



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

FRIDAY, 29 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

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| Chief Minister's Department | 1354 |
| Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services | 1354 |

Privilege statement

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

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Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 9.17 am.

Appearances:

Hargreaves, Mr John, Minister for Disability and Housing, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Corrections

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Hehir, Mr Martin, Chief Executive

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

Matthews, Mr David, Director, Housing ACT

Ford, Ms Lois, Executive Director, Disability ACT

Whale, Mr Andrew, Director, Disability ACT

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Director, Finance and Budget, Policy and Organisational Services

Hyland, Mr Bob, Financial Controller, Housing and Community Services ACT

Collett, Mr David, Director, Asset Management

Manikis, Mr Nic, Director, Multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Chief Minister's Department

Hudson, Ms Catherine, Deputy Chief Executive, Governance, Commissioner for Public Administration

Gotts, Mr Robert, Acting Director, Office of Industrial Relations

Collins, Mr Phil, Registrar, ACT Construction Industry and ACT Contract Cleaning Industry Long Service Boards

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates. This morning the committee is meeting with the Minister for Disability and Housing and departmental officials from the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. As previously advised, the committee has agreed that where answers are inordinately long we will ask the individual to conclude and wrap it up. Before we proceed to questions, could people confirm that they have read and understood the privilege statement? Thank you. Before we proceed to questions from the committee, minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I would. I beg the committee's indulgence on one level: I want to make an opening statement, but I will do both disability and housing at the same time. That will save us doing two. Is that okay?

THE CHAIR: Fine; sure.

Mr Hargreaves: I thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to discuss budget measures pertaining to my portfolio responsibility of Housing and Disability Services.

In regard to housing, under my guidance Housing ACT has continued to improve service delivery to public housing tenants and applicants and to deliver on the

government's ongoing reform for social housing. We now have a housing assistance program that is more targeted and responsive to the various needs of people accessing services.

The capital program is something I want to talk about. Underpinning our housing system is a comprehensive capital works program; services focused on helping our tenants who have complex needs to sustain their tenancies; and an unprecedented injection of funds from the commonwealth government via the national partnership agreements and the national building and jobs plan.

Housing ACT will receive significant funding in 2009-10 and the forward years under the national partnership agreements associated with the national affordable housing agreement, which came into effect on 1 January 2009. The additional funds are targeted to expand the supply of social housing and assist with addressing homelessness in the territory. The total increase in funding under the national partnership agreements is almost \$122 million, of which \$110.5 million is capital funding and \$11.5 million is recurrent.

One of these, the social housing national partnership agreement, delivers \$6.4 million to provide long-term sustainable housing to homeless families. This funding will provide 20 additional social housing dwellings that are accessible, meet universal design housing principles and are environmentally sustainable—being energy and water efficient, including having rainwater tanks and energy efficient appliances, such as hot-water systems and heating systems. This builds on an earlier ACT government initiative to improve energy and water efficiency in public housing, including the provision of \$20 million provided over 10 years for energy efficiency initiatives. Some \$3.3 million has thus far been expended, and Housing ACT has developed a 10-year action plan to deliver the energy efficiency program in total.

Under the nation building stimulus package, Housing ACT will receive \$102.7 million over the next three years to repair and maintain dwellings so they continue to be used as public housing rather than being sold—that is \$6.4 million—and provide an extra 320 dwellings to house homeless families and low-income, high-needs families in the ACT—\$96.3 million. A substantial investment of housing resources is also required to deliver the 320 dwellings that the Australian government requires to be built with the \$96.3 million.

Under the homelessness national partnership agreement, capital funding of \$5 million over five years commencing in 2008-09 is provided by the Australian government, which is matched by the ACT, to provide additional public housing under the “a place called home” homelessness initiative. In the 2008-09 third appropriation, the ACT accelerated the program by providing \$2.5 million in 2008-09 to acquire the land to build the first 10 dwellings over 2008-09 and 2009-10. The remaining 10 dwellings will be provided over the three years 2010-11 to 2012-13. Recurrent funding of \$5.064 million, matched by the ACT, is also provided under the homelessness NP.

Inclusive of the national partnership funds, Housing ACT's capital program is \$151 million, which will provide funds to start construction on 230 new properties, with the purchase of 222 homes, the bulk of which will be completed by December 2010. In addition, \$12.9 million will be expