stanhope: I just wanted to ensure that we did not miss the question of trees.

THE CHAIR: I would not dream of it. We want to hear all about it.

Mr Gill: In relation to the budget, there is \$9.2 million basically covering investment in cycling, walking and footpaths. That is spread over four years and in each year it includes \$1.6 million for investment in new cycle path facilities—that is on-road and off-road—half a million dollars for new footpaths and in the 2009-10 year there is \$800,000 available for signposting of the community path network.

In terms of selecting projects, in 2004 there was a master plan developed by the ACT planning authority, Roads ACT and Pedal Power that identified a master plan for pedestrian and cycling infrastructure for 2004 to 2014, so that is 10 years. In 2005, a more detailed plan that looked at specific locations identified a methodology for

selecting sites, and that identified about 45 locations. That was subsequently reviewed in 2007. Just last weekend, we publicly tendered for a consultancy to review that program for 2006 to 2016, to review the needs up to 2016. That process will include a public consultation process at each town centre. It will also include identification of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure networks within the town centres, because at the moment, while we have got a well-defined network connecting town centres to each other, within the town centres there are some deficiencies. There is not a well-defined network within town centres. So we see that as an important inclusion in this program.

MR COE: In terms of 50 kilometres for this year, the on-road cycle lanes—sorry, for next year—the estimated, as per page 68 of budget paper 4, do you have a list yet of where—

Mr Gill: They will be associated with the 2009-10 resurfacing program which just recently has been sent to the minister to sign off. So that is where the majority of those locations will—

MR COE: And will that be published?

Mr Gill: That will be published on our website. This year we have actually exceeded the 50 kilometres. When we report at the end of June, we will most likely exceed that 50 kilometres.

MR COE: The increase in length of on-road cycle lanes is 10 kilometres?

Mr Gill: Yes. We will actually exceed that. That was the first year that we have introduced that measure.

MR COE: Okay, but didn't you just say you would exceed 50?

Mr Gill: We will exceed 50, yes.

MR COE: This year?

Mr Gill: That is why we revised that measure.

MR COE: Right.

Mr Gill: Last year, which was the first time it was introduced, we felt it was important to highlight the contribution that we were adding to the network on an annual basis, so we introduced some new measures. We set a target of 10 kilometres last year. But, subsequently, as we have gone through this year, we have clearly exceeded that target.

MR COE: So how did you derive the estimated outcome of 10?

Mr Gill: Previously we were not actually collecting information on that.

MR COE: So how did you make your target if you were not collecting information?

Mr Gill: Basically based on judgement. It is a target we had no—

MR COE: And there is a target but you could not measure it?

Mr Gill: We have introduced measures to actually measure it.

MR COE: Okay, but at the time of making the target, you could not measure it?

Mr Gill: At the time of introducing the target we had a new maintenance system which we were about to implement, and we have now implemented that. We have reviewed the target and put in a more challenging target.

MR COE: Right. How long has this target been in there for? How many budgets has it been in?

Mr Gill: One year.

MR COE: One year, okay.

Mr Gill: Basically, we had a target; it was too low in the first instance so we revised it.

MS BURCH: Mr Gill, with these 45 locations that were in the discussions with groups such as Pedal Power, they will be fed into this new process of identifying locations?

Mr Gill: There will be a starting point, but obviously it is five years on and circumstances have changed to some extent. There is more investment being directed to cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in recent times.

MS BURCH: Looking at networks around shopping centres, you will be talking to the traders and retailers of those groups? That will form part of the consulting process?

Mr Gill: We are looking at an overall Canberra network, and we are looking at a consultation process that will be privy to each community council, and that will obviously have input from traders.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you tell me specifically about the town centre in the Bunda Street upgrade at present? There have been quite a few people who would like to see better cycle provision, but that does not seem to be resolved at this stage. Cycling through Civic is pretty hard. There has been a clear proposal for Bunda Street and—

Mr Gill: I can talk in broad terms about the town centres, and Russell Watkinson might be able to talk about Bunda Street as he has got carriage of Bunda Street. As we stand at the moment the cycling and pedestrian network within town centres is not well defined.

MS LE COUTEUR: No.

Mr Gill: There is no policy position on whether, say, a cycle network should be on

the road or whether it should be on the footpath. If it is on the road, does that displace existing traffic and what does that mean in terms of impact on businesses in those areas? Until you have a policy position and an overall plan for each of the town centres, it is probably a bit premature to jump to a solution, say, in relation to Bunda Street.

MS LE COUTEUR: On the other hand, you are jumping to solutions in so far as there is a plan to refurbish it now. Once that is done, presumably it is going to stay for some period of time. While it may be premature, it seems to be what is happening.

Mr Gill: I do not think the solution for Bunda Street precludes it happening.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Watkinson can perhaps provide more detail, Ms Le Couteur, but there has been extensive consultation by the government. It is the nature of consultation and the nature of our community response and views that there are, in relation to almost every issue on which government consults, a range of views put to government. It is not always the case that the views are consistent.

Pedal Power, representing cyclists, has a particular view of Bunda Street. Pedal Power's preferred position probably would be that Bunda Street be closed to vehicular traffic. That would be their preferred position. There is another view, a view held within government, that it is not appropriate to close Bunda Street and for Bunda Street to be utilised essentially as a bicycle path. There is just not unanimity on this.

At the end of the day, whilst we are very sensitive to the need for access by the cyclists to safe roadways and safe methods of travelling through town centres, we take decisions based on a range of other considerations. One of those considerations as far as I am concerned—and it is a view that TAMS and ACTPLA share—is that it is not in the best interests of the continued function of the CBD or of Civic or the city centre for cars to be excluded from Bunda Street.

We acknowledge, Ms Le Couteur, Pedal Power's position, put vigorously through a broad range of public consultation, that if Bunda Street is not to be closed to vehicles there should be a specific bikeway capacity within Bunda Street. For such a narrow inner city street, it is a very difficult issue for us to accede to the specific and clear position put by Pedal Power.

Over the years, successive governments have closed a number of streets within the city centre. One can look at the benefits and some of the disadvantages that accrue from closing off a large part of the city. I have not done the comparison, but as I walk around Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, I would think the enclosed mall space within the centre of Canberra is probably larger than that in Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane. The issues of vitality and vibrancy and people moving through a city are real issues for us in a management sense. We have a very large area here, and I have to say for one that I am not inclined to increase the area of the city centre that is closed to traffic. That is a debate and an argument that we politicians can engage in.

MR COE: Would you consider reclaiming some of the pedestrian malls for roads?

Mr Stanhope: It is not something that I have asked to be actively considered. But,

Mr Coe, as I sometimes have pondered some of the issues around creating a more vital heart, I must say that it is something that I have pondered, but it is not work that I have asked to be initiated or pursued. For myself, yes, I have wondered whether or not closing Petrie Plaza at both ends was the right thing. The other difficulty, of course, is the bus interchange arrangements through East Row. We have excluded cars all the way from Northbourne Avenue to Akuna Street, and it is a large area. Some of the debate we are now having about what is believed to be actions by QIC to purchase other parts of the centre is really a debate about the lack of people or traffic or pedestrians in this other very large area of the city that we have to maintain.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: I actually have a question for Mr Gill. We were talking about the various infrastructure which is being invested in, including cycleways and walkways. How are government priorities determined? The bus priority lanes are listed here. How are the priorities determined about where the investment goes?

Mr Gill: The actual projects fit into the broad policy that Karen, the manager of the transport policy and regulation area, talked about. If we take an example of, say, public transport and bus priority lanes, during the year we have looked at the city to Belconnen, the city to Woden and the city to Queanbeyan links. We have identified some improvements on the city to Belconnen link which we are currently implementing at the intersection of Barry Drive and Belconnen Way. It is a specific project. We have also flagged a future bus lane extending from Barry Drive to link into the existing bus lane on Clunies Ross Street.

Mr Stanhope: I might just ask Mr Gill to expand a little more, but these are decisions that have only just been taken in relation to funding. Mr Gill might like to give more detail about two specific public transport initiatives that we have agreed to fund. I find it a bit confusing to understand exactly what is proposed without looking at a document, which I have had the advantage of, but Mr Gill might like to explain those two projects that we have just agreed to fund at Barry Drive and on Flemington Road.

Mr Gill: As I said, we have looked at the city to Belconnen link and initially identified some work at the intersection of Barry Drive and Belconnen Way. We have also flagged a future extension of that bus lane on Barry Drive to Clunies Ross Street. As part of the roads recovery program we put forward a recommendation to the Chief Minister for a series of projects, some of which have encompassed bus lane projects. One is on Barry Drive, which is an investment of \$2.5 million extending the existing bus lane to Clunies Ross Street and also on Flemington Road at the intersection with Sandford Street. That is an extension of the existing bus lane on Flemington Road further south as well as through the intersection. In terms of identifying specific locations, we look at the policy context and the funding opportunities and we seek to progress them on that basis.

MS BRESNAN: Yes, and you mentioned Queanbeyan to the city earlier?

Mr Gill: Yes.

MS BRESNAN: Just looking at Canberra Avenue in particular, which goes from

Queanbeyan to the city, what is the capacity there?

Mr Gill: Just to give you the relative context, in terms of bus movements on the city to Belconnen link, there are 300 in the peak period. On the Queanbeyan to city link, there are 30, and there are about 250 on the city to Woden link. Clearly, whatever funding is available for making improvements, you focus on the areas where the return for investment is greatest.

MS BRESNAN: Absolutely, but Canberra Avenue is a particularly busy road at peak hour.

Mr Gill: Canberra Avenue is busy.

MS BRESNAN: Yes, and if we had bus lanes there you might actually get more people on public transport.

Mr Gill: In relative terms, if you have funding available for public transport, you look at where you get the best return on that investment.

MS BRESNAN: I understand. Deane's is operating in that area as well.

Mr Gill: But that figure of 30 movements includes both the operations from Queanbeyan by Deane's and the ACTION bus services. To provide a bus lane from Queanbeyan to the city is an investment in the order of \$20 million.

MS BRESNAN: When you were talking about priorities, I was just interested in how priority is determined there.

Mr Gill: In terms of trying to make the best use of the available funding, we try to identify what are the busier or more heavily trafficked bus routes and progress it on that basis.

MR COE: Sorry, go back to that project you mentioned earlier about a busway on Barry Drive. Let me clarify this: from Clunies Ross Street to where?

Mr Gill: There is an existing bus lane from Clunies Ross Street back maybe 100 metres up the hill.

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Gill: Then basically it goes back to general traffic lanes.

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Gill: What we are suggesting is that we would have a bus lane from the intersection of Belconnen Way and Barry Drive—

MR COE: Where the GDE is, pretty much?

Mr Gill: No. Belconnen Way, where you go down to Macarthur Avenue. You are

going into the city.

MR COE: Sorry, yes.

Mr Gill: So that intersection, and then from there we would extend a bus lane about a kilometre to link into that.

MR COE: That is simply by reclaiming an existing lane or by actually putting in—

Mr Gill: No, that is by widening of the existing lane and widening of the existing bridge. That is why a \$2.5 million investment is required.

MR COE: Will there be a reduction in the number of road—

Mr Gill: There will be no reduction in the amount of general traffic lanes.

MR COE: Are you able to provide the committee with plans or information about that?

Mr Gill: We can, yes. They are currently being designed so we would be able to make a copy of the plans available when they are available.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Are you done on that particular one, Mr Coe?

MR SMYTH: Well, I have some more roads questions.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I am sure we have plenty more on roads. I was going to go to Mr Smyth and then Ms Burch if you are finished on that particular line of questions.

MR COE: Yes, on that busway, yes.

MR SMYTH: When will the Gungahlin Drive duplication be finished, Chief Minister?

Mr Stanhope: Mr Gill?

Mr Gill: The Gungahlin Drive extension will be finished by June 2012 at the latest.

MR SMYTH: June 2012?

Mr Gill: At the latest.

MR SMYTH: At the latest?

Mr Gill: At the latest.

MR SMYTH: At the latest?

Mr Gill: At the latest. That is the target date. If we can deliver it sooner—

MR SMYTH: I just remember “on time, on budget” was July 2005—and in January 2008 it was half a road.

MR COE: A great election promise in 2012, isn't it?

MR SMYTH: So June 2012?

Mr Gill: June 2012. You might have noticed in the paper on Saturday that the tender for the site management contract went out.

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Mr Gill: The construction tender for the first stage—Gungahlin Drive extension stage 2 is being built in five stages—is at Glenloch Interchange, where we see the greatest return on investment; also it is where congestion is most perceived at the moment. That will go out to tender on 6 June and that will be completed in 18 months.

MR SMYTH: All right.

MR COE: How can we be confident that it will be finished by June 2012, given the track record of the project?

Mr Gill: We are doing our best to deliver it. All the arrangements are in place. The design is completed. We have got five packages of work identified. We have a site management contract in place come the end of June. So there is no reason from the department's point of view not to provide that advice to the minister.

MR COE: Okay.

MR SMYTH: Could you run through the five packages?

Mr Gill: The five packages of works: there are the older roadworks and bridges at Glenloch Interchange, then there are three bridge packages, because our learning from the first stage of works is that the bridge works can slow up the rest, so we have basically got a bridge package at Belconnen Way-GDE, which is a substantial piece of work.

THE CHAIR: How long is the bridge package expected to take?

Mr Gill: These will be running in parallel.

THE CHAIR: Okay. But in and of itself, as a project?

Mr Gill: About 12 months.

THE CHAIR: That would be 12 months to do all of the bridge widening that is needed for—

MR COE: So that is the Barton Highway, Ellenborough, Ginninderra and Belconnen Way?

Mr Gill: Yes. They are going to be packaged into three separate packages, which can run concurrently, and then the last package basically is just the roadworks connecting the various bridges.

MR COE: Do you have any idea what the cost would have been to have built a dual carriageway from the start in terms of the bridge construction?

Mr Gill: If the Gungahlin Drive extension was built as a duplicated road in one stage, we would have seen savings of about 10 per cent on the overall cost of the project. When you look at the cost of the project, \$120 million plus an extra \$85 million, so there would have been at least a 10 per cent saving if it was all done in one go.

MR COE: 10 per cent of the \$85 million or 10 per cent of the combined cost?

Mr Gill: The total package.

MR COE: So perhaps \$20 million, around \$20 million?

Mr Gill: Ten per cent of the \$200 million project, yes.

MR COE: Okay.

MR SMYTH: And what about in time? If it was duplicated originally, would it be finished now?

Mr Gill: I would hope so, yes.

MR SMYTH: Right—so a few years saving.

Mr Stanhope: But of course that would have been \$85 million worth of other roads that would not have been built. As Mr Gill just indicated, \$120 million—how many years of roadworks is that normally, Mr Gill?

Mr Gill: It probably would be about three years.

Mr Stanhope: Three years, yes. So there are three years of other roads that would not have been built.

MR COE: Yes, but you would have had \$20 million extra to spend at the end.

Mr Stanhope: But you would not have built the roads at this stage—

MR COE: So, after the same time frame, after eight years or after 11 years or whatever, surely you would have had more bang for your buck.

Mr Stanhope: Certainly, there is—

MR SMYTH: Twelve years.

MR COE: Twelve years.

Mr Stanhope: Certainly, but three years worth of other roads have been built in the last three years that would not have been built, Mr Coe, and I actually invite you to nominate the roads that you would not have built.

MR COE: No, no. Let us be clear about this. The net effect by 2012—

Mr Stanhope: Mr Coe, nominate the roads that you would not have built.

MR COE: would be \$20 million worth of additional roads, had it been built as a duplicated road from the start.

Mr Stanhope: Three years of roads that have been built in the last three years, Mr Coe, would not have been built, so—

MR COE: But by 2012—

Mr Stanhope: nominate the ones you would not have built, Mr Coe.

MR COE: No, no. That is wrong, Chief Minister. By 2012 there are going to be fewer roads built—

Mr Stanhope: No, there is not.

MR COE: because of this policy.

Mr Stanhope: No, no, no, that is not true.

MR SMYTH: Well, then your question defeats itself, Chief Minister.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, we will keep asking some questions here on this.

MR COE: We just heard about a 10 per cent saving. How can you argue against that?

Mr Stanhope: Well, we did not have the money, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Right. So it is a different—

MR SMYTH: But you miraculously found the money late one night at about quarter to seven and you just splashed out and—

Mr Stanhope: Well, we had the money then, as a result of outstanding—

MR SMYTH: and there was this beautiful swan dive—

Mr Stanhope: You do need to understand that—

MR COE: The only person who can claim a victory on the GDE.

Mr Stanhope: We came to government of course after seven years of Liberal government, with the coffers bare. We had to build them back up.

MR COE: And we are in such a great financial position now, aren't we?

MR SMYTH: But you cannot mislead the committee. I am pleased as the former roads minister that it has—well, I am not pleased that it has taken you 10 years to implement my five-year road program. That would show that you have been ineffective and inefficient in your job as Chief Minister, which of course is true for many portfolios—many, many portfolios.

Mr Stanhope: Tell us about the Nicholls car park, Mr Smyth—your crowning glory.

MR COE: That is a little badge of honour for you, Chief Minister—a real badge of honour.

MR SMYTH: What about the car park at the Canberra Hospital? Tell us how you lost money on a car park, Chief Minister.

THE CHAIR: We have still got a couple of questions around the GDE. We could go back and forth. It is entertaining for—

MR SMYTH: Well, let us keep going back and forth.

THE CHAIR: a number of us, but we probably should move on. Mr Gill, on a technical matter in terms of the bridge work, to me it seems the bridge work would be relatively disruptive when it is done. Would it not have been more sensible to at least have done the bridge work for a duplicated GDE all at once? Wouldn't that have saved us a fair bit of hassle down the track?

Mr Gill: We have actually done that. We have done the foundations and the bridge abutments for—

THE CHAIR: But the pylons have not been done?

Mr Gill: We have, yes. So basically—

THE CHAIR: All the pylons have been done for all of the bridges that are needed?

Mr Gill: Yes. So at each bridge we have done the ultimate foundations and bridge abutments, so the balance of work basically is the bridge decking and some approach roads in most cases.

THE CHAIR: Okay. And that takes 12 months, that aspect of it?

Mr Gill: Yes, but, for instance, take a look at the bridge at Belconnen Way. It is a fairly substantial structure.

MR SMYTH: Will it be built in the same way where it slowly creeps out—

Mr Gill: Yes, it will be cantilevered out from both ends, so the disruption to general traffic on Belconnen Way will be minimised.

MR COE: And that is the same at Glenloch Interchange? All the pylon work has been done at the Glenloch Interchange?

Mr Gill: Pylon work has been done. Foundations have been done, yes.

THE CHAIR: You are talking about disruption being minimised on Belconnen Way. On the GDE, how severe will the disruptions be? How long will people from Gungahlin be driving in 40-kilometre-an-hour zones?

Mr Gill: The disruption will be obviously less than in the first stage of work, because you have got the first stage now completed. If you take, for instance, the section from Barton Highway down to Ginninderra Drive, that is totally removed from traffic. It is a new section of road so there is no disruption. As you go through the AIS you are looking at providing additional widening in the median, so there will be some disruption. Through Aranda: all the work is done in Aranda at this point in time because of additional works we did relatively recently. Then there is work at Glenloch Interchange, where there is a combination of bridges and some roadworks, so there will be some disruption. People being people, as they go through they will have a look and will tend to slow down. But there will be an overall management plan, as there was for GDE stage 1, with a view to trying to minimise that impact.

MR COE: Between the Barton Highway and Belconnen Way, during construction they are in effect duplicating each of the bits of bitumen, are they not? Like the two strips of bitumen, they both have to be widened—

Mr Gill: You should probably rephrase or re-ask that question. The section from Barton Highway to Ginninderra Drive, there is a new carriageway.

MR COE: Okay. Then what about between Ginninderra Drive and—

Mr Gill: Then between Ginninderra Drive and Belconnen Way—

MR COE: But they both have to be widened?

Mr Gill: They are both widened but are widened into the median—

MR COE: Yes, into the median.

Mr Gill: which is the central area.

MR COE: So that area will be a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone perhaps. How long will that be a reduced speed limit there?

Mr Gill: There will be roadwork traffic management arrangements in place for about 16 months.

MR COE: 16 months.

Mr Gill: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Going to roads down south, I have a question about Lanyon Drive.

Mr Stanhope: That is the road that Mr Coe would not have built. We know that one.

MR COE: Yes, with that \$20 million slush fund we would build more roads though, wouldn't we?

MS BURCH: So what is the progress on Lanyon Drive?

MR SMYTH: Very slow.

Mr Gill: Lanyon Drive stage 1 has been recently completed and Lanyon Drive stage 2, which basically goes from the intersection of Sheppard Street to Tomsitt Drive in Queanbeyan, which is being developed jointly by the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales and the ACT government, will go out to tender in July. The environmental impact assessment has been completed and it is going through the final stages of approval. It is a \$50 million project and the territory, commonwealth and New South Wales governments are contributing funding.

MS BURCH: So it is progressing on time?

Mr Gill: It is on time.

MR SMYTH: When will Sheppard Street up to Tomsitt Street in Jerrabomberra be built?

Mr Gill: That is the section we are talking about. Lanyon Drive stage 2 is what we are talking about now.

MR SMYTH: Okay, so that is up the street. So when does that commence?

Mr Gill: Basically, it will go out to tender in July.

MR SMYTH: And when will it be completed?

Mr Gill: This is about an 18-month program. There are some bridge works there that have to be constructed and we also have to liaise with the Roads and Traffic Authority in New South Wales because of that last 150 metres from the border to Tomsitt Drive.

MR SMYTH: All right. And our contribution to that?

Mr Gill: The territory's contribution is \$3.5 million.

MR SMYTH: And the rest will come out of the feds and the New South Wales—

MS BURCH: Total cost?

Mr Gill: New South Wales are contributing \$5 million and the balance is by the federal government as part of a roads to recovery program.

MR SMYTH: The stub of Athllon Drive where it intersects with Drakeford Drive is being duplicated there. When will that be completed?

Mr Gill: Basically by July. It is making some substantial progress.

MR SMYTH: And Tharwa Drive?

Mr Gill: Tharwa Drive is more like a September timing, but that is well ahead of the program that is tabled in the forward budget.

MS BURCH: So that is ahead. Are we looking at a September completion?

Mr Gill: September completion for Tharwa Drive, yes.

MR SMYTH: And if you progress down Tharwa Drive, eventually you get to Tharwa and the Tharwa bridge.

Mr Gill: Indeed.

MR SMYTH: What state is the Tharwa bridge truly in?

Mr Gill: There are three stages of Tharwa bridge. The first stage was some remedial works to get the bridge open to traffic, live traffic, and that was completed in August 2008. There was \$6 million invested in that. The second stage of work recently approved funding for the foundations of the bridge, accepting that the bridge was constructed in 1895 and it has its original timber piers. So some engineering advice has indicated that there is a need to strengthen the foundations, particularly against flood damage. It has gone out to tender at the moment and a contract will be let in July and that is an—

MR SMYTH: Completion?

Mr Gill: eight-month project.

MR SMYTH: So February 2010?

Mr Gill: Yes. And then the third—

MS BURCH: Sorry, the new work on the foundations?

Mr Gill: The new work on the foundations will basically commence in July 2009 and will be completed within eight months; so, say, sort of February 2010 and the third—

MR SMYTH: And cost?

Mr Gill: \$8 million against that foundation work, and then the balance of the work, which is the restoration of the timber trusses and the new timber decking, that is already underway. But because of the nature of the project, the timber has been purchased from New South Wales Forests. It is being stored in Wagga because we have contracted the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales to do the work. The reason we have contracted the Roads and Traffic Authority is that they have got a bridge team that basically manages and maintains 20 heritage-listed bridges in New South Wales. It is sensible from our point of view to engage their services. So the timber, in excess of 140 cubic metres of timber, which is a lot of timber, is being stored in sheds in Wagga, being cured.

THE CHAIR: Correct me if I am wrong, but we were told by the former minister that this timber was not available any more. Is this different timber than was being contemplated at the time?

Mr Gill: No, the timber is available. It is harder to cure and that is why we have a parking arrangement with the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales and New South Wales Forests. I would be surprised if the former minister said it was not available. I suspect he said it would—

MR SMYTH: No, he did. He said one of the reasons that you could not do this was that this timber was no longer available. It was all gone. So well done on finding the timber, Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: I would be very surprised—

MR SMYTH: So it is not true; the timber was available. Why did you not do it then? If the timber was available, what was the excuse for not doing it?

Mr Stanhope: No, the timber had to be cut and cured. The position of the previous minister—

MR SMYTH: No, he said it was not available.

Mr Gill: The timber is a very—

Mr Stanhope: It certainly was not immediately available. The trees had to be sourced, milled and the timber cured.

MR SMYTH: But that was the reason for building the new bridge. The timber was not available to replace the old bridge; we were going to use concrete.

Mr Stanhope: I will have the record checked for the committee.

MR SMYTH: You should. You should be across your brief, Chief Minister.

Mr Stanhope: I will check what the previous minister said, Mr Smyth. If it transpires that as both I and Mr Gill have suggested the previous minister would not have said that, then we of course will be looking to you to formally correct the record.

MR SMYTH: The previous minister was always 100 per cent right in his dealings with the people.

Mr Stanhope: You are absolutely happy to stand, are you, on the statement that you just made and to bear the consequences of the statement you just made under privilege in the Assembly, that he said—

MR SMYTH: Defend the consequences?

Mr Stanhope: The consequences are actually, Mr Smyth, that appropriate action be taken by the Assembly if you have deliberately misled it.

MR SMYTH: As you always come back and correct all your statements, Chief Minister?

Mr Stanhope: We will check the record, Mr Smyth, and we will be looking to you to do the same.

THE CHAIR: So \$26 million it is going to cost altogether now; is that right?

Mr Gill: The overall project is going to cost \$26 million but just let me deal with the final stage. We have procured the timber. It is a difficult resource to procure because of the nature of it. The Roads and Traffic Authority will start the fabrication of the timber trusses in January 2010 in Wagga. They will be transported to Tharwa in September 2010 and it will take 12 months to do the work. We had a public information session in Tharwa on Thursday last, the 21st. It was very well received by the Tharwa community. It was supportive of the program.

They understand there will be some impacts because of road closures, but they are quite accepting of that. It was also supported by the National Trust. Peter Daly from the National Trust was at the meeting and he was supportive of the approach that the department was taking in terms of the conservation of the bridge.

MS BURCH: Are you effectively completely rebuilding it?

Mr Gill: Every timber on Tharwa bridge will be replaced.

MR SMYTH: Sorry, final completion—is that 12 months after September next year?

Mr Gill: Basically, September 2011.

MR SMYTH: Eleven, yes.

MS BURCH: So it will look as it originally did?

Mr Gill: Basically it will look like the original bridge. The Heritage Council has approved the conservation management plan which is providing the guiding reference for the design. It will look very like the previous bridge but it will be a lot stronger. It will be able to take, for instance, a tourist coach, which is important for access to that

area. Also it will be a stronger bridge and a better bridge from the point of view of maintenance.

THE CHAIR: The \$26 million, though, seems a lot. How does that compare to other similar bridge projects in New South Wales?

Mr Gill: In terms of other heritage bridges, it is quite similar. You have to understand the unique nature of this bridge. If you are looking at it purely from a finance point of view, you probably would not build a timber bridge. No jurisdictions build timber bridges these days, from a functionality and economic point of view, but what we are doing is investing in what is a heritage-listed bridge and we are investing basically for future generations rather than just today.

MS BURCH: And there is no way we can progress or hurry along that process of procurement of those timbers? It is what it is.

Mr Gill: All the procurement processes are in place. The timber is basically in a shed in Wagga.

MS BURCH: Sorry, to get to use the timber?

Mr Stanhope: There is a curing process.

Mr Gill: There is a curing process and the curing process is about controlling the moisture content in the bridge. It is a question of patience. They are very large sections of timber. Modern timber would be put in a kiln and then dried but, because of the size of them, they are basically air-dried and we have to just be patient. But the bridge is open at the moment and people are using it.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan?

MS BRESNAN: I have another question about roads, the Mulligans Flat Road. Could I have a brief explanation about where the need has been identified?

Mr Stanhope: Are you talking about Gundaroo Road or Mulligans Flat?

MS BRESNAN: I believe it is one and the same, is it not?

Mr Stanhope: Not if I have anything to do with it.

MS BURCH: Please enlighten us.

MS BRESNAN: We are asking for some enlightenment on that. Is it just removing it?

MR SMYTH: If you had anything to do with it, minister, what would it be?

MS BRESNAN: Can I finish my question? I want some explanation about whether the old Gundaroo Road is going to be removed, where the busy upgrade has been identified and some issues on that.

Mr Gill: The Mulligans Flat-Gundaroo Road—

MR SMYTH: What will it be, Chief Minister?

Mr Stanhope: Mulligans Flat-Gundaroo Road, yes.

MS BRESNAN: Can we let Mr Gill answer? I have asked Mr Gill the question.

Mr Gill: The project is basically to provide access to Bonner and Forde and includes a water-quality pond as well as a reconstruction of a section of road. There are three options that have been identified as part of the environmental impact assessment. I think the option that we will be supporting is one that basically has minimal impact. It will be along the existing alignment of the existing road, primarily to protect the adjacent environment.

MS BRESNAN: What is the current daily traffic use along Gundaroo Road?

Mr Gill: Fewer than about 300 vehicles a day.

MS LE COUTEUR: And what do you expect it will be?

Mr Gill: With Bonner and Forde, it will be, typically, about 7,000 to 10,000 vehicles a day in the future.

MS BRESNAN: How has that been identified?

Mr Gill: As part of the development, the road has been provided to provide access to Bonner and Forde developments. In the future it will be identified as an arterial road. That is the order of traffic that you would expect an arterial road to carry.

MS BRESNAN: When you say you have looked at the environmental impacts and what are going to be, I guess, the benefits of moving this—

Mr Gill: The road and the water-quality pond have been provided to enable development of Forde and Bonner. The environmental impact assessment, which is a process that is happening at the moment, will ensure that the impacts are managed and that impacts on, for instance, the adjacent nature reserve are reduced. And the decision in terms of the alignment of Gundaroo Road-Mulligans Flat Road, we would be very cognisant of that aspect.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur and then I will move to Mr Coe.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have got to find the right page. I will start on waste. One of the things that intrigued me—

THE CHAIR: I do not think we are quite done with roads, Mr Gill; do not get too comfortable.

MS LE COUTEUR: Sorry, we are not done with roads. On page 65—my memory was correct—output 1.3 is waste and recycling. Note 1 states that all sustainability

outputs were transferred to the new Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water following administrative arrangements from 10 November 2008. This means that you guys are responsible for picking it up but you do not care what is in it. How is this going to work?

Mr McNulty: When the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water was created in November last year they assumed responsibility for waste policy, the development of waste policy. But in terms of the budget papers, all the output measures that reflect those activities are now in DECCEW's part of the budget, not TAMS's part of the budget. That is what that note refers to. Clearly, however, in terms of waste, we are still responsible for picking up the waste and recyclables and their processing and the operation of landfills and recycling centres; and we work very closely with DECCEW in terms of the development of the waste policy for the territory.

THE CHAIR: Minister, given that no waste is no longer on the agenda, what is the target now? What is the reasonable target?

Mr Stanhope: The reasonable target is, in the context of a target, probably that aspirational target or a target of an aspirational nature such as zero emissions or vision zero in relation to road accidents. It is an issue that we are giving active consideration to. There is a significant amount of practice across Australia, and indeed nations around the world, in relation to targets. It is a valid discussion for us to have. A target of no waste is an aspirational target. There will always be some waste that we will reduce for landfill until technology catches up with us.

Of course asbestos is an extreme but a valid example. There is no market in the world for asbestos; there is nobody that you can give it away to, let alone sell it to. Technology has not yet developed an alternative use for asbestos. Here in the territory we return all asbestos waste to landfill. The advice we have is that it is the only safe way of disposing of it.

To suggest that the no waste target imagined that we would achieve a circumstance where there was no waste going to landfill was simply not sensible. But to the extent that 2010 of course is upon us next year, it is important that we go forward with a new and renewed commitment to the reduction of waste for landfill.

The Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water and Minister for Energy and his department, with responsibility and policy responsibility for waste and waste policy, I am sure, will give very serious consideration to how we as a community go forward and the nature of targets that we want to set. But I anticipate that we will establish a target in the formal terms of the target which the minister has recently announced in relation to emissions, zero emissions, vision zero, a target, an aspirational target which reflects our commitment to continuing to reduce waste for landfill and recycling as a part of our commitment to sustainability and to dealing with climate change. But that is work that will be done by the new department and is being done by the new department.

MS LE COUTEUR: Any questions about targets, we should ask the new department? I have got—

Mr Stanhope: Yes, issues on picking up waste and garbage collection are questions for this department but Simon Corbell is responsible for the development of waste policies.

MS LE COUTEUR: He is now running the Mugga Lane tip and all of that?

Mr Stanhope: No. TAMS runs it but TAMS runs it consistent with policy determined by the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Water and Energy; just as every department will pursue climate change initiatives consistent with policies developed by the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Water and Energy.

MS BURCH: On Mugga Lane, budget paper 4, page 70, there is a series of moneys over four years for recycling at the Mugga Lane transfer station. What types of results is this expected to achieve?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you. Mr Ware would be happy to respond to that.

Mr Ware: The funds in the budget were for additional recycling at the transfer station. That will mainly be contractual costs associated with the increase that we require for those recyclables that are dropped there to be actually removed and sorted from the waste stream.

MS BURCH: And what sort of cost benefits are there to have alternative options other than landfill?

Mr Ware: We are anticipating that there will be about a six per cent decrease in waste to landfill, which will equate to about 12,000 tonnes per annum. Any decrease in waste for landfill of course extends the present life of the landfill cells that we have at Mugga.

MS BURCH: What happens? Where are these other materials transferring out to? What other groups are involved?

Mr Ware: Generally, they are metals, plastics, glass, similar sorts of recyclables, or they are items that can be resold, but the majority of the material that is stripped out has no further re-use so it is recycled through existing markets in New South Wales or south-east Australia.

MS BURCH: So other commercial operators will come in and take their preferred recycling material?

Mr Ware: We have not yet negotiated with a specific contractor to do this work, but it is anticipated that they will use existing markets in south-east Australia.

MR SMYTH: In a recent budget you received \$850,000 to look for a new landfill site. Has that work been done?

Mr Ware: There is presently a study underway at the Mugga landfill site—a feasibility study, in effect—to look at our options for increasing the life of that landfill.

We are expecting details of that or the report to be submitted early July, and that will then form the basis for our way forward.

MS BURCH: And what is the concurrent—

MR SMYTH: So are you still looking for a new site or not?

Mr Ware: No. We are looking to extend the life of the Mugga landfill.

MS BURCH: What is the current life, then?

Mr Stanhope: In that context, as Mr Ware says, the approach that has been adopted is, first, to determine whether or not the existing—Mr Smyth, I think they are being technically correct. Yes, we are, but the new site is an expansion of the existing site. If, as Mr Ware says, as a result of the studies currently underway, it is revealed that it is simply not feasible or cost-effective then the focus will shift to other potential sites, but at this stage we are neither ruling in nor ruling out the existing site as being essentially the new site with a major expansion, probably to the north. At this stage to the north is the potential extra site at that site. But if it is proven to be not feasible or not cost-effective then consideration will be given to extending to other sites.

MS LE COUTEUR: When you have been doing the modelling, have you looked at seriously increasing the level of recycling and, say, decreasing the amount that you need to put to landfill? Have you looked at the cost benefit of, say, aiming for an 85 per cent target?

Mr Ware: We are always looking for better ways or more cost-effective ways to increase. Unfortunately, we are at a stage now where the easy recyclables are already taken out and it is the last 26 per cent of all waste generated that we presently have to get out that goes to landfill that is the hardest dollar-wise to recoup. We are always looking at better ways of recouping that last percentage that we have to get.

MR SMYTH: Could you break down what that last 26 per cent consists of?

Mr Ware: As the Chief Minister has alluded to, there is asbestos which comes in. There are things that are extremely hard to treat.

THE CHAIR: What percentage would asbestos be of that 26 per cent? How much would that make up?

MS LE COUTEUR: Hopefully less.

Mr Ware: I am sorry, I have not got the figures with me.

THE CHAIR: Roughly? It would not be a large part, would it?

Mr Ware: It is not a large component, no.

THE CHAIR: We will get those numbers, though?

Mr Ware: We will have to take that on notice, I am sorry, and get them to you.

MR SMYTH: What else is in the 26 per cent?

Mr Ware: The 26 per cent is made up of a lot of what we call commercial and industrial waste, which is what comes out of hotels, shopfronts, shopping centres, those sorts of things, and the residential waste, the green bin waste, if you like.

MR SMYTH: So the green bin waste currently contains items that can be composted?

Mr Ware: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, any progress on the third bin?

Mr Stanhope: I beg your pardon?

MR SMYTH: Is there any progress on a third bin to take the green waste out of the residential stream?

Mr Stanhope: I think at this stage we are alive to the possibility, but it is not something we are actively pursuing and it has not been funded in this budget. Certainly, as we deal, as resources permit, with this final 26 per cent of waste—we have to deal with domestic waste. We will never actually achieve the aspirational target which we, as a community, would use.

MR SMYTH: Well, correction, minister. It was never aspirational. If you go back to the early documents, the community in the consultation said they did not want an aspirational target. They actually wanted governments to deliver no waste by 2010, and you have abandoned them.

Mr Stanhope: How were you going to dispose of asbestos, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Well, it is about finding new methods for that, and that is in the document as well, that this would actually create industries. Let us diversify our economic base argument. What is your support—

Mr Stanhope: Mr Smyth, what should we do with asbestos waste?

MR SMYTH: Where is your support for things like—

MRS DUNNE: Mr Chairman, who is asking the questions here?

MS LE COUTEUR: We probably—

Mr Stanhope: Well, I responded rhetorically to outline the absurdity of Mr Smyth's suggestion.

MR SMYTH: No, it is not absurd. It was never absurd, and you know that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that most of the rubbish is not asbestos, maybe we could

focus on some of the more tractable parts.

MR COE: Go to the 99 per cent—

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. Let us go to the 99 per cent solution.

MR COE: Probably 99.9, in fact.

MS LE COUTEUR: Ninety-nine per cent. I notice that—

Mr Stanhope: That is what we are doing, Ms Le Couteur. That is why this particular budget—

MR COE: So we are going to have 0.1 per cent waste by 2010, are we?

MS LE COUTEUR: We are in the situation, as I understand it, where the target—

Mr Stanhope: Mr Chair, am I to be permitted to answer questions?

THE CHAIR: I think you are getting a fair go.

Mr Stanhope: I was halfway through an answer.

MR COE: You give as good as you get, Chief Minister.

Mr Stanhope: Would you like me to conclude?

THE CHAIR: I would love you to, Mr Stanhope.

Mr Stanhope: Ms Le Couteur, that is precisely why, as Mr Ware has just indicated, this budget contains funding to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill by 12,000 tonnes a year. As resources permit, we are increasing funding to our waste reduction strategy. I would be happy for you to actually concentrate on the budget—future budgets will, I have no doubt, contain additional funding—but in this budget there is a funded initiative which will, when implemented, reduce waste to landfill by 12,000 tonnes a year. We will continue, as resources permit, to do that.

MR SMYTH: Is that a net decrease of 12,000 tonnes a year?

Mr Stanhope: Mr Ware may be able to provide additional information in relation to that 12,000-tonne reduction which we expect to achieve annually as a result of this budget.

Mr Ware: Our forecasts indicate that we will achieve about 12,000 tonnes. Obviously, we would like to achieve more than that, but until we actually get a contractor to start doing this work, we will not know, and it really is dependent upon how much the ACT public utilise the transfer station facility where this is to be deposited and then sorted, with the recyclables removed.

MR SMYTH: With population growth, how much extra waste goes into landfill

every year?

Mr Ware: I do not have that information with me, I am sorry. I will have to take that on notice.

MR SMYTH: We have got a project that will take 12,000 tonnes out of it or stop 12,000 tonnes going to the landfill, but how much additional will go into the landfill as the population grows?

Mr Ware: I will have to take that on notice, I am sorry.

MS LE COUTEUR: Another one—

MS BURCH: On page 65 on waste, there is a target of 75 per cent this year of materials recovered from total waste system, and that is what you want to build on over time?

Mr Ware: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Last year, I understand the target was 77 per cent. Why have we decreased it?

Mr Ware: Can I hear that again?

MS LE COUTEUR: With the target that Ms Burch was alluding to, I am told that last year it was 77 per cent and now it is down to 75 per cent. Why has it decreased? It is on page 65. The previous year it said 77 per cent.

Mr Ware: Each year we take—

MS LE COUTEUR: Why has it gone down?

Mr Ware: Each year we ask the 100 businesses that are presently in the recycling market providing recycling services to divert waste from landfill and they report back to us on how much they recover. We then work out what the percentage is of total waste. Last year we achieved 74 per cent. While our target may have been 77, it depends on exactly how much is actually diverted.

MS LE COUTEUR: That does not sound like a target to me. That is an estimated outcome that you have described to me. With targets, you actually have to try to get there. Can I suggest that you need to have a target rather than an estimated, business as usual, outcome?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you for your advice, Ms Le Couteur. We will take it on board.

MR COE: On that, if the target was 77 and then you delivered 74, why is this year's target 72?

MS LE COUTEUR: As Mr Smyth says, we did try seriously for 100 per cent. Maybe 100 per cent was always going to be a little hard, but we should not be going

backwards.

MR COE: I would like an answer to that. Why is this year's target 72, given the previous year, 77 target; delivered 74 and now we are going to 72? Why is that?

MRS DUNNE: Could I just—

THE CHAIR: We will let them answer.

Mr McNulty: The 77 per cent target, I think, was the 2007-08 target.

MRS DUNNE: The 2007-08 target was 77 and the outcome was 73, and you reduced the 2008-09 target to 72.

Mr McNulty: I think what that recognised at the time was the fact that, due to a number of conditions in the economy in Canberra at that time, with significant building and development work going on, there was a great amount of waste going to landfill and we did not reach the target we had established for that year. The take was 77 per cent, I think. We came in—you said—

MRS DUNNE: Seventy-two.

Mr McNulty: Seventy-two, and I think—

MRS DUNNE: Yes. The 2007-08 outcome was 73.

Mr McNulty: In setting the 2008-09 target of 72 per cent, I think we were perhaps being conservative but also wanting to understand what was going on in the marketplace and not setting a target which was unrealistic in that environment.

MR SMYTH: But it does seem to have indicated to the industry that we are going backwards and the government accepts it. Does that not send out the wrong message about a government—and perhaps this is for the minister—that is supposed to be interested in recycling and weathering the change, but is reducing its targets at every opportunity?

Mr McNulty: Look, from my point of view, the targets in the budget need to reflect what we think we can achieve. It would be unwise of us to put a target in the budget which we have no possibility of achieving. That would be a silly thing for us to do.

MS LE COUTEUR: Targets need to represent what we need to achieve rather than what we think we can achieve.

Mr McNulty: Well, the targets in the budget—

MS LE COUTEUR: Surely, that is the aim of a target.

Mr Stanhope: No, not in the budget papers. The target referred to in the budget papers is a target which the agency believes it can achieve on the basis of the funding available to it and the resources that have been made available to the government. The

simple answer to the question is that the department has honestly, openly and transparently indicated a target within the budget papers. The targets move; they move up and down, and they move consistent with the department's understanding and expectations in relation to what it can deliver with the funding available—decisions that government takes through the budget cabinet process.

The budget papers reflect a certain amount of funding. The department makes a judgement on its best efforts—openly, with integrity, honestly—as to the target that it can achieve with the funding which the government has felt fit to make available to it. That is what Waste ACT has done. It has said, “If you give us this much money, this is what we will achieve.” The decision about how much money the government makes available and the resourcing made available is a decision of government—of ministers, of cabinet and the cabinet budget. The department has provided its estimate of the target that it will achieve for that funding. In an ideal world, of course, with no recession or no funding constraints, with no incrementally increasing health budget—

MR COE: This is well before the recession. This is a year ago.

Mr Stanhope: Absolutely. There is a whole range of issues that are taken into account. The point which was touched on in a question earlier—the level of increase in waste as a result of a recent strong increase in population in the last few years—is relevant to the targets achieved. It is probably fair to say that Waste ACT's budget—the moneys provided—has not kept pace with the growth of the city and our population. We have been through four or five years of very strong population growth. Our population increased by between 1.3 and 1.5. It probably needs to be acknowledged that Waste ACT's budget has not kept pace with the increase in the amount of waste that we are producing as a community, and it is reflected in the target.

MR SMYTH: To verify that, could Waste ACT provide their budget for the committee—for, say, 2006-07 through to the 2009-10 budget years, please?

Mr Stanhope: Yes, most certainly. I certainly would be very happy to do that.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. In relation to waste going to landfill, do the figures that are provided in the budget papers and reported elsewhere by ACT NOWaste include the waste that is taken to the Canberra recycling and concrete recycling site at Pialligo?

Mr Ware: Yes, it does.

MRS DUNNE: It does?

Mr Ware: They are included in our surveys.

MRS DUNNE: They are included. When did that commence?

Mr Ware: Sorry?

MRS DUNNE: When did that practice commence?

Mr Ware: I would have to take that on notice and get back to you.

MRS DUNNE: So the building material that goes to that site is part of your accounting?

Mr Ware: I believe so.

MRS DUNNE: Does ACT NOWaste have any discussions with Canberra concrete recycling about mechanisms that may need to be put in place there to sort and re-use or recycle materials there?

Mr McNulty: The EPA license the facility at Pialligo. One of the conditions of the most recent renewal of the licence was that they install a picking plant at that site, which they have done.

MRS DUNNE: They have installed a picking plant?

Mr McNulty: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: So what is happening out there, Mr McNulty? Since that has happened, what reporting is required by, say, the EPA or NOWaste about the amount of waste that is going in there, how it is being sorted and what is happening to it?

Mr McNulty: Unfortunately, I cannot speak now for the EPA. The issue around the licence was occurring while the EPA was still in TAMS. Since it has moved out, I do not think I should speak on their behalf.

MRS DUNNE: I can take that up with Minister Corbell?

Mr McNulty: Yes, but, as far as I am aware—Mr Ware will confirm or deny this—each of the businesses undertaking recycling activities in the city is surveyed once a year.

Mr Ware: Once a year.

Mr McNulty: And asked to provide information on how much material they take in and how much they recycle. That information is then used to build up our statistics each year.

MRS DUNNE: Could you provide to the committee information, back cast, on what goes in and out of the Canberra concrete recycling works at Pialligo for, say, three years?

Mr McNulty: Could we just consider the conditions under which that information is provided to us?

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Mr McNulty: There may be some confidential pieces of information wrapped up there which we may have committed not to make available.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. You will get back and advise us.

Mr McNulty: Subject to that caveat, we will see what we can provide.

MRS DUNNE: Thanks.

MR SMYTH: On the theme of construction and demolition materials, is it not a condition of every contract that the ACT government let that they have a waste management plan, a recycling plan?

Mr McNulty: I think that is right; once again the contracts are administered by Procurement Solutions, but that is my understanding.

MR SMYTH: And the question was: are they not being adhered to, which would defeat your reason for the growth? If the contracts are let and they have to manage the recycling of any waste, then, as they get better, the amount of waste going to landfill should be going down, but you are saying that, because there is a large amount of construction, more waste got to the landfill. Does that not indicate—perhaps it is a question for you, Chief Minister—a failing in the system on the monitoring of the conditions of contracts let in the ACT?

Mr Stanhope: I do not believe so, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: You do not believe so?

Mr McNulty: There are also a large number of construction contracts in the city that are not administered by the government, and they are not subject to those plans.

MR SMYTH: They do not have management plans?

Mr McNulty: They are not required by the government's contracts to have those plans.

MR SMYTH: But every government contract is required to have a management plan for recycling and waste management, and they are adhered to?

Mr McNulty: Yes, as far as I am aware.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe and Ms Le Couteur had some questions. We are due to finish, but we will finish on some of these waste questions and then break.

Mr McNulty: Can I just clarify?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

Mr McNulty: I have just been advised that it is every contract over a certain value that is required to have a waste management plan.

THE CHAIR: What is the value?

Mr Ryan: I think there is a value. We would have to check, but I think there is actually a starting point at which that applies, because the small contracts—

THE CHAIR: When you check that threshold, could you also get us a breakdown of how many contracts are above that threshold and how many are below?

Mr Ryan: I think we can get it through Procurement Solutions.

MR COE: I have a question about page 68, output 1.3, indicator f, the cost of green waste processing per tonne. The figure is not applicable for 2009-10; the note says it has been deleted because “it cannot accurately be measured as weighbridges are not in operation”. Why is this in there, and how has it been measured in the past? And how did you derive the estimated outcome for 2008-09 if weighbridges are not in operation?

Mr Ware: How we arrived at the figure is based on cubic metres as supplied by the contractors who provide the service to us. They estimate the total cubic metres and then we convert it back to a per tonne rate.

MR COE: Okay.

Mr Ware: There is a conversion rate. From that—

MR COE: So you have got an accepted methodology for this—in which case why can't you continue doing that in 2009-10 and into the future?

Mr McNulty: I believe it is about being able to satisfy the audit office about the accuracy of the numbers.

MR COE: Okay.

THE CHAIR: So the audit office had concerns with the methodology?

Mr McNulty: I do not know the specific details of this indicator, but I do know that generally we have had issues with the audit office in the past where they need independent verification of the numbers that we report on. My assumption would be that that is the reason why this indicator has been discontinued.

MR COE: It would seem to me to be a very important statistic—the cost of green waste processing per tonne. This is absolutely critical, I would think, to working out the economic activity and the economic justification for recycling. If you are not developing a statistic like that, how do you expect to be able to quantify recycling and the merits of it into the future?

Mr Ware: The figure effectively measures how much it costs us to pay the contractor.

Then it is divided by the estimate of the tonnes that are provided. Our contract costs remain the same over the term of the contract, so really it is affected by how much the public bring in or do not bring in to sites.

MR COE: But, surely, looking at it from that perspective, if you are awarding contracts based on the tonnage of green waste you are giving to them—surely it is absolutely critical for their performance indicators to actually know how much green waste they are processing. Otherwise how do you know that this contractor is better than that contractor?

Mr Ware: We will still get figures from them on what their estimates are; we just will not be reporting in the estimates. Effectively, without a weighbridge we cannot—

MR COE: But you have been doing it. You have been doing it, though.

THE CHAIR: What you seem to be saying is that the figures are good enough for internal purposes and for contracting purposes, but not for reporting purposes.

Mr Ware: In effect, as Mr McNulty outlined, yes.

MR COE: Can we perhaps expect the department to publish these sorts of figures every three months, six months or a year, even if they are not up to auditing standards? Can we and the public get some sort of accountability in terms of their processing?

Mr Ware: The figures that are in the budget are the figures that are reported in the annual report.

MR COE: Okay. I would like an answer to that. Are you going to publish, on your website or wherever, the cost of green waste processing per tonne according to existing methodology?

Mr McNulty: I can give you a commitment to consider that; I cannot give you a commitment that we will do that at the moment.

MR COE: Will this methodology be used when it comes to awarding contracts and for internal purposes into the future?

Mr McNulty: When we award a contract, we award contracts on the value for money principle; clearly that would be one of the factors in assessing value for money, yes.

MR COE: So if you are actually doing this, is it going to be too much of a hassle for the department to actually publish that?

Mr McNulty: I repeat: we will consider that.

MR COE: Can I ask why there would be some reluctance to do this?

Mr McNulty: I think we would need to have a discussion with the minister about what the department publishes and what it does not publish; and that discussion we

have not had.

THE CHAIR: Minister, what is your view on that? If it is good enough for internal purposes, why can't it be used for publication?

Mr Stanhope: It has not been ordered. The issue we would have to consider is the extent to which it would mislead. There is a range of issues around that about actually being as objective as we can and publishing information that is factually correct or otherwise that we—

MR COE: Are you suggesting that past budget papers are incorrect?

Mr Stanhope: Can I just finish the answer, please?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Mr Chairman. It is important that governments, in information that they publish and make publicly available—perhaps we could publish it with a whole range of caveats about its reliability, the basis on which it might be used or the uses to which it could be put. That is a conversation we will have.

THE CHAIR: We might leave that one there for now.

Mr Stanhope: I just have a couple of issues before we close.

THE CHAIR: I think we have done that. I think Ms Le Couteur had a quick one before we move to morning tea.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a quick one. Minister you said that one of the reasons that the waste was going up was that the population was increasing, which it clearly is. However, looking back to last year—I see that the current target for annual tonnes of waste per landfill is about 0.59, but last year the target was 0.53 and the estimated outcome was 0.57. Okay, population is going up, but why is waste per capita going up as well?

Mr Stanhope: Perhaps we are becoming a more wasteful society, Ms Le Couteur. There are perhaps a number of explanations for that. Population is increasing; we are producing more waste. I think some explanation, particularly in the commissioner for sustainability's reporting, is that as a community we are individually becoming more wasteful; we are producing more waste.

I am not across these numbers, but I think there are a number of very worrying issues in relation to waste and the amount of waste that we are producing. We are growing as a city, of course, with many more people here; we are producing more waste. I think some of the recent indicators, particularly through the commissioner for sustainability's annual reporting, are that as individuals we are each producing more waste. It is a reflection of our prosperity and perhaps a reflection of the fact that we have not yet as individuals grappled with the issue about personal responsibility in relation to waste.

In the context of the government's response and the targets which Waste ACT have set, these are issues. The government accepts the role it plays and the level of resourcing but, as with everything, governments make decisions in relation to priorities and the availability of resources for particular or individual initiatives. Waste ACT responds to that, as they must—as does every other agency.

Before you close, I just wanted to—

MR COE: Sorry, on that previous comment, if I may—

THE CHAIR: One final one and then we will break.

MR COE: I am concerned about that last comment. You have just said that, for output indicator f, the cost of green waste processing might be able to be released—you might be able to, with a whole heap of caveats—yet then you are willing to make anecdotal statements like: “We are a wasteful society and that is the cause of all this.” Surely, the green waste processing per tonne is a much more accurate and objective figure than you saying we are a wasteful society and that is why we are not getting things done.

Mr Stanhope: I would just like to say something before we complete the morning session.

THE CHAIR: No response to that? Okay.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Chairman, I am reading here. Mr Hargreaves informed the Assembly on 26 September 2007 in these terms:

Mr Speaker, our information is that the original timbers that the bridge was made out of are no longer available. Similar timber is available ... It still has to be cut down and cured before it can be used. This is my information. This is what I have been told ...

It was that similar timber is available but it needs to be cut down and it needs to be cured. Mr Chair, I would welcome your request of a member of this committee to correct the record in relation to claims that he made about a previous minister.

THE CHAIR: I am sure Mr Smyth will review the *Hansard* and then he will have the opportunity to—

MR SMYTH: I have Mr Hargreaves here as well:

The timbers were sourced from old-growth forests in New South Wales. They are not available anymore.

That is exactly what he said.

Mr Stanhope: Then what did he go on to say, Mr Smyth? He then went on to say:

Similar timber is available ... It still has to be cut down and cured.

That is what the previous minister said. The other point I would like to make—

THE CHAIR: Hang on. Mr Smyth can respond; then you can come to your next point.

MR SMYTH: “They are not available anymore,” is what he said. That is what the chair started the conversation with, and that is the chair—

Mr Stanhope: The specific timber used, but that similar timber is available. You misled the committee and you misled the community.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, what world do you live in? Why can’t you be like your deputy? Why can’t you come down and say: “I got it wrong. Sorry; I did not realise Mr Hargreaves had made a goose of himself again. I am sorry”?

MR COE: There is 26 per cent asbestos waste in it as well.

Mr Stanhope: The other point I wanted to make is this, just for the information of those of us cloistered here, Mr Chair: with regret, I wanted—for the information of those of us cloistered here—to advise you, for your information, that the ACT has its first identified case of human swine influenza.

MR SMYTH: That is a shame. Any details?

Mr Stanhope: I will leave those to the Minister for Health.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that, Chief Minister. We will adjourn until 11 o’clock.

Meeting adjourned from 10.43 to 11.01 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back. We will move straight back to questions. Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, how much water would be required to keep the lawn at Green Square alive?

THE CHAIR: I think Ms Le Couteur has some supplementaries as well.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Watkinson.

Mr Watkinson: I might actually ask Jane Carder to respond to that one. She has been looking at the detail of that particular issue.

Ms Carder: We have estimated it is about \$22,000 to keep the lawn areas of Green Square alive. That also includes the shrub beds there and the maintenance of the irrigation system.

THE CHAIR: So that is \$20,000 over what period?

Ms Carder: Per annum.

THE CHAIR: Per annum. How much water is that, roughly?

Ms Carder: Bear with me. It is just over 5,000 kilolitres per annum.

MS LE COUTEUR: 5,000?

Ms Carder: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Kilolitres. Is that all? Surely you mean per week? I thought we used generally, each householder, 100 kilolitres per annum.

Ms Carder: Sorry, five million litres per annum.

THE CHAIR: 5,000 kilolitres is five million litres.

Ms Carder: Yes. So that is correct.

MS LE COUTEUR: So 5,000 kilolitres?

MRS DUNNE: Or five million litres. It has still got six noughts involved.

MS LE COUTEUR: Am I correct that it is about 100 kilolitres for a household? So the amount of water required would be equivalent to half a household, an average household, and given that in Kingston many households do not have backyards and they would be using less than the average and, seen from a suburb-wide point of view and from an equity point of view, that quantity of water would be possible to find? Is it correct that the government is watering other areas such as City Hill and down Northbourne Avenue, which are considerably less used than Green Square?

Ms Carder: That is correct. The watering principles relate to where there are high-profile areas and trees. The watering is done to try to keep the trees alive. So all down Northbourne Avenue, where it is all irrigated, we reduced the watering by 50 per cent for the survival of those trees. Those trees have grown right from when they were tiny little seedlings all the way through with that irrigation. To turn that off would definitely result in a large percentage of those trees dying.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, do you agree with the watering of Northbourne Avenue and of City Hill?

Mr Stanhope: I agree that it is very important that we identify areas in the city that are particularly important in terms of the look of the city and the appearance of the city. We have taken some decisions, and hard decisions, for Parks, Conservation and Lands to take in relation to the desire for all Canberrans to enjoy irrigated and maintained lawns in a variety of places. In that context we have taken the decision to continue to water our town and district parks—Tuggeranong Town Park, Glebe Park in the city, Margaret Timpson Town Park in Belconnen, Telopea Park in Kingston and Yerrabi Ponds District Park. The department has developed a hierarchy in relation to the continued irrigation of particular sites.

In that same vein it continues to water, for instance, those areas where it has been

decided by Parks, Conservation and Lands that continued irrigation is critical for tree establishment or survival, such as Northbourne Avenue, Ainslie Avenue, the Lawns at Manuka and Corroboree Park in Ainslie. Those are parks where—

MR SMYTH: So why is the Lawns at Manuka different from Green Square at Kingston?

Mr Stanhope: Can I just conclude this answer to the question? It has to be understood, though, that in the context of the hierarchy, the decision making on the grounds that have been put in, which has just been raised by Ms Le Couteur, the department, to be equitable for parks in relation to the extremity of the drought and the situation that we face and which continues, has discontinued watering at all suburban shopping centres, including Kingston, and the other 83, not all of which were irrigated.

None of the 84 suburban shopping centres is currently irrigated—none—and it is fair to say that the majority of our schools, including preschools and lands adjacent to our preschools, are not irrigated. In the context of a proposal or proposition that we select one of those generic areas in relation to which the decision has been made to discontinue watering in the extreme situation we find ourselves in, I find it remarkable that it is suggested that we start cherry-picking our particular favourite sites and say, “Well, we will just exclude this one shopping centre from the exclusion.”

I would like to know in relation to this debate whether that is what has been suggested or is seriously being suggested—that, in order to be fair and equitable, if we do actually decide to wind back the decision that has been taken in relation to Green Square at Kingston, members are suggesting that we nevertheless maintain our position in relation to the other 83. This is a special site, is it, with special people and special circumstances, and the other 83 shopping centres really should just bear the decision on behalf of Kingston?

MR SMYTH: No.

Mr Stanhope: I am not quite sure if that is what is being seriously suggested—

MR SMYTH: Well, perhaps you can explain the rationale for why the Lawns at Manuka is kept and Green Square at Kingston is not?

Mr Stanhope: but in the context of the decisions that have been taken—I will conclude on this point, Mr Chair—in relation to the situation we continue to find, we expect the dams to hit 42 per cent within the next week. We have had two millimetres of rain in May—less than five per cent of the long-term average. I am advised by Actew that the worst record of inflows into dams in history in this region was in 2006. It is expected at this stage that 2009 will be worse, that our inflows into our dams this year could be as low as 10 to 12 per cent of the long-term average. We have now a position being put—

MR SMYTH: No, we are asking for data, Chief Minister.

Mr Stanhope: by members of the Assembly that this is the time to break out—

THE CHAIR: Was it 2006 when you ruled out a dam?

Mr Stanhope: in relation to decisions that had been taken to actually conserve and to get us through this worst-ever drought.

THE CHAIR: 2006 was when you ruled out building a dam, was it not?

Mrs Dunne: We would never, never need one—not for 30 years, possibly not ever.

MR SMYTH: Could you explain to the committee, Chief Minister, why the Lawns at Manuka is kept, the rationale for that, whereas the smaller space that was in Green Square, Kingston was not kept?

Mr Stanhope: My understanding is that the circumstance of the trees, particularly at the Lawns in Manuka, is the fundamental point. The decision was taken, a technical decision by experts, that to not continue to water the Lawns at Manuka would result in the death of those trees.

MR SMYTH: Given that Kingston is an area of medium and, in some cases, high density and, as has been pointed out, a lot of those people do not have a backyard and for many of them Green Square was their back yard, is it not unreasonable—Kingston is quite distinct from some of the other suburban shops; it services a very dense population in Canberra by comparison to many of the other suburbs—that those people have access to a very small patch of green grass?

Mr Stanhope: Green Square has a number of unique features. One of the other very unique features of Kingston, of course, is that it borders Telopea Park—perhaps the best maintained and nicest park in Canberra and 100 metres from Green Square. It is 100 metres from Green Square. How many hectares is Telopea Park? Kingston borders the lake on the edge, but the biggest single park in Canberra, of course, is the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore. Kingston not only borders Telopea Park; it borders the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore. Kingston is within metres of the largest expanse of parkland that is maintained in the ACT.

MR COE: So why are people so passionate about it?

MRS DUNNE: Mr Chairman, I have got a question directly related to Telopea Park.

Mr Stanhope: Another unique feature of Kingston is that it actually is located cheek and jowl with the most expansive area of park in the whole of the ACT that is maintained and irrigated.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne on the follow-up.

MRS DUNNE: Chief Minister, how much water goes onto Telopea Park during the year, seeing it is irrigated and quite wet underfoot, because I used it on Saturday?

Ms Carder: I would have to take that on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Ms Carder, could you advise the committee how much water goes

onto Telopea Park and whether it would be possible to apportion the five million litres that you say would be needed to water Green Square from the allocation that goes to Telopea Park?

Ms Carder: Okay. Just on that, the way that we calculate the watering is on evaporation, and that can vary from year to year, depending on how hot and windy and dry it is getting. Certainly, that is happening a lot more. We are getting hotter and drier and we are having far windier conditions. So we are tending to put on more water to meet that evaporation.

With Telopea Park, once we start reducing the watering, we will then reduce the surface area that is used for recreational activities, for playing football, which is what it was designed for, and you will start to get sparser, more tussocky grass. The other thing is the trees in that area as well. If we decide we are going to reduce the watering, which part of the park do we reduce the watering from? Do we want to deteriorate the whole surface? Do we want to start to take off sections, and where does that stop, I suppose, once we start eating into some of our other really high recreational town and district parks?

MRS DUNNE: Thanks.

Mr Watkinson: Could I make a comment on Green Square, if that is okay? There tends to be a focus on Green Square, on the issue of irrigation. The main issue with Green Square is the actual wear and tear that is taking place in the use of that area from the intensive development around it. Despite irrigation in the past, we have found that we have had to replace grass every 18 months to two years. So it is not just a question of turning off the water; it is a question of the appropriate landscape design to cope with that level of wear and tear. That is the fundamental issue.

MR SMYTH: But surely that confirms the point that I was just making. You have a suburb that has some of the largest concentration of medium and a couple of high-density towers. This is their backyard. It is their only backyard.

Mr Stanhope: That is nonsense.

MR SMYTH: It is where the kids go when they shop and they clearly use it. So is it not unreasonable, in that regard, to put the five million litres a year onto the Green Square grass?

Mr Stanhope: I personally think it is completely unreasonable and unsustainable to expect the ACT taxpayer to replace an area when, even with irrigation—this is what Mr Watkinson has just advised us, even when Green Square was irrigated—Parks was replacing the lawn every 18 months to two years. I think it is simply unsustainable to expect the ACT and I—

MS BRESNAN: But does that not point to the popularity of the area? Obviously, it has got the business amenity.

Mr Stanhope: No, it points, as Mr Watkinson said, to a completely inappropriate landscape design. That is what it points to.

MR SMYTH: How dare they use it! How dare they have the nerve to use a piece of grass that they pay for with their taxes! Curse the taxpayer and the constituent! How dare they! That is arrant nonsense, Chief Minister, as is your press release about the “Lite Greens” saying the lawn—

Mr Stanhope: Have you visited the Scullin shops?

MR SMYTH: It is the “Lite Greens” now.

Mr Stanhope: Do you know where Scullin is?

MR SMYTH: Yes, I know where Scullin is. I used to go there.

Mr Stanhope: Do you know where Charnwood is?

MR SMYTH: I went there every week for about nine years to recycle paper. I know exactly where Scullin shops are.

Mr Stanhope: Advance for me the logic of providing an irrigated, maintained, manicured lawn at Green Square in Kingston and not at Scullin.

MR COE: And where is the grass at Charnwood shops? You just mentioned Charnwood.

MRS DUNNE: There is not any grass at Charnwood shops. There has never been grass at Charnwood shops.

Mr Stanhope: Yes, but I bet they would love it.

MR SMYTH: What arrant nonsense!

Mr Stanhope: They would love a maintained area; every shopping centre would. But other shopping centres have accepted that it is simply not sustainable or reasonable to expect the ratepayer—

MRS DUNNE: It has never been there. Like the Melba shops, it has never been there.

Mr Stanhope: That is just nonsense.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can we get back to what Mr Watkinson said. He said that we have had a problem for a number of years with heavy use of this area. Why didn't we, a number of years ago, say: “This grass is being used a lot. We need to do something to make the grass more resilient”? I have seen areas in Australia where grass is used a lot. Green Square in the past—

MRS DUNNE: The Lawns, Manuka.

MS LE COUTEUR: The Lawns, Manuka; Federation Square in Melbourne, if you want a beautiful example. One of the things often done is that the edges are raised so

that you do not get foot traffic, you only get people actually on it. Surely, given you just said the problem is that it is being loved to death—that is what I think you said—given that people are loving it, couldn't we look at designing something that they could continue to have and love?

Mr Stanhope: We—

MS BURCH: Can I make a comment that it was a local shopping centre—

MR COE: No, it is not for you to say. This is for—

THE CHAIR: I will let—

MS BURCH: But you interrupt, Mr Coe.

THE CHAIR: Hang on.

MR COE: I would like to hear a response.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, Mr Coe, we will allow Mr Watkinson to answer the question.

Mr Watkinson: We believe we have, with the design that we have come up with. We have looked at a whole range of different possible treatments for Green Square, ranging from artificial grass to extensive paving. The design that we have come up with, we think, maintains Green Square looking green by the use of low-growing ground covers, by hardening up the main design lines, by improving opportunities for children's play.

Like all of these types of issues, when you are looking at a design problem, you go through a number of possible solutions. The long-term maintenance cost is one of those issues that we have looked at. With the preferred design that we have at the moment, we believe it will leave Green Square looking very attractive; it will leave it looking able to be maintained in the short term and without a demand on using more water.

As you have heard the Chief Minister say, water is part of the equation. But the main issue is having a design there that will cope with the level of use. And it is not just in Green Square. We do this in a number of our parks and we go through master planning exercises, as we are doing at the moment. We are looking at how to make those parks more resilient for a growing city, able to withstand the use that we are anticipating in the future.

THE CHAIR: I will go to Ms Le Couteur and then Ms Burch.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is the plan that you are suggesting now the same as you suggested to the traders in October?

Mr Watkinson: Essentially. I might have to take some advice from Ms Carder there but I think it is essentially the same proposal that we came up with in October.

Ms Carder: We did take this on board during our consultation process. There was concern that we would put gravel around the edge of the walls. Because children love to play on the walls—that is probably one of the main attractions of that park—we have changed that to a mulch, a soft-fall. As part of that design, there is also a big lizard in there, which is a play item. We have also extended the back of the wall down near the car park to try to keep children within that little square area with the play equipment, so that when people are having their cups of tea and coffee they can keep a closer eye on their children without them darting off onto the road. The main thing was the wall and the change from the granite to mulch.

MS LE COUTEUR: I understand you suggested to the traders that they can have lawn if they pay for it. Is this going to be the approach that the government uses for other shopping centre areas?

Mr Stanhope: I think you need to put that in context. The government has presented a landscape plan to the traders at Kingston. We have negotiated on it and indeed there was—Ms Carder can perhaps assist here—a significant level of support for the plan.

Ms Carder: There were about 30 people who were very supportive, another 30 who were not supportive and then the others were sitting on the fence. Generally, most people were happy when we first went out. Then there was a loud, vocal group who were against it totally. They just wanted the green grass; no negotiation.

Mr Stanhope: But in initial negotiations there was significant, we believe, majority support for the plan—the plan that you refer to but which has been adjusted. The position the government has put is that, for the sake of further consultation in relation to what had become something of an impasse, a government position, a government reluctance to actually relinquish a plan in relation to the equitable distribution of water across suburban shopping centres—accepting that all of the other government facilities, notably preschools, primary schools, high schools as well as every other of the 84 shopping centres in the ACT that do not receive irrigated water—it was not feasible for us to agree to that group within Kingston that wanted a lawn at all costs and that would not consider any other option.

The government said: “This is the position. We’ll negotiate around it and we would be interested in your views on your preparedness.” We, even then, were prepared, through that discussion, to accept a partnership in relation to an alternative way forward in relation to some irrigated grass. I think it was a reasonable position for us to put, through our interest or determination in coming to, at the end of the day, a consensus position.

I must say—I do not resile from this—that it is very difficult for me, as the ultimate decision maker in relation to this, to suggest to the 83 other shopping centres and the 83 other suburbs or the rest of Canberra that we, the government, are asking them to support the irrigation of lawn at one out of 84 shopping centres. We are asking them to accept that their preschool and their primary school will continue not to be irrigated and we want them to accept and understand that Kingston is an exception that we should all accept.

I do not accept it and I do not expect other Canberrans to. I do not expect other Canberrans to accept that as the government's position in relation to a developed hierarchy in relation to the irrigating of lawn in an environment where, my latest advice is, inflows into our catchments this year will probably be the worst in recorded history. I do not expect other Canberrans to accept that now is the time to be relaxing or actually breaking the mould in relation to the established principle or policy in relation to the irrigation of grass.

I just cannot accept that it is reasonable, in the face of advice, in a month where rainfall is four per cent of the long-term average for May, where I am advised that our inflows into the catchment this year will be the lowest on record, to suddenly say: "Let's review the irrigation of grass. Let's provide five million litres of water. Let's replant a lawn, which we know we will have to replace in 18 months. Let's provide five million litres of water a year for a lawn—

THE CHAIR: I think we have probably covered this sufficiently now, Mr Stanhope.

Mr Stanhope: which we'll have to replace in two months," and that this is reasonable policy making. I do not—

THE CHAIR: We are probably just going around in circles. Ms Burch?

MS BURCH: Thank you. I refer to your comment earlier about shopping centres. My local shopping centre, Chisholm shopping centre, has been redeveloped. It is very well done. It had grass and it no longer has grass. I am sympathetic. I see every day people and families playing on alternative surfaces and child play areas. I just put that down.

Mr Stanhope: The Melba shopping centre has just been redeveloped. It has exactly the landscape treatment that is proposed—

MRS DUNNE: It never had any grass.

MS BURCH: There is a question.

Mr Stanhope: It has the landscape treatment that is proposed for Kingston.

MRS DUNNE: There was never grass at Melba shops.

Mr Stanhope: And it was accepted willingly by the traders.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch is coming to her question.

MRS DUNNE: There was never grass there. You did not replace the grass.

Mr Stanhope: There was.

MRS DUNNE: That is not true.

Mr Stanhope: There was grass there.

THE CHAIR: Enough of the back and forth. If Ms Burch has—

MS BURCH: Can I go to my question?

THE CHAIR: You made a statement. If you want to ask a question, that would be fantastic.

MS BURCH: I do have a question. I made a statement that was relevant to the discussion that preceded it.

Mr Stanhope: Absolutely; the most sensible comment made today.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to ask a question?

MS BURCH: I am. It is on funding for land management. BP4, page 62, shows an increase in funding this year of \$7.5 million. Can you please outline the enhanced services that this will cover?

Mr Watkinson: The additional funding for land management will go to maintaining and improving a whole range of services that we provide through Parks, Conservation and Lands. As members would be aware, Parks, Conservation and Lands manage, I think, 73 per cent of the ACT—everything through Namadgi, down through the district town parks to the urban centres. So that money will be allocated across the spectrum of the services that we provide and maintain, and hopefully improve some of our service levels.

MS BURCH: Have you got any particular parks or areas in the national parks that you would focus on?

Mr Watkinson: Not specifically with that funding. We are just going through the detailed planning of the budget at the moment, on how that money will be applied next year.

MS BURCH: So how will you identify what areas of activity that you have—internal processes or—

Mr Watkinson: Essentially internal processes. There are a number of demands on the budget from national parks, from urban parks, from maintenance of the city. So we will go through a process of looking at where our priority areas lie and discuss that with the minister in terms of how the budget is finally applied.

MS BURCH: Okay.

MS LE COUTEUR: How many rangers will we get from this?

Mr Watkinson: I would have to take that question on notice about how many rangers we currently have. I do not have that number in my head, I am afraid.

MS LE COUTEUR: If you could, and particularly broken down to national park and

nature reserve rangers, we would like to know.

Mr Watkinson: They operate across the whole of the estate.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

MS BRESNAN: Can we get that breakdown anyway?

Mr Watkinson: Yes.

MS BURCH: I have a supp on that as well. On page 71 there are particular items for control of weeds and feral rabbits, which is under land management. They are existing programs, aren't they?

Mr Watkinson: There are ongoing weed and pest animal control programs. There is specific funding in next year's budget to tackle an increasing rabbit problem and to enhance our basic weed control program.

MS BURCH: So it will run for two years and then go back to a maintenance regime?

Mr Watkinson: Unless we are successful in bidding for other funds when the current funding runs out.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne had a supp on this, and Mr Smyth also had a supp?

MR SMYTH: No, a different one.

MRS DUNNE: Just a couple of issues. Mr Watkinson, the processes that you are going through you have described as that you are working out what you are going to do with the extra allocation. Did you put in a bid for a particular target or just a blanket increase in funds?

Mr Watkinson: We have put in a number of bids through the budget process, which I am sure members will be aware get whittled down in terms of what is finally funded, and sometimes the final figures that we get do not exactly match what was bid for, so there is a process then of looking at the final appropriation of the budget and how that can be best applied and then discussing that with the minister.

MRS DUNNE: On the subject of rabbits, you have got \$150,000, I think, for rabbits this year. There was a similar amount last year for rabbits on Mount Majura. That is essentially one lot of warren ripping; where do you plan to do that?

Mr Watkinson: The focus for rabbit control this year has been on Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie. This will be following up the rabbit control on those areas—because you do not normally succeed in one year, you have to at least follow through in the next year—and then looking at where we could further extend rabbit control measures after that.

MRS DUNNE: So you are going back to Majura and Ainslie to follow up? When you do warren ripping is that the normal course of action?

Mr Watkinson: There are a number of techniques that we use, anything from releasing calicivirus to ripping up the burrows, to direct poisoning, to in some cases ground shooting. It depends on the circumstance of the areas that we are dealing with. When we have done the control works, we will go back and monitor and check whether we have reduced the population of the rabbits. The general rule of thumb, if my memory is correct, is that, if we can get the population down to below five per cent, effectively you have got control of that area for a large number of years.

MRS DUNNE: You had a program at the Pinnacle, perhaps last year or the year before, near Hawker.

Mr Watkinson: The year before, I think.

MRS DUNNE: Have you been back there to monitor that site as well, because that was mildly controversial because you were laying baits at the time?

Mr Watkinson: Yes. I am sure we have, but I just have not —

MRS DUNNE: Could you get back to the committee about what the final results were. I was not critical of you laying baits, but there were people who were concerned about it.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Ms Bresnan has a follow-up question, then to Mr Smyth and Mr Coe.

MS BRESNAN: Out of interest, in relation to park management, particularly Namadgi, has any provision been made in the budget for an advisory board for Namadgi or for an Indigenous liaison officer to facilitate Indigenous involvement with the park?

Mr Watkinson: There is no specific allocation in the budget for that, although there is a separate bid process going forward for the caring for country process, caring for country grant. That would facilitate that type of program.

MS BRESNAN: Okay. And are there any plans to celebrate the 25th birthday of Namadgi? I could not see anything in the budget around that.

Mr Watkinson: Again, no specific funding for that, but we do have discussions going on with the National Parks Association about a suitable program or programs that might celebrate the 25 years of Namadgi.

MS BRESNAN: So there is no specific funding but you are working on a plan around it?

Mr Watkinson: Not at the moment but, as I said, as we go through our total budget outcomes we will be looking at all those types of bids that we have internally and working out how best to allocate the dollars.

MS BRESNAN: But you did mention you were having some discussions with

National Parks?

Mr Watkinson: With the National Parks Association. They are interested in working with us on some kind of celebratory event.

MS BRESNAN: Okay. Also, is there any provision for making annual state of park reports against the plan of management for Namadgi?

Mr Watkinson: Again, no specific provision for that. In the Parks, Conservation and Lands strategic plan we have identified that as something that we would like to move towards and we will probably have some discussions with New South Wales and Victoria about the schemes that they have put in place there and just have a look at how well that has worked.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you.

MR SMYTH: Minister, the Treasurer revealed the other day that some departments have made bids to use Treasurer's advance before the end of this financial year. Has TAMS bid for additional money to be used from Treasurer's advance?

Mr Stanhope: Over the course of the year—I will have to take some advice on precisely what they were—in the context of the question, I think, yes, moneys have been provided.

MR SMYTH: I am talking about up until today; I am saying between now and the financial year—

Mr Stanhope: You mean between now and the end of the year?

MR SMYTH: Do you need money to balance the budget between now and the end of the year?

Mr Stanhope: No, I do not believe; I am not aware. I will take the question on notice, but I have to say I am not aware that there is a live bid or request from the department to me to seek Treasurer's advance. But I will just confirm it.

MR SMYTH: I see on page 100 of budget paper 3 in table 4.2.18, the second line, that Territory and Municipal Services are expected to find \$7 million over the coming years as part of the efficiency dividend. Before we go there, Ernst & Young, I think it was, were helping the department to find supposedly \$10 million worth of savings. Have Ernst & Young given you their report and have \$10 million worth of savings been found?

Mr Stanhope: No. The department commissioned Ernst & Young for advice in relation to financial management and strategic planning, but the report was not commissioned on the basis of making suggestions or finding savings and it does not provide that. Certainly, the department has been working with Ernst & Young in relation to financial management generally and issues in relation to departmental operations. But it was not tasked to identify or find savings or assist in the finding of savings. Those are matters that the department will pursue, certainly in consultation

with me.

The department has experienced significant base budget pressure over the last year and that is very much in the area of land management. It is a real issue for the department, for the government, and indeed for this community, the extent, nature and level of funding we provide and the services that we currently contract in relation to the maintenance of this enormous area of urban open space, which of course is a feature—

MR SMYTH: Yes, that is okay about open space, but Ernst & Young were not charged with finding any savings at all?

Mr Stanhope: I do not believe that was their remit, Mr Smyth. It was a report designed certainly to provide strategic advice on financial management. It certainly would have gone to issues around efficiency and structure. Through efficiency and structure we would be looking for savings, but the consultant's task was not to find savings; it was certainly to provide advice on issues around efficiency in operation.

MR SMYTH: Okay, were efficiencies in operation found and were savings suggested?

Mr Stanhope: I have taken that question on notice. I do not believe so.

MR SMYTH: Mr McNulty, do you happen to know?

Mr McNulty: The report made a series of recommendations, which the department is currently implementing, which went towards, as the Chief Minister said, financial management, the way the organisation planned for and delivers its budget and potentially the structure of the department.

MR SMYTH: All right. And did they recommend savings and, if so, to what value?

Mr McNulty: No, the report did not recommend savings.

THE CHAIR: What was the key restructure of the department that was recommended?

Mr McNulty: I do not think it went to that level of detail. It suggested that there were some areas we should look at, to take advantage of some of the synergies that exist within the department.

THE CHAIR: Okay. What was the cost of this contract?

MR COE: Was it just one contract?

Mr McNulty: It was one contract.

Mr Kalogeropoulos: The cost of the contract was, I think, \$402,000.

THE CHAIR: What were the financial management issues that were identified which

necessitated Ernst & Young coming in?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: One of the primary objectives of bringing in the review was to review the current government's arrangements that we had within the department. The department, and probably most agencies, was facing significant pressures, particularly with increasing costs.

Increase in water cost is something that has traditionally affected our department the most out of most agencies. Those increase the input cost. We sought Ernst & Young to provide some advice with regard to how we could best position the agency to react to the changing environment and particularly to the increase in costs that the department has been experiencing.

The major recommendations that came out of that were largely twofold: one was around the governance arrangements and the appropriate structure of the department. The other was a focus on—

THE CHAIR: What were those changes? What did they suggest?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: The proposed recommendation was to revisit the actual structure, the organisational structure of the department, to re-align it with what were deemed to be high priorities in the department. That was one element—a governance structure.

The other element was looking at the financial management tools, if you like. One of the significant recommendations was looking at establishing some sort of activity-based costing system for the department. In that way, the department would be more informed or better informed with regard to what the costs of its activities are.

The only issue with implementing formal activity-based costing is that it potentially would be relatively expensive. We are in the process at the moment of doing a cost-benefit analysis with regard to whether we move to a full ABC system or a partial ABC system.

THE CHAIR: Is that report available?

Mr Stanhope: The document has not been released. It is a document that goes very much to the business of government and of the cabinet. It was not the government's intention to release it.

THE CHAIR: It is not a cabinet document though, is it?

Mr Stanhope: I believe it is, yes.

MR SMYTH: You do have the ability to release it if you so choose, Chief Minister. Would you release that document?

Mr Stanhope: At this stage, no, but I will take that question on board.

THE CHAIR: Was it prepared for the department or specifically for cabinet?

Mr Stanhope: It is a cabinet document.

THE CHAIR: Well, was it prepared for the department or was it prepared for the cabinet?

Mr Stanhope: I will have to take that on notice, Mr Chair.

THE CHAIR: The asset management plan, I imagine, would obviously have been a key part of what they would have looked at in terms of future planning. Are you able to describe it for us or is there a document available that is the department's asset management plan?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: At the moment, each business unit, if you like, has its own asset management plan. As part of the 2008-09 budget process the Department of Treasury was actually appropriated funding to look at strategic asset management across all agencies.

THE CHAIR: I do not think all of that money has been spent, from memory.

Mr Kalogeropoulos: I am not aware.

THE CHAIR: It has been looked at across agencies, although I am pretty sure that isn't being spent. In terms of TAMS, there are asset management plans for the different business units; is that correct?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: Correct.

THE CHAIR: And there is no overall asset management plan for the agency as a whole?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: As I understand it at the moment, we are in the process of looking at a whole-of-department strategy for asset management planning so we can have a bit more synergy with regard to asset management planning across the different themes of functions within the department. But that needs to be done within the broader framework of the work that Treasury are doing with their strategic asset management unit.

THE CHAIR: Which appears to be delayed.

Mr McNulty: Could I just clarify, Mr Chairman?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

Mr McNulty: I think it is true that the department has a wide range of assets it manages and asset management plans. I think it is fair to say that those asset management plans are at various stages of development. Some are better than others; some are quite rudimentary. There is a challenge for us to make sure that all our asset management plans are as good as they can be and we are not there yet.

MR SMYTH: If you do not have a full suite of asset management plans for all the assets that TAMS manages, are our assets being managed appropriately and maintained appropriately?

Mr McNulty: I believe they are but—

MR SMYTH: How would you justify that if you do not have plans against which to judge that statement?

Mr McNulty: Based on our assessment of the condition of the assets and the decision we make on the way we allocate the budgets we get. It is based on our understanding of the condition of the assets and that information, while it may not be written down in a formal asset management plan, is held in the department in numerous places, in numerous documents. One of the challenges of asset management planning is to get all of that into a central single asset management plan that presents that all in a proper way.

MR SMYTH: When do you anticipate that that will be done?

Mr McNulty: Once again, part of that will depend on our getting access to the money Treasury have for doing asset management plans. It is a cost which we have to build into our overall budget. Mr Ryan reminds me that we are just employing a new director of asset services group, who will have a whole-of-department responsibility for asset management to coordinate that activity.

MR SMYTH: Okay. In that regard again, how do you know that your assets are being managed properly? If we have asset management plans in different stages of development, we obviously do not have someone in the department running asset management across the department. Could perhaps Mr Kalogeropoulos tell us exactly how much is spent on asset management abatements each year?

Mr Stanhope: I think, Mr Chair, it has to be said that Mr McNulty just answered that question. He just indicated that we have some progress to make. We have just appointed a director to accept central control of asset management and asset management development. Mr McNulty has just said that the department is confident the assets are maintained appropriately but that the systems are not as efficient as they might be.

That is the point about centralisation. The renewed effort that they are putting into asset management is that the department accepts and the government accepts this. That is why the government has provided funding to advance the nature of the management of our assets. But within the department, within the systems that currently operate, there is confidence that our assets are managed appropriately and Mr McNulty has just made mention—

THE CHAIR: I am conscious of the time, Mr Smyth. We will have a final one and then move to Mr Coe and Ms Burch.

MR SMYTH: How much does the department spend on asset management every year?

Mr Stanhope: I do not know whether there is a figure but I am happy to—

Mr Kalogeropoulos: It depends what you mean by asset management. We may well talk about asset management as being capital upgrades. For example, with the capital upgrades program we spent approximately \$21 million a year on upgrades. With repairs and maintenance, again there are issues with regard to definition as to whether—

MR COE: How did EY describe it, though? How did EY determine what that definition of assets is?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: I am not sure that they actually communicated to me what their definition of asset or asset management is.

MR COE: It must be in the scope of the project, though?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: Which project are you referring to?

MR COE: If \$400,000 was spent on this and it touched on assets—

Mr Kalogeropoulos: That is right, touched. Asset management was only touched on as part of the review in the previous budget process. We identified that we really needed to invest some money with regard to asset management and particularly the asset management plans. As has just been discussed previously, as part of that budget process Treasury decided that it was probably better served by that funding going to a central agency to manage asset management planning across government rather than it being invested in an agency like Territory and Municipal Services in the first instance.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe and then Ms Burch.

MR COE: If I might ask Mr Gill to come back, I have a question on roads again. Horse Park Drive will be a continuation from Majura Road. It is going to go all the way to Gungahlin Drive. So it is already there at the moment and there is a missing link at the moment. I understand that this year a section between Arrabri Street and Burrumarra Avenue is to be built. Firstly, is that to facilitate the construction of Casey 2?

Mr Gill: The Casey 2 development, yes.

MR COE: Brown Consulting conducted research and assessment of community views on that, I understand. As part of that, they went to the Gungahlin Community Council. There I believe they said that that stretch of road will be built as a single-lane road in each direction, but the scope of the project was that it never needed to be duplicated so that the landscaping, the paths and the surrounding environment were not going to accommodate any possible duplication. Is that correct?

Mr Gill: That is correct.

MR COE: So Horse Park Drive, the continuation of Majura Road—

Mr Gill: That section of Horse Park Drive.

MR COE: That section, yes. So there is no scope whatsoever for Horse Park Drive to be duplicated in its entirety?

Mr Gill: That is correct. On the basis that—

MR COE: Given the population growth, though, that will be using Horse Park Drive around Forde, Bonner and also Casey, and then you have got Nicholls, and by the time you put in Clarrie Hermes Drive as well, is that not extremely short-sighted to make an assumption based on today's information that you were never, ever going to need that to be duplicated?

Mr Gill: That project was developed by the ACT planning authority as part of the development of Casey 2, as you mentioned. Their advice to us, looking at population and future traffic projections, is that there is not a need to duplicate that section of Horse Park Drive in the future. From TAMS's point of view, our role has been to deliver that project. The tender has been awarded and it is under construction at the moment. But, yes, exactly what you have outlined is the advice that we have been provided by the planning authority in relation to that section of Horse Park Drive.

MR COE: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Were we not told when Gungahlin Drive was built that we would not need duplication for five to 10 years and we are duplicating it now? How can we be so certain going forward that there will not be a need to duplicate it?

Mr Gill: It is quite a different context. Horse Park Drive is a local arterial road within the Gungahlin district. Gungahlin Drive extension is part of a major peripheral parkway for services.

THE CHAIR: Nonetheless, we were told at the time by the minister that it did not need to be duplicated for five to 10 years. That was clearly wrong. Do we really want to be so certain and lock ourselves into not being able later to duplicate it if it is needed?

Mr Gill: I am guided by the advice provided to me by the planning authority in relation to this.

MR COE: So what are the restrictions? TAMS are implementing ACTPLA's plan. What are the restrictions adjacent to the road that will prohibit it being duplicated? Is it a path, trees—

Mr Gill: For a road to be constructed, there generally needs to be a road reservation that can accommodate a future carriageway if required.

MR COE: Right.

MRS DUNNE: But the road reserve is not big enough to—

Mr Gill: The road reserve currently identified for Horse Park Drive basically covers the construction of a single carriageway.

MR COE: I understand generally that the future work of landscaping et cetera will be such that it will prohibit it, but in terms of the allocated space, is there actually space for it to be duplicated?

Mr Gill: There will be actually space in that area, but it is not currently a road reservation.

MR COE: Right. One other issue: bridge safety screens are being installed to prevent rock throwing, I understand. I see it is going to be the Cotter Road, Carruthers overpass, Ginninderra Drive, Isabella Drive, Belconnen Way and the next lot is Yamba Drive, Kent Street bridge and Luxton Street bridge. What are the remaining eight that I have not mentioned that the *Canberra Times* might have been pointing to?

Mr Gill: We can take it on board and provide the committee with a listing of locations that have currently been assessed by the department.

MR COE: Okay.

Mr Gill: They are predominantly pedestrian bridges or bridges with pedestrian access passing over roads of high speed and high volume.

MR COE: Barriers on Gungahlin Drive are going to be built?

Mr Gill: Gungahlin Drive extension will be reviewed as part of Gungahlin Drive stage 2. This is a requirement of the assessment. Gungahlin Drive stage 1 basically was constructed before this policy was enacted.

MR COE: But at this stage, is Gungahlin Drive one of the eight that I did not read out?

Mr Gill: No.

MR COE: Given there was an attack as reported in the *Canberra Times* on 1 May on Gungahlin Drive, why was it not included?

Mr Gill: As I said, the first stage of Gungahlin Drive extension was progressed before this policy was enacted. We will investigate Gungahlin Drive for inclusion in this program, which is a rolling program over four years.

MR COE: Are you aware of attacks that have occurred in the ones that I have read out or in the other eight?

Mr Gill: Erindale Drive is one that has been reported a number of times. The pedestrian bridge over Yamba Drive has also had a reported incident. These are rare occurrences, but the consequences obviously can be very significant.

MR COE: Given the recent attack, why was Gungahlin Drive not on that list?

Mr Gill: The section we are talking about on Gungahlin Drive is the section in Aranda around Bandjalong Crescent. As I said, when that was built the government policy was not enacted.

THE CHAIR: But that would be true of the other roads where these barrier are being put in—

Mr Stanhope: Mr Gill has just said that the department is giving consideration to leaving Gungahlin Drive on the list of—

Mr Gill: We have now included Gungahlin Drive on it, and we will assess the need for pedestrian fencing for the second stage of Gungahlin Drive that is currently funded.

THE CHAIR: When will that assessment take place?

Mr Gill: It is currently happening.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: I want to go back to parks, towns and trees. At page 70 of BP 4 there is lower Cotter catchment planting over a number of years. Can someone tell me what that planting is?

Mr Watkinson: There has been an ongoing relationship with Greening Australia in re-vegetating the Cotter after the 2003 fires. To date, most of that replanting has involved trees. This funding represents a continuation of that work, now with more emphasis on using under-storey species so that we get a complete suite of species rather than just trees. So it is a continuation of the Greening Australia program.

MS BURCH: How long have you been working with Greening Australia?

Mr Watkinson: I am not sure what the commencement date was.

MS BURCH: And it will go through to the centenary, yes?

Mr Stanhope: This has grown from four-year funding, essentially, as some contribution to our partnership with Greening Australia, and it does go through the entire outyears.

MRS DUNNE: So how much of the lower Cotter catchment has been replanted, and are you going back to the areas that have been replanted with trees to put in the under-storey? How is that working?

Mr Watkinson: I do not think I have the figure of how many hectares have been replanted in my head, but we can certainly provide that detail if you wish.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

Mr Watkinson: From memory, we planted I think something like 160,000 trees last year with community support. The lower Cotter, as you know, is a huge area, so it is a program that will probably be going on for a number of years yet. The objective is to try and restore it to as near a natural situation as we can in terms of native species woodland.

MS BURCH: So the benefits will be to try and rehabilitate it to what it was?

MRS DUNNE: No, it will be better than what it was, because it was pines before.

Mr Watkinson: There is a twofold objective: it is to restore the native vegetation as best we can and to look after the water quality, as the lower Cotter is now a major reservoir servicing the ACT. Its primary function now is as a catchment area.

MRS DUNNE: I have got tree questions.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: And then whoever else gets my attention. Ms Le Couteur.

MRS DUNNE: There has been some discussion in the media in the last little while, Mr Watkinson, about a strategic approach to street and park trees in the ACT urban area. That is predicated upon a report as yet unseen. When will that report become publicly available?

Mr Watkinson: Could I clarify what report you are referring to?

MRS DUNNE: The report that was discussed at some length on page 1 of the *Canberra Times* yesterday that—

Mr Stanhope: The ANU report?

MRS DUNNE: The ANU report.

Mr Watkinson: The ANU report has been available for a number of years now, so anyone—

MRS DUNNE: Is that this report?

Mr Watkinson: No, that is the urban trees asset management plan, which was developed using the information from the ANU survey.

MRS DUNNE: But what was discussed was a new policy approach, so where is the policy document that underpins what appears to be a new policy approach to urban trees?

Mr Watkinson: I am not sure that there is a new policy approach as such. What has happened is that the ANU report has highlighted the fact that a large number of the

urban trees are all maturing at the same time. As a result of that, we have developed an urban trees asset management plan, which was the basis of a bid to government to commence a program for the systematic replacement of the urban forest. We currently have an expert reference group that has been formed to help us plan how that might happen. Once that plan has been produced that will be, if you like, the new policy document or guiding document about how we are going to tackle—

MRS DUNNE: So there is a new policy, but it is still under formulation?

Mr Watkinson: There is—I would not call it a policy—a program on how to replace the urban forest over the next 25 years. That is currently under development with the assistance of the expert reference group.

MRS DUNNE: So the expert reference group is currently meeting. What is the timetable for deciding the outcome?

Mr Watkinson: We hope to have a first report from that group probably in the next couple of months. It has been meeting almost for a year now, about eight or nine months from memory.

MRS DUNNE: And that will be based on the urban trees asset management plan?

Mr Watkinson: It will be based on the urban trees asset management plan, updated with a recent tree audit that we have started this year to update the data that we got from ANU, which is now eight or nine years old.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: My understanding is that the entire funding for the urban forest renewal program comes from the climate change program. That is BP5, page 7. Given that, can you explain the net benefits in terms of carbon sequestration or other climate change benefits from this? Does it really warrant it all being climate change money?

Mr Watkinson: I am not sure if the funding comes as part of the climate change funding. I would have to check that detail. In terms of the questions—

Mr Stanhope: I think that is how it is described under the million trees program. It is basically in terms of our descriptions of the funding source. This is a matter that is exciting great interest amongst some of my colleagues.

Mr Watkinson: In terms of the question regarding carbon sequestration, we have had—

MS LE COUTEUR: Particularly the net.

Mr Watkinson: Sorry?

MS LE COUTEUR: Particularly the net carbon sequestration, given it is largely a

replacement program.

Mr Watkinson: That is one of the factors that we are looking at in how to undertake the urban forest program. We have one report which is being written up at the moment which looks at the capacity of the urban forest to sequester carbon. Some information I have been given verbally on what is coming out of that report is that urban trees apparently sequester carbon at seven times the level of trees out in the bush. But, of course, we will need to look at a balancing act between the trees that we take down and the trees that we replant. We have not got that equation worked out yet in terms of how much carbon will be taken out and over what period of time that carbon will be taken up as new trees are planted. We need to remember that it is not just taking out trees; it is replacing the trees at the same time. We are also then looking at opportunities on what do we do with the timber of the felled trees and a range of options that might be available to us there.

THE CHAIR: We are due to finish. Just a quick one to take on notice, just a follow-up on the Ernst & Young report, are you able to tell us when it was completed and which of the recommendations have been adopted? Are there any quick questions before we finish up? I know the Chief Minister is due to go.

MR COE: I have a quick one, which I think will be a quick answer.

THE CHAIR: We will try and deal with it quickly. Mr Coe.

MR COE: The Lake Ginninderra foreshore project was split up into three different stages. Stage 3 has significantly changed in terms of the money allocated to it; the money seems like it has almost entirely been rolled over into stage 2. Is someone able to explain what those stages are and why stage 2 has been beefed up at the expense of stage 3?

Mr Stanhope: It essentially relates to a significant change in scope as a result of engineering work that was undertaken in relation to stage 2.

MR COE: Yes, I figured it was that. I could not find anything on the website or anywhere else about that.

Ms Hill: That project was initiated through a forward design process which was conducted seven years ago. When we actually got to the construction stage, we found a lot of unexpected and extensive issues that needed to be dealt with, such as water quality and stormwater issues. So the actual delving into the detail of the project uncovered a whole lot of extra costs that were required to actually construct the final quality landscape treatment to the area. So that is basically it.

MR COE: Is the full project still going to be delivered or has it been scaled back at all?

Ms Hill: It is scaled back, yes.

MR COE: It has been scaled back?

Ms Hill: Yes.

MR COE: What aspects of it have been scaled back?

Ms Hill: What will be achieved will be the reconstruction of the inlet, which will then allow water to flow and circulate in that area.

MR COE: Right.

Mr Stanhope: It unfortunately acts as a sump at the moment, and we are trying to deal with that issue and it is quite a—

MRS DUNNE: This is the inlet near Lake Ginninderra between—

Mr Stanhope: The water police station.

MRS DUNNE: The water police one rather than the one near—

Ms Hill: That is right.

MR COE: Near the arts centre?

Mr Stanhope: Yes. Unfortunately, they both act as sumps. It is a very difficult engineering issue.

MR COE: Are you able to describe what was originally part of stages 1, 2 and 3 and what is now part of stages 1, 2 and 3?

Ms Hill: It is quite complex, because there is a mix of precincts and—

MR COE: Not now, take it on notice.

Ms Hill: On notice? Sure.

Mr Stanhope: Yes.

MR COE: That would be good.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and thank you, departmental officials. We will adjourn until 2 o'clock when we will come back with the Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water.

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Mr Chair.

Meeting adjourned from 12 noon to 2.01 pm.

Appearances:

Corbell, Mr Simon, Attorney-General, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Minister for Energy and Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Water

Papps, Mr David, Chief Executive

Farnsworth, Ms Penny, Acting Executive Director, Policy Programs

Hargreaves, Ms Anita, Chief Finance Officer, Strategic Finance

Butt, Mr David, Director, Policy

Neil, Mr Bob, Director, Environment Protection

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Director, Ministerial and Corporate

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome, minister and representatives of the Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Water. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Mr Chairman, and thank you to the committee for the opportunity to appear. With your leave, I will make a brief opening statement in an attempt to simply canvass some of the key elements of the appropriation in this portfolio for the forthcoming year.

Obviously, this is the first time that this department has appeared before the estimates committee. The establishment of the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water is an important step in consolidating and bringing greater focus to these key policy areas in a whole-of-government manner. The government is providing significant funding for the establishment of the agency and improving the capability of the agency to focus on these key policy areas.

In this budget there is \$35 million in funding for a range of specific and new initiatives. That funding is targeted at a range of programs, both service delivery to the Canberra community and through infrastructure and policy development work. \$19.1 million over four years is provided for the new switch your thinking program which will bring together and expand our existing rebate and incentive programs for householders. It will introduce new programs for householders and assist Canberrans, through a virtual one-stop-shop, with information on rebates, information and guidance on ways to reduce their carbon footprint and to improve energy efficiency, water efficiency in their home and tackle waste issues in their home.

Funding has also been provided, to the order of \$13.9 million over two years, for the construction of two new wetland ponds in Dickson and Lyneham, to build on the existing Canberra integrated urban waterways program. This infrastructure will provide for an alternative to potable water supply for the irrigation of nearby ovals and sportsgrounds in a way which reduces demand on potable water supplies and provides a more sustainable way of managing urban water courses.

The government is also providing \$483,000 over two years to conduct widespread industry consultation and develop a future waste strategy for the ACT, targeting business, electronic and organic waste. This consultation in particular will investigate

why businesses in the ACT are not recycling more, identify what the obstacles are to increasing the recovery of recycling from the commercial waste stream and look at ways to promote innovation in resource recovery and a system of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Funding has also been provided in the budget to allow us to engage with the community on the issue of how to best reduce the use of plastic bags in the ACT.

There is also new funding to assist and maintain partnerships that are currently in place with a range of community-based organisations. The government is continuing to provide support to organisations such as the Canberra Environment and Sustainability Resources Centre, the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra and, for the first time, an ongoing commitment to the work of the SEE-Change ACT group, recognising the strong community support and influence this group has in bringing about behaviour change at a local, neighbourhood level.

The government is also continuing with a range of other very important initiatives. Just 10 days ago I announced the formal calling for expressions of interest in the ACT government's proposed solar power facility and possible sites on unleased land for this facility. This is a major project. The capital cost alone is estimated in the prefeasibility study to be in excess of \$140 million, and the government maintains its election commitment of providing \$30 million worth of assistance towards this program.

I have been quite up-front in saying that this money has not yet been appropriated and is not being appropriated in the current budget. The reason for this is that the government will need to discuss with the selected proponent the form in which they wish to receive this assistance. It may take the form of a grant, that is, a cash grant; it may take the form of part assistance in the form of land; it may take the form of part-purchase of electricity through an electricity contract; it may be through some other form of assistance altogether. Therefore, the government felt it was prudent not to request appropriation of this money at this time but, if necessary, will bring forward a request for an appropriation in the Assembly in the coming financial year.

It is also worth highlighting a number of other initiatives that are occurring outside my immediate portfolio but are, nevertheless, important in the context of our climate change policies. In particular, the \$2 million tune up Canberra program is providing incentives to improve the efficiency of commercial office buildings, along with, of course, funding to purchase 30 per cent of all of the ACT government's own electricity requirements from renewable energy resources.

With that, I and my officials will be happy to try to answer your questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We had a bit of discussion this morning about waste and the no waste target. The Chief Minister has essentially abandoned the no waste target as he sees it as unachievable. Are you able to talk us through what kind of targets you will be setting in place of the no waste by 2010 strategy?

Mr Corbell: I heard the Chief Minister's comments this morning and I think it would be wrong to say that the government has abandoned the no waste target. That is not the case. No waste remains the broad objective of the territory, as it should and as it

does of many other jurisdictions across the country. What the Chief Minister, I think, has been seeking to make clear is that there are at this point in time some practical limitations on achieving absolute zero waste to landfill, which, of course, is what the no waste target is. And he highlighted this morning in his evidence some of the practical issues that exist in terms of achieving zero waste to landfill.

That being the case, the government has indicated that we will be embarking on a review of our no waste policy to properly prepare a path forward for the next period of time, the next five to 10 years, on where we want to go in terms of waste reduction. That work will be done by my department. But I think it is important to retain the objective for our community of zero waste. That is, I think, the only reasonable policy setting. There will be a discussion about the time frame in which that can be achieved, the practical limitations and the costs and benefits of doing so. But zero waste should remain our overall objective and that will certainly be the presumption that my department will be working on as we progress the review and the implementation of a new waste policy for the territory.

THE CHAIR: We also heard today that over the last couple of years we have seen, in some cases, the target revised down for a particular year. As the minister now responsible for setting policy in this area, are you comfortable that in some years in recent years we have actually gone backwards?

Mr Corbell: I think it is inevitable, as we develop and implement policies, that adjustments are made in that policy framework, and what may happen from year to year does not necessarily, certainly in my view, mean that the government is deviating from the overall objective.

It is important to stress the no waste policy over the period of, I think it was, about nine years achieved significant reductions in waste going to landfill. Recycling rates increased from about 45 per cent to about 75 per cent over the period of the policy. In the period of 12 years, they went from 42 per cent recycling rate to 74 per cent recycling rate. That is a very significant achievement. It should not be underestimated. It is the highest level of recycling of any city in the country, any jurisdiction in the country, and that is a very significant achievement.

What we are now doing, though, is entering into the hard end of this policy debate; we are having to deal with forms of waste that are much more difficult to address. Electronic waste, for example, e-waste, is a very problematic waste stream. There were some very important developments at the meeting of the Environment, Protection and Heritage Council that I attended last week in Hobart where some important national agreements were reached in relation to tackling e-waste, for example.

We also need to focus much more strongly on waste streams out of the non-household sector. We do the household sector very well compared to many other places around the country. In fact, we lead the country in terms of waste from the household sector overall but we do not do very well in the non-household sector—shopping centres, public places, stadiums, sporting grounds and so on. We can do much better in those sectors. So the waste strategy that we develop will focus strongly on the gains that can be achieved in those sectors as well as continuing to improve in a cost-effective way

waste management out of the household sector.

MR SMYTH: On that, no waste is a genuine target of this government?

Mr Corbell: No waste needs to remain a genuine objective of this government. The issue—

MR SMYTH: It is not aspirational; it is a genuine and real target of this government?

Mr Corbell: Different people use different language to describe—

MR SMYTH: Aspirational is an aspiration.

Mr Corbell: An aspiration, a target—

MR SMYTH: Is it aspirational or is it real?

Mr Corbell: We can have a pedantic argument about it but—

MR SMYTH: No, pick one. Aspirational or real?

Mr Corbell: No waste is no waste. That has to be the objective—no waste, no waste to landfill.

MS BURCH: I would be interested in some of the initiatives. You made mention that we are leading the nation on household collections but there is work to do across business, organics and e-waste. You did say that you are looking at that area to improve. Can you tell us a bit about how you would go about that and what you have in mind?

Mr Corbell: There is just under half a million dollars over two years allocated in this year's budget for the commercial waste scheme. This will provide funding to develop a future waste strategy. It will allow the government to develop a policy collaboration with businesses and the waste recycling industry to identify what the obstacles are to businesses recycling, clarify those and identify ways of removing them so that we can improve the recovery of recyclable material from the commercial waste stream.

This is important because, as I have said, a lot of our waste which is generated and which is not being diverted to landfill is coming from the commercial sector and we have to address that. We need to make sure that what we do is consistent with national arrangements to reduce waste going to landfills.

For example, the national packaging covenant, which is a voluntary program amongst large commercial entities to reduce their waste generation, is up for renegotiation currently and will be considered by environment ministers in more detail at our next meeting in November. But we need to look at complementary measures that can occur at a jurisdictional level to complement the national arrangements and we do need to be much more assertive in tackling the issue of waste coming from the non-household sector. So that is what this funding will allow us to achieve.

We will develop a public discussion paper canvassing options to improve commercial and industrial recycling. We will do a series of stakeholder and industry consultations and then there will be the release of a business waste reduction strategy, with the backing of business, so that we can actually identify some measures to be implemented to reduce it. Just to give the committee a bit of an idea, over half of all the waste that goes to landfill in the ACT comes from the commercial sector; so there are some very significant gains to be had. That is about 110,000 tonnes.

There is significant food waste coming from the commercial sector; so there are commercial business opportunities for combustible recycling collection from the commercial food sector. Then there are the e-waste issues which I talked about earlier, particularly generated, ironically, by the commonwealth government in particular and its agencies, as well as, obviously, the private sector and the ACT government here in the ACT. So those are the issues that we will be focusing on through the development of this policy initiative funded in the budget.

MS BURCH: This will go from small retailers up to the large end of commercial—

Mr Corbell: I think, to be fair, our focus will be on the larger operators. They generate large levels of waste. It may be individual businesses. Certainly there will need to be a focus on smaller retailers but it probably would be in the context of the fact that they operate in large shopping centres and those sorts of precincts where there is an overall management responsibility, say, at a shopping centre level.

Shopping centres are very large generators of waste, as they are large consumers of energy and water. So there are issues that we need to focus on and tackle in those matters but, when it comes to waste, shopping centres, large commercial office precincts, are obvious targets for activity and that is where we will be seeking to engage with stakeholders.

MS LE COUTEUR: With the commercial waste, are you planning at the end of the two years of funding to actually have an operational system or what?

Mr Corbell: We intend to have a clearly defined strategy and the beginnings of the implementation of that strategy.

MS LE COUTEUR: You were saying that you are going to do a review of waste. I understand that last year there was the Wright review of the no waste strategy. Are the recommendations from that going to be acted on? What is the government response to it?

Mr Corbell: That review will be used to inform the development of our future waste strategy.

MR SMYTH: Is that review public?

Mr Corbell: Yes, it is public.

MR SMYTH: On the issue of business waste, I notice the department had two programs, office smart and business smart. Can you tell me how successful they have

been and how many businesses have taken up the offer to become accredited offices?

Mr Corbell: Yes, I can. These are both programs designed at encouraging recycling in business and office sectors. They require a commitment from those business and offices wanting to be involved in them and are mostly focused on behaviour change and simple mechanisms to encourage recycling in the business and office environments.

Twenty-one separate offices and three major businesses have so far approached the department to become part of the programs. The businesses are: Westfield, Woden and Belconnen; McDonald's in Gungahlin, Belconnen, Belconnen Lake and Charnwood; and the Canberra CBD Ltd Group. Offices are a mixture of ACT and commonwealth offices. They are the ACT Department of Treasury, Chief Minister's Department, InTACT, Justice and Community Safety, Health, ACTION buses, Department of Defence, Canberra Hospital, Calvary Health Care ACT, Department of Parliamentary Services, Dickson Motor Registry, Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Legislative Assembly, I understand,—and that will be announced, as I understand, shortly—IP Australia, CGU workers compensation, CAS ACT, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Servcorp, Bureau of Statistics, Australian Capital Tourism, Jones Lang LaSalle and the department of education.

MR SMYTH: Do you liaise with Business ACT on this program? I asked questions about this the other day when Business ACT appeared and they seemed to be totally unaware of either of these programs.

Mr Corbell: I am not sure whether someone else can answer that.

Ms Farnsworth: Yes. We have not specifically liaised with the business part of the Chief Minister's Department, primarily because their focus is on supporting the development of business across the ACT, whereas this is focused on helping businesses become more sustainable within their own practices, so existing businesses. We are happy to—

MR SMYTH: But can you separate that out and say, "We are only going to deal with this business part," or that business part? Surely a holistic approach is the more appropriate path to find.

Mr Corbell: I think with any of these issues it is about identifying as many synergies as possible between the activities of relevant agencies, and we will continue to do that. The programs—

MR SMYTH: But Business ACT did not know about it at all.

Mr Corbell: That person may not have known about it at all. These are—

MR SMYTH: All right. Who in the department was talking to Business ACT?

Mr Corbell: I cannot answer for Business ACT. Our objective, if I can just answer the question—

MR SMYTH: Okay, but has your department approached Business ACT?

Mr Corbell: Our objective is to try and encourage as many elements of the ACT government and broader into the private sector and the commonwealth government to engage in these programs. We will continue to do that. If there are areas of the ACT government that are not aware of it, obviously we need to make sure they are aware of it.

MR SMYTH: Sure. Are these programs still advertised on the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water website?

Mr Corbell: The website is going through a transition as we develop the new web presence for the department, so I am not sure whether they are all fully detailed on the website at this point in time. But, if they are not, they will be in due course as we continue to develop the website presence.

MR SMYTH: So the programs are running and they are fully supported by the department?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR SMYTH: If you do a search for them, you can currently only find them on the TAMS website.

Mr Corbell: Yes. We are still going through transition in terms of providing all the information in a single point. A lot of this will be developed further as we put in place the switch your thinking program. We intend to make sure that the switch your thinking program and its website presence will provide a very clear, identifiable, single point of reference for a whole range of programs, including this one.

MR SMYTH: Just to finish: what resources are dedicated to both programs? Are there staff? Are there funds to back it up?

Mr Corbell: There certainly are staff. I do not have the exact figures in front of me but we can take that on notice and provide that to you.

MR SMYTH: If you would. And I understand there is a manual; is that so?

Mr Corbell: I think there is a range of materials. We can answer that in the question on notice.

MR SMYTH: Is it possible for a set of the materials to be provided to the committee?

Mr Corbell: Yes, we can do that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: I actually wanted to follow up on the Wright review of the no waste strategy. You said the recommendations are going to inform the strategy that you are

now developing, including commercial waste. Are there any particular recommendations in that or is it just all of them that are going to inform what you are doing?

Mr Corbell: The Wright review looks at a whole range of issues around operational matters associated with the delivery of the no waste strategy, so a number of the elements of the review will be of relevance to TAMS in their operational responsibilities for waste collection, recycling and so on in the ACT. So some will be relevant to TAMS, some will be relevant to DECCEW. We will have regard to those which are relevant to policy and make sure they are taken into account in developing policy.

MS BRESNAN: Okay. So TAMS will be using some of those recommendations, will they?

Mr Corbell: The document was previously the responsibility of TAMS. It was commissioned by TAMS, so they are very familiar with its findings.

MS BRESNAN: Is there going to be a government response to the paper at all?

Mr Corbell: It was commissioned by the department; it was not commissioned by the government as a whole. It was commissioned by the department and it will be used to inform policy. That was its purpose.

MS BRESNAN: That was the purpose so there will not be any sort of formal response or anything?

Mr Corbell: No.

MS BRESNAN: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Okay, Mrs Dunne and then Mr Rattenbury.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, I would like to go to the question of the switch your thinking program. There is a bit over \$4½ million in each of the years in the budget cycle for that and it is an expansion of the program. How much money is already allocated to switch your thinking? What are the programs and what will the impact be on existing programs like the home energy advisory team services?

Mr Corbell: The funding includes \$1.455 million to maintain programs, existing rebate programs.

MRS DUNNE: There is \$4.6 million which is described as an expansion.

Mr Corbell: That is right. The large amount of funding that has been provided in this budget is for expansion, but there is maintenance of existing programs. So for 2009-10 the total amount is \$4.6 million, new funding of \$1.9 million and then maintenance of funding that would have otherwise ceased at the end of this financial year of \$2.6 million. So it is a combination of maintaining existing funding and growing the total amount of money available. What is—

MRS DUNNE: So how much of that is—

Mr Corbell: If I can just clarify, what we will be doing as part of this overall program is rationalising the range of activities that occur, consolidating them and trying to provide a much more coherent package of support which is suited to individual households. I can give you an indicative rundown of the various elements of it, if you like, if that would be of assistance?

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

Mr Corbell: So for example, there will be about \$565,000—this is an indicative allocation at this stage; I would have to stress it is not confirmed; it is subject to some further work—allocated for this coming financial year on the plumber visit program. We anticipate that will provide around 1,000 water audits, about 1,300 toilet rebates. There is \$1.24 million for a residential energy efficiency program, which will provide for about 750 appliance rebates, 400 insulation rebates, 250 solar hot water rebates. There is \$465,000 in low income and renters water and energy assistance package, so 800 rebates there for the installation of energy saving additions in rental properties, 650 rebates on energy efficient consumer goods. There is another quarter of a million dollars on water tank rebates for achieving around 200 rebates for internal connections and another 150 rebates for tanks where there is no internal connection.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I thought we could not have a rebate if there was no internal connection?

Mr Corbell: I beg your pardon?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: I thought that the policy had been changed so that you could not get a rebate unless there was an internal connection.

Mr Corbell: We are proposing that there could potentially be a rebate.

MRS DUNNE: So we are looking at a change in policy?

Mr Corbell: Yes. There will also be some information packages developed that do not involve rebates: about a quarter of a million dollars on advice on composting, educational materials on composting; another \$30,000 on assistance in terms of information and audits, water audits, and management plan assistance for small businesses in terms of water use; continuation of the garden smart program, \$200,000 and about 1,200 residential visits; \$140,000 on an irrigation smart program, achieving about 400 residential visits; a schools audit program of \$20,000 that will achieve about 20 school audits; \$295,000 on our communications overall, \$18,000 on staff development and then the remainder on staff wages and website development.

MR RATTENBURY: Is it possible to have that as a piece of paper? That was a very detailed list you just gave us, minister. Thank you.

Mr Corbell: Yes, sure. I will provide that.

MRS DUNNE: And where do the home energy advisory team services fit into that?

Mr Corbell: They will provide the audits and the assistance on identifying energy efficiency measures in people's homes. As to exactly how that will occur, I will defer to the officials, if they can answer.

Ms Farnsworth: We are looking at expanding the existing services provided through the home energy efficiency team, so that will continue and grow with particular focus on the audits.

MRS DUNNE: And when, minister, you provide that lovely table, can you provide the committee with an indication of what the increase in services is anticipated to be? You listed a number of rebates and the number of audits you might do, but how does that compare with the previous years?

Mr Corbell: We can endeavour to do that.

MRS DUNNE: I am still unclear, minister, about the \$4.6 million this year. For instance, how much of that is new money?

Mr Corbell: I think I just gave that figure, but I can—

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, you ran off—there was \$1.45 million and there was another figure, but it was unclear—

Mr Corbell: \$1,905,000 is additional funding. It depends on what you mean by additional funding. Funding for all of these rebate programs was due to cease at the end of this financial year. It had reached the end of its four-year funding period and it was due to cease. So my objective was, obviously, to secure ongoing funding for these programs and that amounts to \$2.695 million for the coming financial year. Then, in addition, there is an expansion of the program in the order of \$1,905,000.

MRS DUNNE: So I suppose it is a matter of whether you consider it to be money or not. Okay, that is fine.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: Can you also tell me, minister—it had a name; it was a million-dollar revolving fund for capital investment. Where is that?

Mr Corbell: It is the energy efficiency fund, which is an action out of the weathering the change strategy. It is a revolving fund for ACT government agencies to access capital to improve energy efficiency.

MRS DUNNE: How much of the fund is expended and how much has come back?

Mr Corbell: Do we have that here?

Ms Farnsworth: I do not have figures on me at present. I can get those for you, but there have been three separate allocations made out of that fund. We are currently undertaking a process to look at that to see how we can increase the take-up.

MRS DUNNE: So is it undersubscribed, do you think?

Ms Farnsworth: The take-up has not been huge, so that is why we are looking at means by which we can identify what are the barriers to agencies taking that up and how we can increase it.

MRS DUNNE: Could you, Ms Farnsworth, provide the committee with what money has gone out in the three rounds and how much has come back through the—

Ms Farnsworth: Absolutely, yes.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: I presume it is because it is a revolving fund that people have to reinvest their savings.

Ms Farnsworth: They do have to pay it back, yes.

Mr Corbell: One of the issues that I want to look at as minister is whether or not the structure of that fund is appropriate. At the moment the way it works is that the savings achieved by agencies come back to government. Agencies do not get to keep savings. So in many respects there is an argument to say there is not much incentive for agencies to do the work to access the fund, because they do not get to keep the savings achieved in terms of, say, energy bills and so on as a result of their measures. So that is something that will be under review in the coming 12 months.

MRS DUNNE: Is that an ongoing basis? Say, for instance, an agency borrowed \$10,000. Once they had paid back the \$10,000 in savings, do the savings after that go back to the agency or do they lose that?

Mr Corbell: I do not have the full details of that; perhaps someone else can clarify it. My understanding is that there is not the level of incentive that perhaps we need to encourage agencies to take up access to the fund, and that is something that we will be looking at.

Ms Farnsworth: That is an area we wish to discuss, both with Treasury and with the Property Group, to provide the incentive element in relation to the savings. I do have some figures here in terms of take-up. There has been \$128,000 allocated so far across three projects.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry. I thought you said there were three tranches of—

Mr Corbell: No.

Ms Farnsworth: No. There was a lack of clarity there. There have been three allocations made to agencies.

MS BURCH: And what sort of projects have they been?

Ms Farnsworth: CIT got \$33,000 for solar collection and hot-water system, \$80,000 for a connection to a heating reticulation pipe for a co-generation plant, and Canberra Stadium got \$15,000 for an energy efficiency feasibility study. There have also been energy audits completed on Canberra Stadium and Manuka Oval, with opportunities for further improvements identified. They are not yet funded.

THE CHAIR: Just going back, I think someone was going to clarify exactly how it actually worked in terms of the savings, once they had been paid back.

Mr Corbell: Yes. I do not have the full details of the scheme in front of me, Mr Seselja, so I will have to take that on notice.

MRS DUNNE: But does somebody else?

Ms Hargreaves: Ms Penny Farnsworth has actually stated the correct figures in terms of where the loans have gone to. The way that the scheme works—I have only a broad background as to how that works—is that the loans are repayable in equal instalments over three years. There is an agreement that is entered into with the agency and also with DECCEW as a department.

THE CHAIR: So that any ongoing savings are just pocketed by the agency? Is that correct?

Ms Hargreaves: That I could not answer at this point in time.

MRS DUNNE: I think that is probably the issue.

Ms Farnsworth: That is the question, yes. But we will provide further clarification on that.

Mr Corbell: We will clarify that.

Ms Farnsworth: But it is an area we want to discuss further with Treasury as well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: I wanted to come back to the switch your thinking program. Minister, you said this is a new program?

MRS DUNNE: Yes and no.

Mr Corbell: I think what I have said is that it is a consolidation and expansion of an existing program. As I have said previously, the government runs—and has run for a number of years now—a range of rebate and assistance programs. The intention is to consolidate and rationalise the existing range of programs and then expand their service delivery. That is what switch your thinking does. Switch your thinking has been a brand that has been used by the predecessors of this department in terms of

energy and water efficiency programs, but it has not been promoted as aggressively or as strongly as I would like to see it done. The intention of this budget funding is to allow us to promote it more aggressively and assertively, to make sure information is easily accessible and then to deliver that in a comprehensive way. That is really what this consolidation and expansion is designed to do.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, because I was interested that in last year's budget papers, the 2008-09 budget papers, there is a switch your thinking program.

Mr Corbell: That is right.

MR RATTENBURY: You were just saying that the money was due to expire, but in last year's budget papers there was out-funding to 2011-12. Following on from Mrs Dunne's question, I would just like to understand—

MRS DUNNE: Yes. I was surprised to hear that further funding was—

MR RATTENBURY: And that is a figure of over a million dollars.

Mr Corbell: That is certainly not—

MR RATTENBURY: I am just seeking clarification.

Mr Corbell: I am not sure what you are referencing.

MR RATTENBURY: This is page 92 of budget paper No 3 from 2008-09.

Mr Corbell: All right. We can clarify that, but I can assure the committee that if the budget bid had been unsuccessful these programs would have ceased at the end of this financial year.

THE CHAIR: What do those figures refer to then?

Mr Corbell: I do not know. As I say, we would have to clarify that.

MR RATTENBURY: Would it be appropriate to hand over a copy?

THE CHAIR: Absolutely, yes.

MR SMYTH: Or I can hand him the book.

Mr Corbell: That is all right. We can check that and I can clarify that, but I can assure the committee that the funding was due to cease at the end of this financial year.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay; we will have to take that one on notice. It will be very interesting to then know what the outyear funding was for and why that was going to be done despite the budget premise.

Mr Corbell: It may just be a presentational error in the budget paper. I would assume that is what it is, but I will clarify the matter for the committee.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. Budgeted for 2008-09—\$518,000. Can you—

Mr Corbell: Sorry, for what?

MR RATTENBURY: For the switch your thinking program. Can you tell us how much of that was spent during this past financial year?

Mr Corbell: For this financial year?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, the one we are just finishing—2008-09.

Mr Corbell: That is normally a question that would be dealt with through annual reports when we report on expenditure for the previous financial year; I do not know whether we have—

THE CHAIR: We do ask them here also—what was spent in this financial year.

Mr Corbell: If we have that figure, I am happy to make it available, but I do not know if we have that figure. I would have to take it on notice, I am sorry.

THE CHAIR: Could we also, when you take that on notice, get a breakdown—not just how much was spent but in what areas it was spent as well?

Mr Corbell: Yes, of course.

MR RATTENBURY: I was interested to note that a group of Western Australian councils had a switch your thinking program and, unfortunately for the ACT government, they already have the domain name, switchyourthinking.com.

Mr Corbell: I understand that we operated under a licence from the Western Australian government.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay.

Mr Corbell: We will gladly copy and learn from other jurisdictions; we have done so with their agreement and that is where that name, I understand, comes from.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay.

MS BURCH: I have a question on looking at a media release around a number of aspects of this initiative. Whilst it is a carry-on of some and a collection of others, what are we adding to it for the next few years?

Mr Corbell: I think the key elements include—the expansion is certainly in the number of audits that are going to be made available in energy and water use. They are also particularly going to involve the rebates for certain types of energy efficient appliances. These are election commitments of the government. Of the additional funding, the development of the one-stop shop and website is an important new development that was not previously in place. The home water audit program to the

value of \$565,000, the low income and renters water and energy assistance programs to the value of \$465,000, the small business advice element to the value of \$30,000 and the rebates on energy efficient appliances in the order of \$645,000 are all the additional elements being built into this program.

MS LE COUTEUR: In terms of additional, you mentioned earlier that there was going to be money for solar hot-water systems?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you tell me how that is going to be? In particular, I think I have already suggested to you that HEAT could change its programs so that, if the hot-water system has broken down, people can immediately access the \$500 rebate rather than having to have a HEAT audit first. Is that the way you are going or is there some other program which will be supporting solar hot-water services?

Mr Corbell: We certainly recognise that when your old hot-water system dies you want it fixed straightaway and it needs to be fixed straightaway. We will be looking at mechanisms to enable people to access support immediately rather than having to go through some sort of audit process in relation to that element. Obviously, when someone has an old electric hot-water system and it dies, fails to work, that is the key opportunity to get them to consider installing solar—gas-boosted solar, preferably. That is something which we will be looking at in terms of the delivery of the program. As to how it will work, I cannot give you that answer, but we are certainly cognisant of that issue and we want to try and make it easier for people to access the assistance.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you an idea of the time frame of when you will finish that work?

Mr Corbell: The government is keen to get this program up and running as soon as possible. I do not know what time frames the department is expecting.

Ms Farnsworth: We are looking to get it rolling out as soon as possible. Obviously the ones that are ongoing will continue ongoing, and some of them are expansions of ongoing so that should not be too timely. We are looking at going to the market to look for a website design, as I speak. And the others would be rolled out within the next couple of months after the start of the financial year.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the whole solar hot-water improvements could be in the next couple of months.

Ms Farnsworth: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Just one last question from me on the switch your thinking program. I appreciate the level of detail today about the number of audits you are intending to undertake and the like; that is very helpful, thank you. I want to just explore what the key performance indicators will be for the program. Is it going to be those numbers or are you going to have other measures around emissions reduced or the number of households lifted to three-star or four-star energy rating? Are you looking at any performance measures like that for this program?

Ms Farnsworth: We are looking at developing a range of performance measures. There is some existing information on the effectiveness of some of these initiatives which we will hope to build on. We have obviously got some indicative numbers; we will track our progress against those. And yes, we will look at overall emission reduction as well and help that to feed into our zero waste road map. There will not be any single performance measure; it would be a range of take-up and what those programs themselves deliver to meeting our overall goals.

MR RATTENBURY: Will those indicators be published in next year's budget papers?

Ms Farnsworth: That would be our aim.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay.

MS BRESNAN: Sorry, just one last question. Think water, act water—are there going to be elements of that which are going to be integrated with switch your thinking?

Mr Corbell: Yes. The ToiletSmart commercial bathroom retrofit programs, the rainwater tank rebate, the audits for gardens and so on are all key elements of think water, act water.

MS BRESNAN: So they are all part of that. So there will be quite a bit of integration between those two?

Mr Corbell: The whole intention is to bring the water, energy, waste—

MS BRESNAN: Into that?

Mr Corbell: programs together.

MS BRESNAN: Okay.

Mr Corbell: That is really what is very important about this initiative. I do not know about you, but if you have ever tried to find information from the government on what rebates are available—

MS BRESNAN: It is not easy.

Mr Corbell: It is not easy.

MS BRESNAN: No.

Mr Corbell: For people like you and me, Ms Bresnan, who are interested, it is frustrating. We are prepared to spend the time and we still find it difficult to find. Having that coordinated, easy to identify presence with all of the relevant information at one point is about improving uptake of a range of these programs.

MRS DUNNE: Will that mean also, minister, that you will be directing people to, say, commonwealth grants programs as well?

Mr Corbell: Yes. We will include links and relevant information about commonwealth-related programs as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I just ask about the ToiletSmart program? My understanding is that there is only one brand of toilets that you can buy via it.

Mr Corbell: Yes, Caroma.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have heard a number of criticisms of that brand. I do not have any personal experience, but is there any reason why there is only one brand?

Mr Corbell: The primary reason is that it is the only Australian-made product. All the other products available on the market are imported. Caroma is the only manufacturer in Australia of bathroom fittings, including toilets. The government took the decision that it would be appropriate to source the material locally—Australian made, Australian manufactured. And Caroma have been more than willing to provide a good deal. For those two reasons, we thought it was a good fit.

MS LE COUTEUR: Right.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Minister, the department is obviously new—six months old. Where is the department currently housed?

Mr Corbell: The department continues to operate from where the various elements of it previously operated, which is Macarthur House.

MR SMYTH: That is the annexe?

Mr Corbell: At the moment the department is in two parts of Macarthur House, some in the tower and some in the annexe, which is the three-storey element adjacent to the tower. The government provided funding in an earlier appropriation this financial year to facilitate the co-location of all of its elements into a single part of the annexe. It will occupy two floors, as I understand it, of the annexe. That project is underway to consolidate the operations of the department into that part of the building.

MR SMYTH: When do you expect to occupy the two floors?

Mr Corbell: June this year.

MR SMYTH: I noticed on page 332 of budget paper 4 that 97 staff is the estimated outcome. Have you got to that target yet or are you still recruiting?

Mr Corbell: We currently have approximately—yes.

Mr Rutledge: That 97 does also include the Office of the Commissioner for

Sustainability and the Environment in part of that 97, so no—

MR SMYTH: How many staff is that?

Mr Rutledge: Currently six FTE at the office.

MR SMYTH: Including the commissioner?

Mr Rutledge: Including the commissioner, and then the remaining are ours, I think. That leaves you at about 91 or 92. I think we were about 89.4 at the end of last month. So we are almost fully staffed. We made a big commitment to get fully staffed very quickly and we have done some active recruitment throughout the last six months to be almost fully staffed.

MRS DUNNE: With the ramping-up of staff, how much of that staff was essentially corporate structure staffing and how much of it was what might be called policy growth?

Mr Corbell: I think this was dealt with in—no, I do not think it was.

MRS DUNNE: In the third approp there was someone who said that you had taken over components from TAMS and that most of the funding was for corporate HR, ministerial correspondence and that sort of thing. Is that the case?

Mr Papps: I am the chief executive of the department.

MRS DUNNE: Welcome on board.

Mr Papps: Thank you, good to be here. My colleagues can probably provide more detail, but coming in from other jurisdictions I just make the observation that in establishing a new department the very clear focus in terms of staffing numbers has been on both policy and program areas. We have what I would regard, based on my experiences, as a minimal set of staff necessary to support the corporate areas—human resources, ministerial servicing and the sorts of financial responsibilities that you would expect to be accrued in those areas. We have recruited very minimal numbers within that space so that the focus of our staff expenditure can be on policy and program.

MRS DUNNE: Could you just give—

MR SMYTH: Welcome to Canberra and welcome to the department. For clarification, can you give us some background on where you have come from and your experience?

Mr Papps: Very briefly, I have spent most of my public service career in New South Wales, initially in the National Parks and Wildlife Service but then broadening out to natural resource management and environment departments with a focus on sustainability. I spent a number of years in a sustainability and planning department within New South Wales. I worked in Victoria in the Department of Sustainability and Environment, again covering all those areas that are covered by the brief here,

and various other forays including about four years with Macquarie Bank.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

MRS DUNNE: If I could, Mr Chairman, going back to the staff structure, would it be possible to give the committee a rundown of the staff structure and where the bodies are?

Mr Papps: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: Not necessarily buried but housed—what they are doing where they are housed?

Mr Papps: We can provide a little more information now which we can supplement further.

Mr Rutledge: Everything is a point-in-time thing; so at the end of April, energy efficiency projects, two FTE; environment protection, 24.5 FTE; ministerial and corporate, 7.8; the chief executive's office and his executive assistant, two; sustainability programs branch 23.1; policy branch 16; and finance, two. So that takes us to about 83.4 FTE at the point in time at the end of April, then six at the commissioner's office.

Mr Corbell: As you can see, the department is a very lean, small machine.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. Could you also outline to the committee when you come back what functions are performed by, say, the EPA and the policy area. Mr Rutledge mentioned a number of program-type policy areas. What actual tasks are performed by those areas?

THE CHAIR: While we are talking about the setting up of the department, we heard this morning in the TAMS portfolio about an Ernst & Young review of the functions of TAMS. Presumably that would have touched somewhat on some of the functions that have been transferred. Minister, were you aware of that report and did it help with the setting up of the department in terms of learning from some of the recommendations in the past that applied to the bits that come over to the new department? Also, given that it was looking to put in place better governance for TAMS, were there things that you took out of it in setting up a new department?

Mr Corbell: I am aware of the report, although I have not read it or seen it. As I understand it, however, that report deals largely with the large cost drivers in the TAMS portfolio, as it then was. Those are really not areas of particular relevance to this agency. Environment protection and sustainability programs, which are the two main elements that have come across from TAMS—there are others but those are the two main elements in terms of size—were not large in the overall TAMS budget. As I understand it, that investigation looked at the main cost drivers in TAMS—libraries, parks, conservation, lands and so on—which are not relevant to this department.

THE CHAIR: So it was not presented to cabinet then, or it was?

Mr Corbell: I am not the responsible minister. I cannot recall. You would have to ask the responsible minister, Mr Stanhope.

MS BURCH: We did and he indicated that it was.

MR SMYTH: But you said you had not seen the report.

Mr Corbell: I cannot recall having seen the report. But my memory is not perfect, Mr Smyth. I could not vouch absolutely to recall absolutely every document that has been presented to cabinet over the last 12 months.

MR SMYTH: Back to the building. You are leasing the two floors? It is a lease?

Mr Corbell: It is government-owned accommodation and normal contractual arrangements are in place with the government property manager.

MR SMYTH: How long is the lease for and what is the annual rent?

Mr Corbell: I would have to take that on notice, Mr Smyth. I do not have that in front of me.

Mr Rutledge: It is a government-owned building and currently we are paying a nominal fee. The finances have not been worked out yet. Once we move into the annexe, as Mr Papps said, in June then we will have finalised our floor area exactly. Then we will work on a rental agreement for that. But it will be a standard rate as if we were in any government building.

MR SMYTH: I notice on page 100 of BP3 there is \$24,000 a year as part of the efficiency dividend but what else will the department be asked to offer up in the outyears once the other \$120 million is found?

Mr Corbell: As the department is under the GPO threshold that has been set for the one per cent efficiency dividend, it will be asked to provide 0.5 per cent given its overall GPO share size. That is the efficiency measure that is expected of DECCEW.

MR SMYTH: Is that all?

Mr Corbell: Yes. It is a per annum figure.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur is next and then Mr Rattenbury and Ms Burch.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, I was very pleased a few weeks ago when you announced that the ACT is aiming to become zero net emissions. I think your colleagues may tell you that I have been asking this question of every department so far in estimates. Being the department of climate change, how are you planning to achieve this aim?

Mr Corbell: The zero emissions target is designed to establish at a very broad macro level where we want to go as a city. We will use that target now to inform the detailed policy development in a key range of areas. For example, energy policy is a major

focus for my department at the moment. As we develop that energy, we will now do so having regard to and making sure that our policies are complementary in establishing greater levels of self-reliance in terms of energy generation, greater levels of renewable energy generation, and policies that encourage that to occur as we move towards a zero net emissions outcome.

The government has deliberately said that we are not at this point in time going to state a time frame for that. There are some important reasons for that. One is that the question about what our greenhouse gas reduction target should be, as a territory, is a matter for discussion in this place later this year. There is the Assembly inquiry that is now not going to report, I do not think, until August or September, if I recall correctly. I think they are amending their reporting date.

Mr Rutledge: Yes.

Mr Corbell: Obviously the speed at which that committee considers we need to achieve reductions and then what the Assembly ultimately decides in terms of a legislative target will inform the government's thinking about the overall objective of zero net emissions.

That is the reason why the government has left the issue of the time frame open at this point in time. The extent to which we achieve cuts and how quickly we achieve cuts in emissions as a result of those reduction targets will impact overall on achieving a zero net emissions outcome. But it is already informing our work on energy policy and on waste policy. There are strong linkages between the two, particularly as we look at options such as the potential use of some waste streams for energy. There are opportunities there that I would like to see the department and the government explore. Those are the parameters, I guess, that we are working within, Ms Le Couteur, in trying to work towards that objective.

MS LE COUTEUR: At this stage I am not so interested in the ultimate time line. How do you actually plan to achieve it? In particular, the greenhouse strategy in 2000 set a target of reducing energy use of operation to the ACT government by 15 per cent by 2004 and a further 10 per cent by last year. Did we—

MRS DUNNE: They abandoned that target.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, you possibly have a fuller answer to that question.

Mr Corbell: What is the question exactly, Ms Le Couteur?

THE CHAIR: Were the targets met?

MS LE COUTEUR: Were the targets met, the targets from 2000? So we have had targets. Did we meet them?

Mr Corbell: The targets are set out in weathering the change.

MS LE COUTEUR: Weathering the change, but we started targets before that in 2000. So I guess an answer to both of those would be good.

Mr Corbell: The government was elected in 2001; so I cannot answer for the targets established by the previous Liberal government. But in relation to targets that—

MR RATTENBURY: So that is how we do it—just abandon targets?

Mr Corbell: Well, no, but look I—

MR RATTENBURY: Because they came from another party, we just abandon them.

Mr Corbell: No, that is not what I am saying, Mr Rattenbury. What I am saying is that when governments change, government objectives and priorities and policies change. That is what democracy is all about.

The government has set out targets in weathering the change. Our climate change strategy is weathering the change. We have targets in weathering the change and we are working to achieve the targets currently set out in weathering the change. I can certainly provide you with an update on how we are progressing in relation to a range of the targets outlined in weathering the change.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, please.

Mr Corbell: What I would also say is that the government has adopted an approach that recognises that there will be a shift in the weathering the change policy as a result of revised climate greenhouse gas reduction targets. I have outlined that we will bring forward the development of the second action plan under weathering the change in response to revised greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Weathering the change initially indicated that the second action plan would be developed around 2011-12, if I recall correctly. We will bring that forward to the end of this year so that we have a new, refreshed action plan that sets out specific measures in the short term to work towards achieving the targets that are agreed by the Assembly. We really are, I think, at a point of transition in terms of our policy settings and our targets. Those are a consequence of the political discussion in this place and the fact that there is an Assembly inquiry underway.

Perhaps to give you a bit of an example of some of the things that have been occurring in the interim, however, we have put in place a range of measures to ensure that ACT government agencies' operations move towards a carbon neutral setting. For example, all ACT government agencies have been directed to develop resource management plans.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have they done that?

Mr Corbell: DECCEW are currently in the process of finalising their own resource management plan. That will be used as a model for consideration by other agencies in reducing energy and other resource use and in improving monitoring as well. We are doing a number of showcase projects across the ACT government including photovoltaic arrays at Tidbinbilla nature park.

I refer also to improvements in lighting in government buildings, such as Macarthur House itself; energy audits at Manuka oval, Canberra Stadium; the increased purchase of green power. We have already saved over 30,000 tonnes, reduced our emissions by over 30,000 tonnes, with our green power purchase and we will improve that further with the additional seven per cent to get to 30 per cent in the next financial year. We are investing further in energy efficient street lighting with over \$3 million invested in that to date. We are undertaking detailed training with other government agencies in the use of OSCAR, the online reporting tool on energy efficiency and overall environmental performance of buildings.

There is a range of things that we are doing now. But I think from a broad policy perspective what I would say is that we are at a point of transition. The last election clearly has resulted in a shift in terms of priorities and in terms of focus on a range of these issues. There has been a strong view expressed by the non-government parties about the desirability of improving the greenhouse gas reduction targets. We have a process in place to do that. The outcome of that process will inform a lot of other policy work because it will set out clearly some specific legislative targets that the government will need to work towards.

THE CHAIR: Minister, can you remind me, is there a target for carbon neutrality for government operations? I know there was some discussion of this in the committee hearing the other day, but I just cannot remember the exact situation.

Mr Corbell: Weathering the change sets out the objective that all government agencies should achieve carbon neutrality over time.

THE CHAIR: What is the period of time?

Mr Corbell: I do not think weathering the change identifies a specific time frame; it simply says that it should be the objective for government agencies.

THE CHAIR: I certainly asked this question of TAMS this morning, and they did not seem to have any plan in relation to that. It is in weathering the change, but what does that mean for individual agencies?

Mr Corbell: What this highlights is the importance of establishing the department as a central agency to drive the agenda across government. It gives it a greater focus and priority; it gives it greater standing in cabinet; and it allows these matters to be given greater attention. That includes educating other agencies about their roles and responsibilities in improving their performance. I would be the first to concede that there is more work to be done in convincing some—not all—ACT government agencies of the role they need to play, and that will be one of the key tasks for my agency over the next six to 12 months.

We are starting that work now. For example, tomorrow I will be hosting a roundtable of senior executives from across government on sustainability practices. We have got Mr John Thorp coming from the borough of Woking in the UK. They have done some very innovative work around energy efficiency and deployment of renewable energy in their urban area. He will be coming to Canberra tomorrow and will be meeting with a range of agency chief executives to talk with them about what they achieved in

Woking, which is a relatively small urban settlement in the south-east of the UK but considered to be a world leader in sustainable energy practice. He will help to build a better cultural understanding amongst ACT government public sector leadership about what can be done and what directions we need to be heading in.

MS LE COUTEUR: Continuing on this whole-of-government approach, the Chief Minister's report directions were changed, I believe, in 2008 to require ESD reporting. As someone who has sat through annual report hearings, I know that they are very scattered. Are you doing any work on ensuring that these are useful, or do you have some other mechanism for working out the whole-of-government greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr Corbell: There are two questions there. In relation to the requirements in the Chief Minister's annual report directions, it is ultimately the responsibility of the Chief Minister's Department to ensure that agencies comply with the Chief Minister's directions in terms of annual reporting requirements. That question is probably better directed to them, because they are the Chief Minister's directions. In relation to measuring our overall performance in terms of greenhouse gas reduction, yes, that is a key responsibility of my department. We are currently doing an audit of our emissions across the ACT, so that looks at all sectors in the economy in the ACT. That will give us a much better understanding of how various sectors are performing. Commercial, domestic and transport are obviously the key areas for the ACT.

That audit of carbon emissions will assist us significantly in identifying how we are travelling and where improvements need to be made. In the evidence I gave to the Assembly inquiry into greenhouse gas reduction targets, I outlined the fact that for the first time we are doing that work; we are developing a comprehensive audit of our emissions and where they come from. That will further improve our capacity to develop well-based policy both within the government and for the whole community.

THE CHAIR: We will go to Mr Rattenbury and then Ms Burch.

MR RATTENBURY: Just on this question of carbon neutrality, is it your intention that departments be given training and resources to become carbon neutral? There seems to be quite a gap in that the expertise sits seemingly within your department and no others.

Mr Corbell: I do not think it only sits in our department; there are a number of other agencies that have a good understanding of these issues. But it is not uniform, I certainly agree. As I said, the resource management planning requirement of all agencies is being done by my department alongside others, but we will use the work done by this department to act as a template through Property Group to inform other agencies of how they can do it and how they need to do it in relation to resource management.

It certainly is the case that the role of DECCEW is a leadership role, an advocacy role, and a role of encouraging and facilitating and harnessing the work of other agencies. That is really what a central government agency needs to do. We do not have large areas of service delivery; we do not have a large number of staff. It is the power of our ideas and the power of our advocacy and the power of our coordinating ability which

will be important in achieving the outcomes that we seek.

MR RATTENBURY: I take it from that that there is no specific budget allocation to assist other agencies outside of the thought leadership? I think I heard you just say there is no particular program where you—

Mr Corbell: No, there is no specific funding. Agencies will be expected to find and dedicate the resources from within their existing corporate budgets for these matters. Agencies have building managers and people who do this work now. It is about making sure that those people are hooked into the networks across government that are convened by groups such as Property Group and others so that they are familiar with the issues and are able to access advice and information. Certainly it will be the case that my department will be in a position to provide a certain level of advice and information on a range of issues around energy and water. Indeed, the programs that you asked me about earlier, the business smart and office smart programs, are examples of where we are providing advice to other government agencies about improving their recycling practices and giving assistance. It is that sort of approach that will continue.

MR SMYTH: If you are the central agency that has advocacy for leadership and ideas, how does that equate to, say, the energy rating of the building you are in? What is its energy rating? What example are you setting there for the rest of the departments?

Mr Corbell: The building we are in?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Mr Corbell: As you would know, Mr Smyth, Macarthur House is a very old building.

MR SMYTH: Sure.

Mr Corbell: By Canberra standards, it is a relatively old building. It obviously has all of the limitations that come with a building designed at the time it was designed and built. There are certain things that come with buildings built at particular points in time which are very difficult to deal with, but there are other things that can be dealt with. Macarthur House—

MR SMYTH: So what is its energy rating?

Mr Corbell: I do not know what its energy rating is, but Macarthur House has had a range of programs put in place. It has solar—

MR SMYTH: I know, I started them.

Mr Corbell: It has photovoltaics in it; it has energy efficiency measures in it; it has had improved treatment to its windows; it has got a range of measures in it that improve its overall—

MR SMYTH: So on the theme of advocacy, leadership, ideas—

Mr Corbell: environmental performance—

MR SMYTH: what is the energy rating of your building—

Mr Corbell: and DECCEW has contracted Viridis to provide a sustainability audit and action plan for the south wing annexe, which is where the department will be accommodated. That will provide the department with wide-ranging advice on the overall performance of the building and measures that can be done to improve energy, water, waste as well as issues around transport and staff health and wellbeing. I am advised that the current NABERS star rating for Macarthur House is three stars for the whole building.

MR SMYTH: And for the annexe?

Mr Corbell: I think it is just treated as a single building, Mr Smyth.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, they usually do it as a whole building.

MR SMYTH: So three stars?

Mr Corbell: I am advised that that is why the department has engaged Viridis to do the sustainability audit of the element of the building that we are in to focus on improvements there. Obviously to date the building has been treated as a single entity.

MR SMYTH: How much will you pay Viridis for this?

Mr Corbell: I will take the question on notice, Mr Smyth.

MR RATTENBURY: If I could just come back to the questions I was on before, we were talking about different government agencies. Are agency heads held accountable for the sustainability performance of their departments, and do they have to report to their ministers?

Mr Corbell: That will increasingly be a focus for the government over the coming years. A challenge for any government is to convince agencies, particularly those that are not directly involved in this policy sphere, to focus on these issues.

MR RATTENBURY: But they all have building managers.

Mr Corbell: I beg your pardon?

MR RATTENBURY: You just said they all have building managers.

Mr Corbell: Indeed.

MR RATTENBURY: Each department, even if it is the education department, has somebody responsible for—

Mr Corbell: Mr Rattenbury, I am in furious agreement with you on that. It is one of

the reasons why we are now starting to utilise the platform that I and the department have been given by virtue of its creation to go out and start talking to other government agencies about the work that we need to do. So, for example, the roundtable that I am hosting tomorrow is exactly the sort of opportunity to get representatives from non-environment-related agencies, such as Justice or Education, to come and understand and learn about the opportunities that are available and the responsibilities that exist for heads of agencies to improve the environmental performance of their agencies.

That is not to say that work is not happening. Work is happening in this sphere, but it is probably not as widespread as we would like it to be. For example, in the education sector, an enormous effort is going on in schools. There is an enormous amount of work going on in terms of energy efficiency, water efficiency and waste reduction in our schools. The other day I attended St Clare's college in Griffith. They have just become the 100th school to sign up to the Australian sustainable schools initiative. Out of the 142 schools in the ACT, public and non-government, 100 of them are signed up to the Australian sustainable schools initiative. That is the highest level of any jurisdiction in the country. That program is run out of my department, and some excellent work is being done by officers to encourage schools to improve their energy and water performance and their waste reduction strategies with some really noticeable results. The government has been providing funding directly for solar energy, water efficiency and so on. So there is work happening in the school sector.

The health projects are an area of particular interest for me. We are spending a lot of money on the rebuild of health infrastructure. Given that our hospitals are very large users of energy, large generators of waste and large users of water, there are obvious opportunities as part of the rebuild of our health sector to identify ways to dramatically improve water and energy efficiency in those buildings. That is something that I was having a talk with the Minister for Health about as part of that health rebuild. There is a range of opportunities and a lot of work to be done, but it is a very exciting range of opportunities as well.

MS BRESNAN: In adopting all of this, is there going to be a standard reporting process adopted across government? This work is happening and all departments have to take on the responsibility. Is there going to be some sort of approach adopted so that we are actually seeing that this is being reported on? Are there going to be standard reporting measures in annual reports? Has there been thought given as to how that is going to be managed?

Mr Corbell: Ms Le Couteur just mentioned the fact that there is currently a Chief Minister's reporting direction, so it is about strengthening the quality of the reporting that comes through that direction more than anything.

MS BRESNAN: Yes. Obviously I know she mentioned that, but will that then be applied across all government departments with all government departments reporting?

Mr Corbell: That applies to all government agencies through their annual reports mechanisms.

THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you. Ms Burch and then Mrs Dunne.

MS BURCH: I want to move to another theme around some infrastructure projects. I will come back to the solar power but can I first start off with the wetlands on BP5, page 72. There is some capital works money going into accelerating replacing stormwater drains with wetlands at a couple of locations noted there. Can you outline that work, when it will commence and how it will progress?

Mr Corbell: Sure. The government is providing capital funding of approximately \$13½ million, nearly \$14 million, over the next two years to establish two new major urban wetlands on Sullivans Creek. One will be located adjacent to Hawdon Street in Dickson and the other will be located adjacent to Wattle Street in Lyneham. This will build on the two wetlands that are close to completion. One has been completed adjacent to Flemington Road in Mitchell, as well as the one that was built a number of years ago adjacent to the O'Connor shops in O'Connor.

This is a really positive project. It is being done as part of the Canberra urban waterways project. The overall objective is to replace 1½ gigalitres of potable water by 2010 with alternative water sources for irrigation and, we believe, a longer term target of three gigalitres a year of potable water substitution by 2015. I really view this as part of our overall water security projects. Water security is certainly about augmenting supply but it is also about reducing potable water use and providing alternative sources of supply to potable water use.

In terms of the time frames I am advised that procurement for detailed design will occur between June and September this year, DA approval between October this year and March next year, and construction between April and September next calendar year, and it will take approximately six months to actually build the two ponds. These should provide significant alternative water supply to irrigation operators in those areas. We expect that a number of schools and government playing fields will be able to access the water for irrigation and therefore reduce their reliance on potable water supply. We also anticipate that it will generate revenue to the government because the government will sell this water to these users. Obviously it is anticipated it will be sold at a cost less than the cost of potable water, so there is an incentive to purchase it.

MS BURCH: An incentive, yes.

Mr Corbell: And we anticipate that the revenue will be approximately \$610,000 in 2011-12 and just over half a million dollars in 2012-13 from the sale of water to end users.

MRS DUNNE: Why does the revenue drop off?

Mr Corbell: I am not quite sure why the revenue drops off, but I can certainly clarify that.

Ms Hargreaves: It drops off as there is an additional fee that is imposed in the first year. That is my understanding.

MRS DUNNE: So a connection fee or something?

Ms Hargreaves: It is an access entitlement fee.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

MS BURCH: And, once these are in place, they are a permanent fixture of the area, ongoingly, providing alternative sources?

Mr Corbell: Yes, correct. It is an ongoing measure. The government started the Canberra urban waterways project in concert with the commonwealth a couple of years ago. The commonwealth provided funding for the assessment and identification of possible sites and then the territory has provided the funding for the actual infrastructure, the actual construction.

It was a 60-40 funding arrangement, with the commonwealth doing 60 per cent. We have overmatched that—we have well and truly overmatched that—and we are now pursuing further opportunities with the commonwealth to leverage other funds that they have available, given that we have already committed more than our share, and we should be able to access further commonwealth funds as a result.

MS BURCH: And the playing areas that will benefit across schools and playing fields; that is an enhancement of local facilities—

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS BURCH: that are currently being irrigated by—

Mr Corbell: Yes, the types of sites that we are looking at: for the Lyneham pond, the potential end users have been identified as Lyneham high school, the Lyneham neighbourhood oval, Lyneham primary, Daramalan college, the Majura tennis centre, the O'Connor cooperative schools, St Joseph's primary school and Football Park in Ainslie; and for the Dickson pond, Dickson college, Dickson district playing fields, Rosary primary school, and Emmaus Christian school.

So, as you can see, there are potentially a very large number of users who will benefit from this infrastructure, reduce their water use—

MS BURCH: Their costs.

Mr Corbell: or, alternatively, improve the reliability of supply and reduce, I guess, their vulnerability potentially to water restrictions. So there are a range of community benefits that come from this investment.

MRS DUNNE: What is the capacity of the ponds? Seven million dollars each is a pretty expensive hole in the ground.

Mr Corbell: It is much more than a hole in the ground, Mrs Dunne. If it was that easy, we would be building them all over the place. I do not have that capacity information in front of me, unless someone—

MRS DUNNE: Take it on notice. That is fine.

Mr Corbell: I will take it on notice.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, were you finishing off with another supp, and then I will move to Mrs Dunne?

MS BURCH: Not on wetlands. As I said when I first started, I was going to ask around solar.

THE CHAIR: Okay, so I might go to Mrs Dunne and then I will come back to you and then I will go to Mr Rattenbury.

MRS DUNNE: I might end up with a segue into solar. Minister, you mentioned in your opening remarks that there were appropriations elsewhere for purchasing renewable energy. What is the government policy on renewable energy and green power and are we meeting the targets in the policy for renewable energy and green power?

Mr Corbell: The government made an election commitment, Mrs Dunne, to increase the level of green power purchased by the government to 30 per cent in the first year of the government. That was our election commitment, and we have met that. That funding is \$686,000 indexed over the next four years, and that increases our uptake of green power from 23 per cent to 30 per cent. The parliamentary agreement outlines further steps to move towards 100 per cent purchase of green power. That is a matter that the government will consider as we enter the budget cycle each year. The funding is actually provided to TAMS, to Property Group, who administer the electricity contracts on behalf of all government agencies, but the funding driving that appropriation has been my department.

MRS DUNNE: And is that audited?

Mr Corbell: Is it audited? As to where the power—

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Corbell: We use the accredited green power providers.

MRS DUNNE: And so the contract is for 30 per cent green power?

Mr Corbell: That is correct.

MRS DUNNE: And has that contract started?

Mr Corbell: We have existing contracts.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, which was for 23 per cent.

Mr Corbell: Yes, so we negotiate—

MRS DUNNE: When does that 30 per cent come in?

Mr Corbell: a larger percentage with our existing contracted suppliers.

MRS DUNNE: And are we up to 30 per cent yet?

Mr Corbell: That will commence, as I understand, from the beginning of the next financial year.

THE CHAIR: What are the costings on moving from 30 per cent to 100 per cent?

Mr Corbell: I do not have that information in front of me. It will depend on the time frames and it is difficult to predict because the cost of green power is highly variable. As demand for it continues to grow, the cost of green power continues to increase. It will also be affected by the changes occurring nationally in relation to the mandatory renewable energy target. That will also have an impact on the overall cost of green power in the national electricity market. So I think the short answer is that it is difficult to properly identify what the total costs would be in moving to 100 per cent because it will occur over a period of time and the cost of green power is highly variable in the market.

THE CHAIR: So you are not aware of any costings or modelling that have been done, looking at various scenarios on it?

Mr Corbell: I think there may have been some costing done in relation to what it was if we assume the price as it was now remained the price over the next period of time, to get to 100 per cent.

MRS DUNNE: Which is about \$100,000 a percentage point.

Mr Corbell: At the moment we assume an annual increase in price of 12 per cent, based on recent market trends. But there are a number of variables here. The first would be levels of consumption—if our consumption goes up, obviously our total cost goes up—and also demand in the market will continue to fluctuate. So it is a difficult thing to accurately assess.

THE CHAIR: But, given those variables, modelling was done. Are you able to provide that modelling to the committee?

Mr Corbell: I think that was done by Treasury and it was done in the context of the election commitments made by other political parties, so I think you would need to talk to Treasury about that.

THE CHAIR: But the 30 to 100 per cent was not part of the election.

Mr Corbell: It was a commitment, I think, or a policy position put by the Greens; and it is dealt with in the parliamentary agreement. But that work was not done by my agency; it was done by Treasury.

THE CHAIR: Your department has not been provided with those costings then?

Mr Corbell: Not that I am aware of. No, I do not know whether we have that.

THE CHAIR: Can you check that?

Mr Corbell: I can take that on notice and check it, but I think that the modelling was done by Treasury.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, could you just refresh my memory: was it \$680,000 supplementation for property for the transfer from 23 to 30 per cent?

Mr Corbell: It was \$686,000 in 2009-10.

THE CHAIR: And then that is indexed at 12 per cent, is it?

Mr Corbell: Indexed in the outyears.

MRS DUNNE: Indexed at 12 per cent, yes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch. Then I will come to Mr Rattenbury.

MS BURCH: In your opening statement you made mention of solar power, and on budget paper 4, page 331, the dot point is “facilitating the establishment of a major solar power facility in the ACT”. You touched on it in your opening statements, but can you tell us a bit more about the process for site selection and then the benefit and the cost benefits over the life of such a project?

Mr Corbell: Sure. The government is proceeding with its projects to develop a solar farm in the ACT capable of powering a minimum of 10,000 homes. That is our election commitment, and we are moving to implement that. A formal expression of interest process has now commenced. That will finish in June. Then there will be assessment of those expressions of interest, with a request for tender being extended to a short-listed number of parties who respond to the expressions of interest process. That is the intention at this time. The minimum capacity for the solar facility is approximately 30 megawatts of generating capacity; that is—

MRS DUNNE: It is now a minimum capacity?

Mr Corbell: That is the minimum capacity. Previously it was identified as 22, but following more detailed technical assessment and advice it was decided that 30 was the minimum to achieve the 10,000-home requirement. The government will provide \$30 million worth of assistance towards the project.

The government has identified a number of sites of unleased territory land that could potentially be made available to a successful bidder for this project. Those two sites are at Kowen forest and the former Ingledene pine plantation south of Tharwa. Those sites have been selected on the basis that they meet the technical criteria for the efficient operation of the solar farm. They have been subject to an initial analysis in terms of other potential constraints—such as heritage, access to relevant infrastructure, planning and land use—but they have not been subject to any detailed assessment.

That would need to occur through the statutory processes that will apply should a successful tenderer choose to use one of these sites. We would expect them to go through that process.

The government has commenced a community consultation process in relation to these sites to determine whether there are any threshold issues that would preclude them potentially being made available to a successful bidder for this project.

This does not rule out the private sector coming forward with their proposals with alternative sites—for example, sites that are on leased land where they choose to enter into private arrangements with lease holders to access or purchase those sites or use those sites. We would expect those sites to also be subject to detailed consultation by those proponents, should they choose to do that.

That is the process that we have embarked upon. So far, the response from the community and from industry has been very positive. We are conducting a very extensive process around consultation and around the technical issues associated with these sites. We look forward to seeing the expressions of interest when they come forward.

MS BURCH: And in that process the benefits over the life of the project will be a key element to help you in your decision making?

Mr Corbell: In looking at the successful tenderer for this project, we will be wanting to make sure that they achieve outcomes that we are looking at in terms of greenhouse gas reduction, increased use of renewable energy and economic development opportunities for the territory, so both in terms of construction and operation. Obviously those are all factors that we are keen to see fully getting some really good outcomes as we move forward with the project.

THE CHAIR: Mr Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY: Budget paper 4 on page 337 notes that reporting on weathering the change has changed from four reports a year to an annual report. It is at the top of the page under output 1.3. I was just wondering why that change has happened, from quarterly to annual reporting?

Mr Corbell: I think the quarterly reporting was a fairly onerous requirement for relatively little meaningful gain. With a large number of these elements that we were reporting against, it is not possible to always get significant data to demonstrate progress over the period of a quarter but it is certainly feasible to do so over a 12-month period. Given the amount of time that goes into developing reporting, and to make sure that it is meaningful reporting, it was decided that 12 months was a more appropriate time frame, rather than having a quarterly time frame.

MR RATTENBURY: Who gets those reports and are they publicly available?

Mr Corbell: They are certainly reported to me as the minister. I am not quite sure what arrangements have previously been put in place for reporting to the Assembly, but I would envisage annual reporting to the Assembly on progress.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to go to some of elements of weathering the change and budget paper 4 on pages 336 and 337. Has weathering the change action plan 1 been evaluated so far? There is a document from July 2008 that reviews the action points. Are there any other documents that lay out the evaluation?

Mr Corbell: Are you referring to a particular accountability indicator?

MR RATTENBURY: I am interested in, for example, whether weathering the change has resulted in a reduction of emissions?

Mr Corbell: I am just trying to clarify. Are you referring to a particular—

MRS DUNNE: Output class 1.2, “Policy”, (i), is a review of the climate change policy. Is that it?

MR RATTENBURY: No. I was going to come to that next. I was referring to the general observations on these two pages that talk about weathering the change in various points.

Ms Hargreaves: I can explain that. Initially, when we would transfer various functions from TAMS, we had one output and that output was categorised as the environment, climate change, energy and water. To better reflect what we actually do, we divided that output into three separate outputs: output 1.1, environment protection and water management; output 1.2, policy; and output 1.3, sustainability programs. As a result, we needed to then transfer some of the measures that were listed in output 1.1 into their correct outputs. That is the reason why you are seeing references to weathering the change a couple of times.

MR RATTENBURY: Thanks; that is much clearer. Picking up on the point Mrs Dunne just made, at output 1.2(i), it says “Review of climate change policy”. Can you tell us a little bit about what that review is going to involve?

Mr Corbell: The review of the climate change policy will obviously be driven by the factors that we have been discussing earlier in this hearing: a revised greenhouse gas reduction target for the territory; the zero emissions policy which the government has adopted; and a range of other changes, both locally and nationally, in terms of climate change policy. Given all of those things, it is timely to review the overall policy and bring forward the implementation of action plan 2. That is what that item reflects.

MR RATTENBURY: Is there a timetable for that work?

Mr Corbell: Yes. As I said earlier in the hearing, we will bring forward the review and the development of action plan 2 to the end of this year.

MR RATTENBURY: Will there be public consultation on that?

Mr Corbell: Yes; there will be a need for public consultation on that.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We are due to break in a moment. There are a few people waiting. Do people want to have a quick question before afternoon tea?

MR SMYTH: I have got a string of questions.

THE CHAIR: Okay; we will come back to you. Does someone have a quickish one?

MS BURCH: I think it is quick. It is on page 336, where Mr Rattenbury was, on implementation of national reform in energy and water. Does that go to the first two dot points or the second dot point under priorities, which was around the towards carbon neutral policy or is that something different?

Mr Corbell: No, that is something different. National reforms represent the fact that we are engaged in a number of national fora on energy and water reform through the Ministerial Council on Energy, our membership of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council and a range of officer-level fora. There are significant reforms occurring in relation to water, with the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council. So there is a need to continue to support my work and my role as the ACT's representative on that body.

Also there is the implementation of reforms in areas such as energy efficiency for appliances and energy efficiency in buildings, which is shared between the Ministerial Council on Energy, the Australian Building Codes Board and so on. And, similarly, there are the changes in water policy guidelines for water re-use, for example, that were adopted by the Environment Protection and Heritage Council, a ministerial council, last week around the re-use of grey water and so on.

These are all things that have policy implications at a local level. This just reflects the fact that we are very strongly engaged in a whole range of discussions around national policy development.

MS BURCH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: All right. We will come back at 4 o'clock.

Meeting adjourned from to 3.43 to 3.58 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back. Mr Smyth has a series of questions, he tells us.

MR SMYTH: Yes, a string of questions. Minister, when you appeared as the Attorney-General, I asked you about who is responsible for various functions and you suggested I might ask questions of the EPA about noise and dust activity at Fairbairn Pines.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Has the department had any complaints about the activities of any of the operators out at Fairbairn Pines?

Mr Corbell: Yes. I am advised that Environment Protection have had a complaint from a business adjacent to Fairbairn Park. That relates to noise from Fairbairn Park. That matter is currently involving officers from the Environment Protection Authority. They are working with the complainant and representatives of the motorcycle facility to try and facilitate a satisfactory outcome for all the parties.

MR SMYTH: What action has been taken to date, because this matter has been going on for some time now?

Mr Corbell: I might defer to Mr Neil, and he can give you some more detail on that.

Mr Neil: Thank you, minister. I think there is probably a little bit of history. You are right, Mr Smyth, it has been going on for a while. Paintball Sports was actually on a part of the Fairbairn Pines plantation that was actually Defence land. The Department of Defence required that land as part of the field firing range. As a consequence, officers from Parks, Conservation and Lands met with the proprietor of Paintball Sports and offered him a couple of alternative sites. One was in Kowen and the other one was actually the site he currently has. He then moved to that site over winter, I think, when there was not much activity at Fairbairn Park—in summer there was more activity—and he then started to make complaints to us through Canberra Connect, and that still continues.

The motorsports facility actually has a licence to operate out there and to emit a certain amount of noise. Those emissions are measured by the most sensitive receivers—the local residents.

MR SMYTH: That being the Ridgeway residents?

Mr Neil: The Ridgeway residents. There are premises closer to Fairbairn Park. There is the whole of the Queanbeyan industrial estate, but the decision was made to have that as the compliance location for obvious reasons—people in residences deserve that sort of level of protection. We have measured the noise up there a few times. We had one instance about three weeks ago where we believe it was over. That will be something that will be further investigated by my officers, and they, no doubt, will give me a report on how it happened and where it occurred.

The actual noise levels in the paintball area, on my reading of the results that have been made available, would not breach what used to be the daily noise dose, which was 0.33. That is effectively 85-decibel Leq for an eight-hour period in any 24-hour period. After that, you need some form of hearing protection. Just based on the results I have seen, it would be well below that. That is not to say that it is not a nuisance occasionally, but I do not think he has any occupational health and safety complaints as opposed to nuisance complaints.

MR SMYTH: The motorcycle track have a lease to operate at any time, or do they go on a noise credit system?

Mr Neil: They run on a noise credit system. When they have an event that is likely to be loud, they are required to advertise that in a daily newspaper in the territory. They can operate at any time, provided they are below what would be our normal

residential standard where that is measured at the Ridgeway so—

MR SMYTH: Which is?

Mr Neil: It is 45 decibels through the day. Unless they are above that limit at the Ridgeway, they are complying with their authorisation.

MR SMYTH: At what stage is the investigation?

Mr Neil: A noise measurement has been taken. I have been told that it is probably above 45 decibels; I do not know how far above. What the officers will do is go through all the usual details about checking to see whether it was advertised, whether the measurements are actually legal and whether they were taken for the full 10 minutes. Based on all of that, they will give me a report probably with some recommendations about what may or may not be the best method to deal with it.

MR SMYTH: So how long is that likely to take?

Mr Neil: It will probably take another month. I could lean on them, but there is no rush other than to formalise a potential breach of their authorisation.

MR SMYTH: Given that another department found the site and assisted Paintball Sports to move there, part of what has happened is that approval has been given to construct a 2.5-metre soil mound. Do you have a role in monitoring what material is put into the mound and what goes on site?

Mr Neil: Yes. There are two parts to that. Paintball Sports employed the services of an acoustic consultant who recommended this earth mound. If you want to place any more than 100 cubic metres on the land in hills, ridges, buffer zones—a whole lot of different zoning areas—then you need environmental authorisation. That authorisation has a set of requirements about the material that can be taken to site. Generally it is virgin excavated material or clean fill, if it is proven to be clean, which generally needs some form of testing. The material that he is taking on site has been up until now, as far as I am aware, virgin excavated material.

MR SMYTH: Was the motorcycle track given permission to import fill?

Mr Neil: Yes, under the same conditions.

MR SMYTH: For what purpose? To build a noise attenuation mound?

Mr Neil: No. Theirs was to regrade their track.

MR SMYTH: The material that went into the regrading of the track was virgin fill?

Mr Neil: It is either virgin excavated material or it is material that has been approved by our officers to be put there, and that would be based on testing results.

MR SMYTH: So you have tested what has gone in and you are happy that the motorcycle track complies?

Mr Neil: No, we have not tested what has gone in. If the motorcycle track wanted to import material that was not virgin excavated material, we would expect that they would be able to demonstrate that it was clean. As far as I am aware, there has been no material, other than some material that was brought in some years ago, that has not met the criteria.

MR SMYTH: Does the EPA have the right to test motorbikes for compliance with the standards?

Mr Neil: No. There are two separate parts to the way they manage noise in motorsport. One is the governing body of the motorsport involved. So for V8 car races it would be CAMS, and their standard is 95 decibels at 30 metres, like drive-by standards. The Motorcycling Australia, the body that looks after motorcycles, has its own standards, as do the go-carts. Our obligation is to measure the noise at the compliance location to make sure that it is not too loud at the compliance location.

MR SMYTH: Who has the responsibility to ensure that the motor vehicle itself is compliant?

Mr Neil: If it is a race, my understanding is that it is the responsibility of the clubs; it is part of their licences with the Motorcycling Australia, or whoever the governing body is.

MR SMYTH: Who checks the clubs?

Mr Neil: I do not know.

MR SMYTH: Is it an EPA responsibility, minister?

Mr Corbell: No. If anything, you would have to refer it to the Minister for Transport. I do not know whether these vehicles are approved for on-road use or whether they are strictly off-road. You would have to talk to the Minister for Transport.

MR SMYTH: But as a noise issue, if the EPA is there to protect against noise, is there not a role that the EPA monitor these vehicles and the like?

Mr Corbell: As Mr Neil says, the EPA are responsible for noise pollution and making sure that levels of noise pollution do not exceed certain standards. That is what they do. Obviously there is also an issue about vehicle standards, which is dealt with by the relevant transport authorities.

MR SMYTH: I have got a number of questions but if you are investigating it perhaps it is more appropriate to put them on notice. Will you continue the monitoring, from an occupational health and safety responsibility?

Mr Corbell: As Mr Neil has just indicated, it does not appear to be an occupational health and safety issue; it appears to be a noise pollution complaint at this point in time. As I indicated the other day, it would be an occupational health and safety issue if it was believed that staff were being endangered—

MR SMYTH: There are staff there that probably cannot hear the safety instructions—

Mr Corbell: and, as I said to you the other day, if people believe there is an occupational health and safety issue they should refer the matter to WorkCover.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Smyth. Mrs Dunne and then Mr Rattenbury.

MRS DUNNE: This is an area of some confusion, minister: you are responsible for the lowland native grassland report, but who is responsible for the finalisation of the kangaroo management plan?

Mr Corbell: Territory and Municipal Services, and the reason for that is that my department and my portfolio are responsible for nature conversation policy and biodiversity policy generally. As is the case in jurisdictions around the country, you often have a national parks agency or a land management agency that is responsible for the operational plans of management when it comes to managing certain public lands, and that is the case here. My department is responsible for overall conservation and biodiversity and nature conservation policy, but operational management of the lands is a responsibility of the—

MRS DUNNE: The kangaroo management plan has been finalised, so—

Mr Corbell: The primary carriage of the kangaroo management plan rests with the land manager, which is Parks, Conservation and Lands within Territory and Municipal Services.

MRS DUNNE: Are you aware, minister, of the MOU between Defence, the commonwealth environment department and what was Environment ACT back in 1998 when the MOU was signed in relation to the operation and access to Defence land for conservation purposes?

Mr Corbell: No, I am not aware that there was an MOU. It was obviously well before my time. But I am aware that there is a close level of cooperation between commonwealth agencies and ACT government agencies when it comes to nature conservation on commonwealth owned and managed land.

MRS DUNNE: Including Defence land?

Mr Corbell: Including Defence land.

MRS DUNNE: With your policy hat on, what actions were taken in relation to the protection of endangered species on Majura?

Mr Corbell: I am not aware of any specific actions involving my department. The activities to implement protection measures would normally be done by the land manager.

MRS DUNNE: So they are all land managers?

Mr Corbell: Yes. Unless there were broader policy considerations at play, those would be matters for the land manager and certainly not something—

MRS DUNNE: There seems to have been a breakdown in the land management at Majura, because with the increase in the number of kangaroos—

Mr Corbell: The breakdown was that Defence was not prepared for an extended period of time to manage the kangaroo population sustainably, and that obviously had other implications. My predecessor as minister, Mr Stanhope, was obviously very aware of these issues, and he was being briefed by his department accordingly. That is one of the reasons why he commissioned the commissioner for the environment to thoroughly investigate all these issues and prepare a report on ways of sustainably managing these nature conservation areas and other areas of environmental significance moving forward.

MRS DUNNE: So in your role of finalising the lowlands grasslands report will your department be looking at the interactions between the various land managers and what the responsibility of land managers would be?

Mr Corbell: That is obviously a matter that will be considered in the government's response to the commissioner's report.

MRS DUNNE: Will you therefore take on board a review of the MOU and see whether the MOU has been complied with and whether or not it needs to be perhaps renegotiated?

Mr Corbell: As I say Mrs Dunne, I am not familiar with the fact that there was an MOU—it was obviously some time ago—but, if the matter has been raised by the commissioner and if it is a matter that is relevant, then obviously we will treat it seriously and respond to it accordingly. But I am not really in a position to pre-empt the government's response to the commissioner's report in every detail at this time.

MRS DUNNE: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: I have a question on the grasslands report and there is one other matter I want to cover. Has your department yet given consideration to the priorities in responding to the report's recommendations and will the government be making formal responses to the commissioner's report?

Mr Corbell: I am obliged under the act to make a formal response to the commissioner's report and the government will be doing so as a matter of course. That will occur within the time frames prescribed under the act. There are a range of recommendations, some of which are short term and urgent in relation to management of these grassland sites in relation to overgrazing by kangaroos, stock and rabbits, and a range of other matters including weeds and mowing regimes.

Then there are some longer-term issues that need to be addressed, including the relationship between commonwealth and ACT legislation. Dr Cooper makes a number of recommendations in relation to expansion of the reserve network and identifies a number of sites there. There are also issues around raising community awareness and so on. So all of the recommendations will be responded to by the government.

MR RATTENBURY: Are you confident that TAMS will be in a position to respond to all the actions identified in the report?

Mr Corbell: That obviously depends on the government's response to the recommendations, but if the government takes decisions to respond to particular recommendations that have resource implications that would be something that would be closely considered in developing the government's response.

MR RATTENBURY: I thought one of the interesting parts of the report was the consultant who was part of undertaking the assessment of grassland sites recommending that several of the sites should have ecological burns conducted on them to ensure that they regenerated effectively.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: And that burns on some sites were considerably overdue?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Have you spoken to TAMS about whether they would be in a position to undertake ecological burns? The consultant said it would be ideal to do it this autumn. Is TAMS in a position to do that at all?

Mr Corbell: That was not the commissioner's recommendation. The commissioner recommended that consideration be given to burns of some grassland sites. She did not identify it as an urgent recommendation. She was quite explicit about saying which recommendations were urgent and which were not. If I recollect correctly, the ecological burns matter was not identified by the commissioner as a matter requiring urgent consideration by the government. Obviously, we will deal with it in that context and give consideration to it when we respond to all of the other recommendations.

MR RATTENBURY: I noted in the budget papers there is reference to the review of the Nature Conservation Act.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Have you determined time lines for the review of that act and can you give us some details on that?

Mr Corbell: Yes, I have. My department has advised me that the Nature Conservation Act does require a review. It was first established in 1980; so it is an act that does require a more contemporary look at its operation and need for any

improvements in its operation. I am proposing that a discussion paper as a start be released for community comment in the middle of this year. In the next couple of months there will be a release of a discussion paper. It is envisaged that will be for a 10-week period. Following the collation of feedback, drafting instructions will be developed for an exposure draft bill to be introduced to the Assembly as an exposure draft late this year or early next year. Then passage of the final bill will be in the autumn session of next year.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. I noticed a comment you made before the break, when Ms Burch asked about the solar farm, that the target is still to provide enough power for 10,000 households.

Mr Corbell: As a minimum, yes.

MR RATTENBURY: As a minimum. Previously it was calculated that 22 megawatts of generating capacity was required to achieve that.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: You have now suggested 30 megawatts. Can you tell us about why that figure has needed to be altered?

Mr Corbell: I am no expert but I will ask Mr Butt to—

MR RATTENBURY: We did not want Mr Butt to go home without getting a chance to say something.

Mr Corbell: No, absolutely.

MR SMYTH: He has done well. It is 20 past four.

Mr Corbell: He is doing very well.

Mr Butt: The decision that was taken on the megawatt size for the facility was based on looking at having the facility being able to fit in with the national electricity market and being able to be called upon. The size of the facility would otherwise have depended on the type of technology that may be brought forward, but the government is being quite open in not trying to direct any technology answer here. You have a range of potential sizes that could have come forward if you were just going to meet the 10,000-house minimum requirement. Depending on the technology, I think it was ranging between 22 megawatts and 28 megawatts.

MR RATTENBURY: Sorry, the latter figure?

Mr Butt: 28.

MR RATTENBURY: So the 30 is a threshold to be in the national electricity market. Have I understood you correctly?

Mr Butt: The threshold was based on the ability for the national energy market

company, NEMMCO, to have the generator bid into the market.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: My question is in relation to the consultation on plastic bags, which is mentioned on BP4, pages 336 and 338. I know it does mention that there would be consultation and a survey. I am just wondering if you can provide a bit more detail on what the plan actually is for the consultation and what that finding would be used for?

Mr Corbell: Yes. Perhaps it is helpful to give some background around this issue before I answer that. As you would be aware, Ms Bresnan, it is a commitment of the parliamentary agreement between the government and the Greens to establish a trial levy on the use of plastic bags in the ACT. The government has been considering options for implementation of that part of the agreement.

The question currently before the government is whether or not it is constitutional to impose a levy on plastic bags through an act of the Assembly. There is some opinion, although it is not clear cut, that the imposition of a levy through an act of the Assembly may be the equivalent of an excise duty, which is constitutionally a measure not available to the states and the territories. That is a matter that is subject to more detailed legal advice being commissioned by my department at this time. That will clarify the issue, hopefully, and give a clear indication to the government whether or not it is feasible to introduce a levy.

I note that some people have questioned why this is the case when a levy was introduced in Victoria. The answer to that is that the levy in Victoria was introduced voluntarily by the retailers in agreement with the government. The amount that was collected was collected by retailers. It was not given to the government; so it was not an excise and could not be captured that way. But that process in Victoria was only for four weeks.

The government is seeking to resolve the constitutional issues surrounding the possible introduction of the levy. Once that is the case, and concurrent with that, we will conduct a community consultation exercise with the funding provided in the budget to explore community opinions on the best mechanisms to address and achieve a reduction in plastic bag usage in the territory and get some baseline data on community opinion about the matter. For example, do people support a levy, do they support alternatives to a levy—for example, voluntary measures by retailers, including levies on a voluntary basis—or, at the other end of the spectrum, bans on plastic bags similar to the South Australian approach. The money provided for in the budget will allow us to test community opinion and that will help inform policy development.

MS BRESNAN: Is the consultation just going to be a survey or is there going to be some other form of consultation?

Mr Corbell: The exact nature of the proposal is for research which will mostly be through opinion testing of the community.

THE CHAIR: So it will be a survey?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

THE CHAIR: You said earlier that part of the agreement is that there is a levy, but you seem to be consulting on whether or not you should do a levy, whether you should do a ban or whether you should do something else.

Mr Corbell: It will be necessary, even if a decision is taken to implement a levy, to have a good understanding of public opinion because that will then drive decisions around what sort of information needs to be available. Education is to be made available to the community in the event of a levy being imposed or established. We need to have an understanding of what Canberrans think and want on this issue so that we can make sure that information and education, where necessary, are provided to explain why certain policy steps are being taken.

THE CHAIR: Have you done, or has the government done, any modelling on how much revenue a levy would bring in?

Mr Corbell: No.

THE CHAIR: And do you have a view on roughly where that levy should be set, or is that something that is simply going to be done through the consultation process?

Mr Corbell: No, we do not have a view on that. We do know that in Victoria I think it was 10c. In Victoria they imposed a voluntary levy for the period of their trial at 10c a bag. That did lead to a significant reduction in plastic bag use during the trial period. Obviously, the total amount of the levy will be the significant factor in sending a price signal about whether or not people are prepared to continue to use plastic bags. If a levy is implemented, the price will need to be sufficient to encourage people to consider alternatives to paying for a plastic bag. That is the whole point of it. Whilst the government does not have a concluded view, it will need to be on the level that achieves the policy outcome.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur, then Ms Burch and Mr Smyth.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is a different question. Last week we talked to the Chief Minister a bit about some of the funding for the arboretum which came from the climate change budget. This was highlighted last year and we are still somewhat confused. Several projects in the meeting the challenge of climate change were funded out of a \$100 million bucket in last year's budget. This year's \$38.3 million of that was allocated to various projects—\$6.5 million for the arboretum, \$18.7 million for urban forest renewal programs and \$8 million for drought-proofing sportsgrounds. Can you tell us what climate change measure is the residual \$5 million allocated to? I am sure this is purely that we have not managed to read the budget papers quite right, but could you please help us with this?

Mr Corbell: There are a range of programs that have been funded and I guess they are simply the initiatives that are outlined in the budget papers that are funded in the

budget for this portfolio. There is the increased uptake of green energy purchase. There is the tune up Canberra program. There is the switch your thinking program. There is a whole range of policy initiatives that directly address climate change matters.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, there are, but what I am specifically interested in is the ones that were out of last year's \$100 million. \$38.3 million of that was allocated this year. Tune-up Canberra I think came from a different pot of money.

MRS DUNNE: My recollection is that that is correct.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am pretty much 100 per cent sure about that. I thought that switch your thinking was also a different lot of money. That is basically what you said earlier this afternoon—that it was a different lot of money. Last year there was \$100 million for climate change.

Mr Corbell: It was a notional allocation within the budget; that is right.

MS LE COUTEUR: Of that notional allocation, you said that this year \$38.3 million of it was allocated to various projects—the arboretum, the urban forests and the drought-proofing, which we are missing. Would you like us to give these figures to you in writing and you come back as to what we have got, where we are confused?

Mr Corbell: It is important to understand that the allocation relates to the total amount of money available to the government for infrastructure. They relate mostly to capital projects, and those are the capital projects to date that the government has chosen to provide funding towards in relation to climate change matters.

MRS DUNNE: But the \$1 billion for the environment in last year's budget was not all capital money.

MR RATTENBURY: Perhaps I can be more specific on Ms Le Couteur's question. On page 7 of budget paper number 5, in the last dot point on the page, it says:

... various projects for meeting the challenges of climate change (\$38.3 million).

The question—perhaps you can provide it on notice—is: what are the components of that \$38.3 million, please? Ms Le Couteur has identified a number of them, but we cannot identify all of them.

Mr Corbell: I will take the question on notice; I am happy to provide that information to the committee.

MS LE COUTEUR: Sorry, I should have read out the number. Moving on from that, given that some of this climate change money is the arboretum and the urban forest project, can you tell me how you are actually measuring the climate change impacts of the arboretum and the urban forest renewal project?

Mr Corbell: The government has recently completed a carbon sequestration study in the territory. That was commissioned by TAMS—by the policy area that is now a part

of DECCEW, the climate change policy area—to look at carbon sequestration in the territory. That work was undertaken by the ANU, and that is a very valuable piece of work in identifying the extent to which urban and non-urban vegetation contributes to the sequestration of carbon in the territory. That gives us detailed assessments of the impact of the arboretum, the urban forest more generally and the non-urban vegetation in the territory—the amount of carbon that those respective elements store and their potential contribution over time.

MS LE COUTEUR: When you are looking at the arboretum, for instance, I understand that a large amount of the expenditure on the arboretum has been for civil works. You will be taking off the CO₂ implications of that before evaluating it? It will be net; we will not just be looking at the trees?

Mr Corbell: The study has looked at the total ability of the arboretum, and indeed of the urban forest more generally, to sequester carbon and has taken account of the different planting regime at the arboretum in determining the amount of carbon sequestration that can occur at that site.

MRS DUNNE: Can we see that stuff?

MS LE COUTEUR: That was my question, too, Mrs Dunne.

Mr Corbell: I will be making that study public. I am currently finalising the government's consideration on that, but I do intend to make the study public.

MR RATTENBURY: In that context, has the government done any evaluation of the cost of reducing emissions so that, for example, we can assess the value per tonne of carbon from the arboretum compared to other projects?

Mr Corbell: That study does identify the relative value of different elements of urban and non-urban vegetation; it does identify which are more efficient and effective at sequestering carbon and over what period of time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Looking at the tree planting still, are you going to be asking the project managers to look at the likely climate changes over the period of the trees' expected life?

Mr Corbell: Yes; those factors have been calculated into that study. The study was done by, I think, the department of forestry at the ANU, using internationally recognised methodology to do this work, so it is a highly credible and professional assessment.

MRS DUNNE: Could I just follow on from—

Mr Corbell: I beg your pardon; that was actually done by—I should correct it—the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the ANU.

THE CHAIR: If there is a supp here, I will go to Mrs Dunne; then I will go to Ms Burch.

MRS DUNNE: It is not really a supp; it is about measurements and indicators. I will come back to it.

THE CHAIR: Another sneaky one, Mrs Dunne! I will come back to you. Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: I want to go to BP4, page 331. Perhaps it was something that was part of the question I asked just before the break. It is the second-last dot point. It is around a number of things, but the caption there is “Caring for our country”. Is that a commonwealth program, our program or a partnership program?

Mr Corbell: Caring for our country is a commonwealth program where they provide funding to a range of government and community-based organisations, private landholders, industry and scientific and research organisations to undertake measures to improve the health of the natural environment in various regions, largely focused on improvements in water management and improvements in land management—for example, weed reduction, improvements in the health of natural waterways and so on.

The ACT recommendations on funding are put to the commonwealth through the natural resource management council, which is established here to do that work and to provide advice on ways of improving natural resource management in the territory. The commonwealth has recently provided funding in the order of \$3 million to \$4 million to provide for improvements in the management of exotic weeds and other measures on the Molonglo River to improve the health of the Molonglo River—the upper Molonglo River near the Duntroon area back towards Queanbeyan, that stretch of the river. That funding is being implemented through Waterwatch and Landcare groups in those locations. Caring for our country is a commonwealth program where they make allocations through the NRM council to those groups.

MS BURCH: Does the ACT determine the projects we wish to do?

Mr Corbell: No; the commonwealth determines it, based on recommendations from the NRM council.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, is that all from you on that? I will go to Mr Smyth now, then Mrs Dunne.

MS BURCH: But I will get a next round.

MR SMYTH: Minister, page 333 shows the strategic indicators for the department, of which there are five. I have to say that they strike me as being not so much indicators as statements of fact.

MRS DUNNE: Not very strategic or indicating anything.

MR SMYTH: The opening line in indicator 1 is:

The ACT has high value natural and built environments with a legislative framework in place to protect and maintain those assets.

That is a statement of fact but it is not an indicator. The second sentence is:

The Department promotes knowledge sharing and implementation of contemporary, best practice environmental standards.

It may do that, but what is the strategic outcome from that? Let me compare them to Health. The first strategic indicator for Health is:

Proportion of persons who are admitted by the emergency department, who wait more than eight hours ...

Then there is a chart that shows our progress in reducing that. And if you go across to Education, strategic indicator 1, student performance, it says:

The achievement of excellent student outcomes is a key strategic priority.

And it gives a string of indicators as to how we measure that. How would you measure each of these indicators when they are more statements about what the department does, not what it is going to achieve in a strategic sense?

Mr Corbell: This reflects the nature of this department: it is a policy development department primarily. It provides some service delivery—for example, in the important area of environment protection and water regulation, and also through our sustainability programs, the switch your thinking program and so on, which we discussed earlier today. These indicators reflect that the department has broader objectives in terms of policy setting around climate change, greenhouse gas emission reduction and security and sustainability of energy supply, and these are not areas where we actually deliver services directly in many respects. The Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water does not actually deliver energy: it does not deliver energy; it does not supply energy. It develops the policies that govern the provision and supply of energy in the territory—

MR SMYTH: But at the end of the day how will we know we have it?

Mr Corbell: In the same way, the department does not supply water but it sets the policies that govern the supply of water in the territory. I think these are good in that they indicate the broad objectives of the department in these key policy areas.

MR SMYTH: But broad objectives are not strategic indicators.

Mr Corbell: If the committee feels they are not sufficient, I would welcome the committee's recommendations on improvement.

MR SMYTH: Let me go to energy. Strategic indicator No 4 is “secure, sustainable and equitable supply of energy”. You state that you are going to work “to ensure that energy is secure, sustainable and equitable” and that it complies with regulatory regimes. That is simply a statement of the obvious; it does not tell us when we have reached a secure, sustainable and equitable supply of energy and how we are going to get there. In each of those, there is nothing but statements of what the department may or may not do. There is no indication of the strategic value and how we will know when we have got there.

Mr Corbell: If the committee feels that the indicators are insufficient, the government would welcome a recommendation from the committee on ways of improving that.

MRS DUNNE: On the subject, which I suppose is really my question—Mr Smyth has given quite a good segue into it—let me ask this. Where is it shown in here—and, given that the department is fairly new, if it is not here, how will you develop—measures of the effectiveness of the policies that you implement? You are just not writing policies; you are actively implementing programs in your own right. In the first instance, how will you measure the effectiveness of the programs that you implement in your own right? Have you set targets for, say, water reductions, greenhouse gas reductions, energy efficiency et cetera in areas like switching your thinking? Also, will you be setting measures for whole-of-government improvements in energy, water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions et cetera?

Mr Corbell: In relation to the second question, yes; those will be reflected in the respective policy documents that are developed or refreshed and revised in those relevant policy areas.

In relation to the first question, as I have already said to the committee earlier this afternoon, there will be specific performance measures around programs that we deliver. We have outlined already some of the things that will be put in place in relation to switch your thinking—for example, the total number of rebates; the total number of audits and so on that are performed in any one financial year; and, as Ms Farnsworth indicated earlier, the greenhouse gas emissions reduction achieved in relation to relevant programs. We have already indicated that we will be doing it.

MRS DUNNE: It seems to me that just saying that you have delivered X number of audits—people can have audits and then not achieve anything as a result of those audits. There needs to be follow-through in those policy areas or program areas; an audit by itself does not deliver efficiencies or revisions.

Mr Corbell: An audit can. This is the more challenging end of the service delivery issue. An audit can lead to significant behavioural change on the part of a household.

MRS DUNNE: But it may not.

Mr Corbell: It may not. But obviously there are ways of getting an indication as to whether householders believe that an audit in and of itself has been effective. I would say, though, that the objective of the switch your thinking program is not just an audit; the audit is there to inform the householder and to assist the householder and the department to make decisions about which rebates and other programs should then be made available because they will be the most effective means of implementing those issues identified in the audit. The whole point of the audit process is to make sure that the switch your thinking team is able to put together a suite of rebates, incentives, information or whatever it may be to the householder to enable them to actually achieve a reduction in their energy and water use primarily. That is the whole point of the program.

MRS DUNNE: I have got a completely different question, which is short.

THE CHAIR: I will come to you. Minister, I refer to page 337, accountability indicators under output 1.3, sustainability programs—“advise government on the potential expansion of feed-in tariff”. Where are we up to in that process? We obviously had a fairly robust debate in the Assembly when we put it off for a little while before making a decision on going forward. Can you bring us up to date on that process?

Mr Corbell: Yes. My department has established a process for examining options for the development of a second stage for the feed-in tariff. My department is leading an across-agency group, an across-government group, that is looking at issues associated with the potential expansion of the feed-in tariff. My department is also engaged in discussions with the ICRC to engage the ICRC to provide us with advice on some of the technical matters that they have expert knowledge on in relation to the cost drivers that exist in the market that would be of relevance to potential renewable energy generators, and the relationship of those with the feed-in tariffs. That is also occurring. I anticipate releasing a discussion paper in late July and then proceeding with development of stage 2 in the second half of this year.

THE CHAIR: You are now releasing a discussion paper in July. When is this advice to government due to be delivered, because presumably that would be something that goes to cabinet before you then release a discussion paper, or would that process come after, once the legislation has been developed?

Mr Corbell: The discussion paper I do not envisage will need to go to cabinet, but obviously a final government position will and that will occur in time for the government to know what the final arrangements are for stage 2 of a feed-in tariff before we take a decision on a preferred or successful operator for the solar power facility.

THE CHAIR: So late this year we are looking at this being brought to the Legislative Assembly?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Is that the broad time frame?

Mr Corbell: Yes, late this year.

THE CHAIR: What are some of the technical issues that you are dealing with with the ICRC?

Mr Corbell: The ICRC is able to give us good advice on what the cost structures are in the market. The ICRC understands the internal rate of returns and the various market factors that influence decisions by energy retailers and, in particular, energy generators because they look at those factors now when determining what is an appropriate return through the price for electricity. The ICRC understands many of these issues. It is a highly technical and complex area. I would not profess to have a full understanding of all of the factors that influence decisions around investment in the national electricity market, but the ICRC does have a good understanding of many of these factors and will be able to give advice to us on what are reasonable rates of

return and what are some of the other factors that are relevant for renewable energy generators in the national electricity market and to what extent the feed-in tariff should be there to assist.

THE CHAIR: When I received a briefing on this issue—and just going back to the residential feed-in tariff aspect—one of the questions I put was around costs. It was put to me that, based on 1,500 homes, it was between \$9 and \$16 extra for every one per year. From memory, that was the range that we were given. I then asked the question: if we had 15,000, would that mean we would see 90 to 160—that is, 10 times the amount? The answer I was given was curious and I would like to explore it. The answer was: no, because the rate of the tariff would be revised downwards as more people took it up. That was the impression I was given. Are you able to comment on whether that would be the position going forward?

Mr Corbell: Certainly the general, theoretical underpinning of a feed-in tariff is that the premium price is designed to reduce over time for new entrants. Obviously, if someone signs up at a particular premium price at a particular point in time they are guaranteed that price for 20 years.

THE CHAIR: For 20 years.

Mr Corbell: So it does not affect their contracts. But the whole theoretical underpinning of the feed-in tariff is that it is something that will reduce over time as the uptake of the technology increases and therefore the cost of buying and installing the technology goes down. So it is logical to assume that the premium price will decline over time. The act provides for annual review and for the minister to determine the premium price on a yearly basis.

It does not mean, though, that the price will automatically trend down over time. It will be contingent on whether or not the government and the minister responsible feel that the policy objectives are being achieved and there is not the same need for the same level of subsidy, effectively, in the premium price—or not. Those will be the factors that are at play. It is not automatically the case that the price will go down, but theoretically that is how feed-in tariffs are structured.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, has any progress been made on facilitation of the establishment of the Spark Solar plant in the ACT?

Mr Corbell: I have had some discussions with representatives of Spark Solar in the last six months in relation to that matter. Primary carriage of that matter, though, is with the business development area of the Chief Minister's Department. It is fundamentally a business assistance matter. The business development area in Chief Minister's has carriage of that matter, but I have met with Spark Solar and discussed with them what their interest is in the territory and what they feel their requirements are. I have certainly made representations on those matters.

MRS DUNNE: I will take it up with the business minister.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: I was just curious about the interest from the industry and residents in the feed-in tariff.

Mr Corbell: There have been strong levels of interest from industry and the community. We are seeing a significant influx of new operators into the market who either sell or install solar panels at a domestic level. The number of solar installations has increased by almost 21 per cent in the first three months of the scheme. There are now just over 700 installations in the territory, which is a growth of 121 since 1 March. So we are certainly seeing a pick-up. Obviously the feed-in tariff is a very attractive mechanism.

What is also interesting, however, is that not all customers with an existing solar installation have yet signed up to a premium feed-in contract with their retailer. People who installed perhaps some time ago, well before the commencement of the scheme, are yet to take up a contract with their electricity retailer. That probably indicates that people who have installed to date have done so for reasons other than the price they will get on their electricity. They have done so because they believe it is something they wish to do; they want to make the investment, and the return on the investment is not a significant factor for them. But we anticipate that over time existing installations will be fully signed up to their relevant retailer.

The Australian Energy Regulator has accepted ActewAGL's distributions claim for an amount of nearly \$50 million over five years to cover the costs to them of making the feed-in payment and this is on a basis of a sustained growth rate of about 50 per cent per annum in installations. The national energy regulator, the price regulator, has accepted ActewAGL's assessment that there will be a 50 per cent increase in the number of installations each year for the next five years.

MRS DUNNE: Does that mean, minister, that people who have not signed up to the premium tariff are receiving or availing themselves of the old tariff arrangement, or don't we know?

Mr Corbell: ActewAGL will probably be able to tell us that. My understanding is they would be under the previous arrangements being offered by ActewAGL, given that almost all of our domestic customers are with ActewAGL.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, I was just wondering what input the department will have to the bushfire management plan.

Mr Corbell: My department has had significant input into that, as have Parks, Conservation and Lands in Territory and Municipal Services. Indeed, PCL have the most significant input outside of the ESA, given that they are the land manager and have responsibility for the land management and therefore the fuel management regime in territory-owned land. My department has had involvement at a broader policy level, but I think primarily it has been between PCL and ESA.

The government is, however, doing some work looking at vulnerabilities in the ACT as a result of climate change and one of those is an increase in severe fire weather days. We know that there will be an increase, potentially a significant increase, in the total number of severe fire weather days in the ACT as a consequence of climate change over the next 25 to 50 years.

MR SMYTH: What recommendations have you made? Now that you are a central agency, does your department get to review such a plan, given the impact bushfires have on the environment?

Mr Corbell: The plan will be considered by the whole of government through cabinet, and my department will have a role in providing advice to government as part of our overall consideration of the plan once it is put to cabinet. At the moment the plan is in draft form and is out for public comment. Once that process is complete, the finalised plan will be submitted by me as Minister for Police and Emergency Services to the cabinet. At that point in time there will be the opportunity for whole-of-government assessment of it.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: This could be very quick. Weathering the change action plan No 20 was about mandatory solar hot water systems for houses. I am asking about progress in this. Have you consulted with your agencies on incorporating greenhouse-friendly technologies into new buildings as per your last strategy progress report? If so, what were the recommendations to government and, in particular, on hot water? If not, when will you have these recommendations?

Mr Corbell: I will just find the relevant action plan, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: I believe 20 is the number.

Mr Corbell: Primary responsibility for this matter rests with ACTPLA, given its building regulation and development control function, but work is occurring in a number of other fora as well. There are discussions through the Ministerial Council on Energy on a national framework for energy efficiency and upgrading of minimum energy performance standards for a range of domestic appliances, including gas hot water units. A national hot water strategy is being developed through that process. It is actively involved in that process. Mr Butt can probably give you some more information in relation to that.

Mr Butt: Through the MCE, the work is being done to phase out electric hot water systems and to replace them with solar and other forms. The only jurisdiction that will not be participating in that program will be Tasmania. That is because their electricity is hydro-based and they have poor solar performance. The policy is going to be given effect through building and plumbing regulations.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can it be fully implemented through the BCA? I suppose this is a question I have to ask my colleague; it is probably getting a bit too technical.

Mr Corbell: I think it is envisaged that it will be fully implemented through the BCA.

There will be COAG level agreement on the policy and then it will be implemented through the BCA.

MS LE COUTEUR: That will include replacement?

Mr Corbell: Include replacement?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Corbell: I think—

MS LE COUTEUR: I think the answer is it cannot.

Mr Butt: The policy initially will go to all new systems and then, as systems get replaced, they will have to comply with it.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Mr Rattenbury. Then I think we will wrap it up and move to the commissioner.

MR RATTENBURY: This may be a quick one: action 24 of the weathering the change action plan speaks about reporting into triple-bottom-line tendering for land release and notes that a report will be produced by 2008. I have not been able to find that. Perhaps you could give me an update on where that is up to.

Mr Corbell: Land release policy is coordinated largely through the Chief Minister's portfolio now. The Land Development Agency obviously report through the Chief Minister, and that applies to the land release strategy overall. That is a matter that is being looked at by CMD, and they are investigating schemes in place in other Australian jurisdictions to develop a similar framework for the ACT.

THE CHAIR: But you would play a role in that, would you not, minister?

Mr Corbell: Absolutely, but, as I say, my department is not able to introduce—nor is it appropriate—and develop every single policy in the climate change strategy. Climate change policy sits across a range of portfolios—planning, land release, transport, housing. Not all of these are the direct portfolio responsibility of my department. My department's job is to coordinate and to work with other agencies on implementation where appropriate.

MR RATTENBURY: Who chases up the fact that this is well behind schedule?

Mr Corbell: Those are matters that my department is responsible for, and we are revising the coordination arrangements within government where all chief executives meet through a coordinating group to report on progress against the strategy.

THE CHAIR: We will leave it there. We thank you, departmental officials. We will now move to the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Are you staying for this, Simon?

Mr Corbell: I was staying for this, but unless you need me, I might—

THE CHAIR: I think we would probably just prefer to have the commissioner to ask questions about you and your performance. So thank you, minister, as well.

Mr Corbell: Thank you.

Appearances:

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
Cooper, Dr Maxine, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

THE CHAIR: We welcome Dr Maxine Cooper from the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Dr Cooper, you are welcome to make an opening statement, and could you also acknowledge that you have read and understood the privilege statement?

Dr Cooper: I have read the privilege statement and, yes, I understand it.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement?

Dr Cooper: Yes, I would. What I would like to say is that it has been my first full year as the commissioner and I must say it has been an incredibly busy year. Looking back, we did a lot of the work on the ACT lowland native grasslands and we produced that report in March. In August last year we produced the *ACT state of the environment report*. In November we produced the regional state of the environment report. We have also been working with the regional people and people in the ACT in trying to focus on sustainability. In doing that, we are producing a paper which we hope to launch on World Environment Day. There is quite a collective approach.

Also, one of the surprises for us this year has been a 300 per cent increase in the complaints that we have had to deal with. That is 18, but when you have gone up from six to 18 we have been a tad little busy. In that process around complaints, I will just say that I think the reason for that is just the general awareness of the fact that we exist now and also the issues in the community. I will say that our approach is not one of having a look and that is it; we actually take a mediation approach. The demands on the office in that regard have been significant.

We have also consulted widely on the role of the office. The office consulted with at least 20 major groups across the city in that consultation process. We also commissioned a paper independently on catchments. That paper is going on with where the future role of the office will go. We also initiated in the place where we reside at the Dickson motor vehicle registry office a going green program. There is not much point in measuring our energy and waste et cetera alone. It is like if your neighbours are not all doing something, although you might make a difference, it is better to take all your neighbours with you, so we have engaged in that program. Also, we have been out and about, in terms of raising awareness, to 40-odd events across the city. So that has been our first full year, Mr Seselja.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Cooper. I will move to Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. Recommendation 1b of your *State of the environment report* says that the commissioner's office annually assesses the progress made in implementing the weathering the change program and, in particular, the ACT government's progress towards carbon neutrality. What was your understanding of the government's progress in terms of developing an approach towards carbon neutrality

in its own operations?

Dr Cooper: What we are looking for in that is a whole-of-government framework to bring it together. There is reporting in various components in their annual reports, but in order to help us to understand the more macro level in terms of overall progress, there is a need for the reporting systems to be somewhat more streamlined. Because of the other work that we have done in terms of programming, we are actually looking at doing an assessment and an audit on what is being reported out there, to help us understand the data that is available. That will certainly be something that we would, as in all our work, be putting out broadly in terms of the information we get.

MS LE COUTEUR: So would you envisage that that would perhaps lead to a change to the Chief Minister's reports directions, or how do you think the ACT government actually should be reporting this information?

Dr Cooper: We actually make recommendations, as you know. It is up to the government to accept them or not. Certainly, in looking at the overall assessment of it in the next few months, we will probably make recommendations. Again, our approach is continuous improvement, certainly in the reporting. We have problems in our own area. We are actually part of the motor vehicle registry office; we are actually not an office. Although we occupy space in that building, if you look at our energy use it is absolutely through the roof. But we average it out across the building in terms of the way it is all apportioned. So you have to look at different situations in terms of what you are getting your data on.

MS LE COUTEUR: Getting away from just the issues of finding the data, do you have any views on the government's approach and its progress towards meeting these goals, given the limited data we have?

Dr Cooper: Given the annual report that we put out last time, just in terms of the energy efficiency fund—I think it is \$1 million—we clearly said last time in our annual report that it is not happening.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, it is not being used.

Dr Cooper: I think our role in terms of reporting publicly is very clear. They are the kinds of things I would imagine the Assembly would expect of us—that is, to be able to assess and give out information.

MS LE COUTEUR: In terms of review mechanisms for what the government is doing with sustainability, would you see your *State of the environment report* being the main way you would do that?

Dr Cooper: I think you need two levels of reports. The *State of the environment report* is every four years, and we try and capture in that the outcomes, the overall progress. But when the government have committed to certain programs aimed at those outcomes I think you would also need to look at how they are enforcing those and how they are achieving those. Part of the problem we have got at the moment on some of the sustainability issues, as we all know, is not acting fast enough to implement some of the actions that people are promoting.

MS LE COUTEUR: You would envisage annual reviews of some projects; is that what you are talking about?

Dr Cooper: You might want an annual review on some of what they report in their annual reports in terms of looking at how valid is that information and is it actually measuring something we want to measure. Then you might actually consider doing it biennially in a more detailed way.

MS LE COUTEUR: You would be envisaging your office would do that?

Dr Cooper: We certainly do, and it has been made very clear under weathering the change that we have a role in that regard. That is why we have initiated the assessment audit to look at what information is out there. We have also got another major project going, and that is looking at indicators—that is, what should you be measuring and how often.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. Given the limited information you have got, would you think that ACT government agencies are reducing their ecological footprints?

Dr Cooper: The overall measure that we have got for Canberra as a whole indicates the opposite.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Dr Cooper: Between the last two measures, we have had a 15 per cent increase. I have not got data to segment it against just the government, but I think, as the mirror of society, it is an upward trend at the moment when we want a downward.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs Dunne, and then Ms Burch.

MRS DUNNE: Dr Cooper, you have completed extensive work in relation to the lowland native grasslands. One of the initial impetuses for that was the overgrazing of kangaroos, but it has wider application. In putting together that material and dealing with, say, areas like the Belconnen naval transmission station and the Majura area, were you aware of the existence of an MOU between Environment ACT, as it then was, the Department of Defence and the commonwealth environment department?

Dr Cooper: Yes, we looked at the MOUs. We also looked at whether they were being actioned, how often and what had happened. It did seem that there was a lot of energy put into the MOUs and that in the past few years the actioning of them had not been in accordance with the MOUs. That is actually addressed in the grassland report. It was so voluminous, I would prefer to actually go back, if you do not mind, and send you where it is in the report.

MRS DUNNE: No, I can find it in the report.

Dr Cooper: It is definitely in there.

MRS DUNNE: I do not recall having seen it in the report.

Dr Cooper: One of the recommendations is that the MOUs that are in existence should be updated first and then actioned. We also noted that there were some areas not covered by MOUs that should also be covered.

MRS DUNNE: Good. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Rattenbury, you had a follow-up on this?

MR RATTENBURY: I would like to ask a number of questions on the grassland report, if I can—

THE CHAIR: Well, we might come back to that—

MS BURCH: No, no.

THE CHAIR: Okay, I will go to Mr Rattenbury then.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. Commissioner, your report on the grasslands was very comprehensive. I wonder if you could just talk me through, briefly, how the recommendations in the report were arrived at.

Dr Cooper: Yes. The process for the Belconnen site was that we had a very diverse group of people on a reference panel. For that particular site we knew that kangaroo management would be a key issue, so for that particular site we tried to deal with the kangaroo management issues and used the information from that for then looking at kangaroo management issues across all the grassland sites. So we had a reference group. Then for the overall, the other 49 sites, we also had a reference group consisting of some of those members but not all of them.

We did not take into the next level of analysis the people who had the focus on some of the animal management, because we had covered that so extensively in the first one. So we actually had this external, if you like, peer referencing group. Through the work that we did undertake, the Department of Defence also had a reference group and at one stage we combined their reference group with our reference group when it was perceived in the public that there was a conflict, and we found that there was not a conflict, which actually helped align the actions that needed to be taken.

We engaged an ecologist, Dr Ken Hodgkinson, who then went and assessed each of the sites. We held a roundtable meeting at the beginning with all the interest groups and asked them for their opinions. We called for public submissions. When individuals wanted to meet with us or groups wanted to meet with us, we spent days and hours meeting with them, hearing their perspective on things. There was ongoing discussion with commonwealth agencies. We had a roundtable meeting and we would have had eight executives from different arms of the commonwealth. We walked them through what the issues were and their policies. We had agency representatives at roundtable meetings. There was an enormous amount of sharing of information. We also engaged with key experts who were not part of any of those processes, when we

needed them. So we canvassed a huge amount of information from a large number of people. Then, after Dr Hodgkinson did his field assessments, we combined the information as reflected in the report and then I went through the recommendations with a reference group. I then went on holiday for a month and reflected on the recommendations.

MR RATTENBURY: That sounds like a great way to work.

Dr Cooper: I think that, having spent such an intense time on a report like that, you do need to step away from it to check that you have got everything covered. Then I approached it by looking at strategic issues in terms of long-term protection, the land management issues, issues around MOUs and what mechanisms needed to be upgraded or put into place and, importantly under the land management agreements, some of those from my opinion needed the agency PCL to actually enforce. That enforcement was not obvious. So there is a mixture of recommendations both at the strategic level as well as at the operational level. Then also, importantly, looking across the region, we need an offset policy. We identified lands which you would consider as the offset sites for investing in if you actually developed some grassland sites.

MR RATTENBURY: One specific area I would like to ask you about is the question of ecological burns. The consultant who wrote the report or who, I guess, did the field assessments made some very specific recommendations about sites that should be burned this autumn, but your recommendation translated into something less specific and was not in the urgent list of recommendations.

Dr Cooper: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Can I ask if you have reservations about conducting ecological burns. For the purposes of *Hansard*, Dr Cooper just shook her head. That being the case, why did it slip from the consultants saying, “We should do it this year; it’s important for regeneration,” to sort of, I guess, not making the cut in terms of your final list?

Dr Cooper: That was done on further advice from other experts, so I had one expert give a particular perspective and then when we would discuss it with some other experts it was felt that there was a need for the community and there was a need for planning around these, in terms of the management of how they would be undertaken, to have a bit of time to work that through fully. None of the sites—I would have to go back and check—that were recommended for ecological burns was in a critical condition that depended upon that particular form of land management. I have just checked and that is right, yes. So, in order to get it right, because they are experimental, in as much as we have not done them on the scale that I am proposing in the ACT, it was suggested that the agencies have some time to get it as right as possible and then do it.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. Just one last question on this: you have made quite a few recommendations in the report about specific sites and what is required. Do you now have a role in monitoring government performance on implementing the recommendations from here on?

Dr Cooper: My understanding is I do. The government is yet to respond to the report. My understanding is my obligation to the Assembly and to the community is to report on the implementation, in my annual report, and I will certainly be monitoring that.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, then Mr Smyth.

MS BURCH: Just on that, you made comment about agencies needing, if they are going to do it, to get it right. There is a dialogue between your office and them about how that will be. That is up to them to determine—

Dr Cooper: That is right. Then we will monitor to make sure that the action has actually happened. In the process of developing these recommendations, I did speak with ESA to ensure that what we were proposing was practical from their perspective as well as the ecological, and the answer was yes.

MS BURCH: Okay. Thank you. You made the comment that you were raising awareness and that could lead, in part, to the increase in some of your activity. You had 40 events. Can you just tell us who that was with and what they were?

Dr Cooper: Yes. They range. I have met with community groups, the Gungahlin community type people. I go to things like SEE-Change. So when the opportunity presents, we certainly will support those kinds of activities. We ran our own walk with the community for earth hour and invited people to join us on those kinds of activities. We very much link in with the AuSSI in schools program, the sustainable schools program, and we have had a youth ambassadors initiative, to try and get information out and behavioural change occurring.

MS BURCH: What is the youth ambassador program?

Dr Cooper: It is a group of young people who have connections right through the youth sector. In this particular proposal we are working with the commissioner for youth. It is going to be a joint project between that commissioner's office and our office. On the 18th of next month they are running—they are running; we are empowering—a forum whereby we are sourcing the ideas of the youth in terms of sustainability issues for the ACT. Then with their communication networks we will take it out more broadly. They have flagged that potentially they would like a forum of wise people and people in power to sit around and listen to their ideas and then see what ideas get taken up.

MS BURCH: Sounds good.

Dr Cooper: Yes, thanks.

MS BRESNAN: What work have you done with the AuSSI in schools program?

Dr Cooper: Mainly in a support capacity. We look at them in terms of their market being mainly in the primary schools. We are working with youth to fill more the

teenagers through to the young adults. We are looking at the kind of material they have. We share our material from our *State of the environment report* and we are also at the moment going to be producing some material that they may use as well as what we use for our youth forum.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: In your introductory comments you talked about a 300 per cent increase in complaints. Can you give the committee a breakdown of where the complaints come from and what the nature of the complaints was?

Dr Cooper: I can, Mr Smyth. The complaints are varied, and for confidentiality reasons we do not mention the names of the complainant. I will just run through them. We had a complaint regarding the 2020 education policy and its effect in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We had one on Nettlefold Street at Belconnen.

MRS DUNNE: That was me.

Dr Cooper: Well, you could respond to how well we responded to that. We had a Chifley resident with a disability regarding the effect of a gum tree on that person's mobility. We have had a noise complaint regarding air conditioning in O'Connor. We have had weed control on rural leases and roadside verges. We have had the development proposed at block 241, Paddys River; I think that is for the Indigenous centre. We have had some complaints around the management of fluid waste and leachate at the two landfill sites. We have had a complaint about a bore being shut off by the EPA; the complainant felt it was not justified. We have had one around the adequacy of the material put forward in the assessment process for the CTC, the Canberra Technology Centre. We have had a complaint about poor management of Canberra south side nature parks and a complaint about the removal of a large gum tree.

We had issues around—some of these are still ongoing—renewal processes for kangaroo cull licensing; we have had two complaints in that area. We have had complaints about loud music and how that was handled by the EPA; environmental and health concerns on one project; and then we have had a really interesting one, which is a complaint against the weathering the change policy, about it not taking into account retrofitting buildings to reduce greenhouse emissions and what could we do about it. We are at the moment working that one through, and I will share with you our process for working through complaints.

We have had a complaint about some grasslands and also we have recently had one to do with the plastic milk crates that milk is delivered in all ending up in landfill.

MR SMYTH: How many of the complaints were at the minister's direction?

Dr Cooper: None.

MR SMYTH: Any from departmental requests?

Dr Cooper: None. These are all complaints, usually about the government or the

government agency, by the citizens of Canberra.

MR SMYTH: All right. Did the minister make any directions in the last year?

Dr Cooper: Sorry, no, not on any of this. The minister would be hearing this for the first time.

MR SMYTH: Okay. The issue of block 241, Paddys River: are we allowed to know the nature of the complaint? Can you tell us the process you followed?

Dr Cooper: The process is the same for all. The nature of that was the impact on some of the surrounding environment, particularly the management of the water.

MR SMYTH: Okay. When you investigate a complaint, does the response only go to the complainant, or can other people find out?

Dr Cooper: Other people can find out when we do a summary in our annual report. We are actually toying with the idea, Mr Smyth, of getting a new website design. We are thinking about putting the summaries up on that as we deal with them so that it is available. We are also thinking of putting things up like your question about what are we doing in awareness and that. So we are trying to get a website that will allow immediate information.

MR SMYTH: Fine. Is the committee allowed a copy of your response to the complaint on 241 if it has been resolved?

Dr Cooper: I will just have to check with my team where they are at with it. Can we take that on notice and come back to you, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Yes, sure.

MS BURCH: Or a summary that you would be prepared to put on the website?

Dr Cooper: We are happy to do that, yes. Our process?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Dr Cooper: If we get a complaint about the agency, we ask the agency for its perspective on the complaint. Because we try and have a mediation-type role rather than a judgemental role alone, what we will do is go back to the complainant and say: "This is the information we have from the agency about that complaint. What is your response to that?" On some occasions—not all, but some occasions—we then write a summary report, and we then share it with both parties. Then, if there is a need, we will bring both parties together and try and identify actions that may take us to the future. If there are issues of a systemic or policy nature, I then write to the agencies. A good example has to do with the one that concerns the tree and the disability person. I wrote to three agencies on that; as a result of that, two of those agencies responded in a very positive way.

MR SMYTH: All right. What happens where, for instance, you make a

recommendation to an agency and it is not followed? What redress do you have?

Dr Cooper: I do not think I have much redress, but I have a lot of tenacity in terms of following through. The fact that I have to report against these in my annual report is a very powerful mechanism. However, it can be frustrating if my recommendation is not implemented in a timely manner, which did occur on one occasion and which caused a person a lot of distress.

MR SMYTH: You mentioned that it is a 300 per cent increase, so 18 this year and six last year. What has it been in the years before that? Do you recall?

Dr Cooper: I think it was more around three or four.

MR SMYTH: Is there any reason for this sudden increase in complaints that you are aware of?

Dr Cooper: I think it is general awareness within the community on issues that are now getting more complex to solve. That is why we are going to very much take a mediation approach, because the objective is to improve it if there is a systems issue. Sometimes we actually say to the people involved who have complained, "Sorry; there's no issue here." But we still have to go through the whole process. Sometimes we will suggest that they might modify their behaviour.

MR SMYTH: Of the 18, can you tell us which you found in favour of the complainant and which you did not?

Dr Cooper: I would have to go back. Can I take that on notice?

MR SMYTH: Take that on notice; that is fine.

Dr Cooper: A lot of these are still active.

MR SMYTH: Yes; okay.

Dr Cooper: We are still working through them.

MRS DUNNE: I was not asked to modify my behaviour.

MR SMYTH: You have only got six staff. What impact is a 300 per cent increase in complaints having on your ability to do the other functions that you have?

Dr Cooper: We are actually, I think, managing it very well. It is often a timing issue. Often with these you have to wait for information from the agency. I must say that the agencies have been exceptionally good, because sometimes the questions are quite detailed. It is just a matter of managing it. I think we have adequate resources to fulfil the requirements expected of us.

MS BURCH: You made mention that you could run us through a summary of the process for the complaints as they come in.

Dr Cooper: The process is that we actually communicate—

MR SMYTH: She just did that.

Dr Cooper: That is fine; I will repeat it. We communicate with the agency the complaint is made against. We seek clarification from them of their perspective of the complaint. We then share that information with the complainant. Then, if the complainant still feels it has been inadequate, we may go back to the agency. On a couple of occasions—sorry: one more point I did not mention, Mr Smyth—I have called in an independent expert to give me advice independent of whatever is going on with the agency. Then we share that independent advice with the agency. Then, if needed, we have a mediation process. Then I make my recommendations.

THE CHAIR: I think, Dr Cooper, if I heard you correctly before, you expressed frustration with one of the complaints in terms of the response. What was the nature of that complaint and which agency was it?

Dr Cooper: The complaint involved three agencies. It involved initially ACTPLA, DHCS and TAMS. It is the complaint around a disabled person being adversely impacted by a tree. It involved those three agencies. There was an agreement about a year ago when she first contacted my office; the agreement was that the tree was not to be taken out. TAMS did not wish that. Therefore, DHCS, being responsible for public housing, agreed to put an awning in. A year later, that awning had not been put in, but it is doubtful now whether that would have solved the problem anyway. It was something that should have been advanced, and it was not. I have recently got an independent view on that particular tree, and it has been recommended for removal. The tree, though, I understand, is also in the stages of suffering some health issues.

THE CHAIR: This is after a year of this person—

Dr Cooper: It was actually three; this was a three-year saga. The woman had tried to complain through the various agencies for about a year. Then we became involved. We managed to come up with a solution. We put to the agency some options. One of the options was this awning; the other option was to remove it. More recently, when the awning was not actioned, another branch fell. This person uses a wheelchair and it has a significant impact on her. She had also had bees from the tree in her bed, and she relies upon breathing apparatus, so it was quite traumatic for her. I am pleased to say that, as of today, we were able to phone her to say that the agency has agreed to remove the tree.

THE CHAIR: After three years.

Dr Cooper: It was not three years with us, obviously; I have been there for only a year. It does raise issues around the need for some flexibility when you are dealing with some of those tree issues.

THE CHAIR: Indeed. Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: Dr Cooper, I understand that there has been some discussion—you made reference to this in your opening comments—about the role of

the commissioner.

Dr Cooper: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: I also understand that there was a report to you on the need to include water catchment issues in your brief, and you also mentioned that. I wonder if you could tell us what were the key recommendations of that report, whether that report has gone to government and whether you have had any feedback from the government on the role of the office.

Dr Cooper: We are to submit a report to government around the end of June or the beginning of July, so nothing has gone to government yet. We are in the final stages of putting together material for the role of the office in its refinement. The catchment paper has not gone to government yet; that was done independently. It certainly canvasses the role of the office in terms of reporting on water supply catchments, and it talks around issues about whether or not there should be a biennial report to do with the health of the water supply catchments. It is quite a comprehensive report; we will submit that report in its entirety, along with any report we put forward to government. I felt that that was so important, given some of the previous discussion around the role of the commissioner, that we got somebody independent in to do that for us, Mr Darro Stinson.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Any further questions from members?

MS BURCH: Can I just ask this? Three years sounds like an extraordinary amount of time, and far too long. Are you able to give an average? They do not all take three years?

Dr Cooper: Sorry?

MS BURCH: Managing complaints—

Dr Cooper: No, no. I think that that was in the extreme. If you did your statistical analysis, it would be one of the out-liers. Remember that we have not had the complaint for three years; this has been a person who has been frustrated with the issue for three years. I think the agencies on the whole do a very good job in dealing with complaints, but there are certain things—like with the EPA's one—and certain procedures under legislation that they have to go through. For instance, with noise, they have to have recordings of three incidents where the noise is exceeded before they can then take action. Some of the community members get frustrated at that, but that is the due process, which is pretty much the norm.

THE CHAIR: That appears to be all the questions we have. Thank you very much, Dr Cooper. We appreciate your time. We will adjourn until 9 am tomorrow morning.

The committee adjourned at 5.37 pm.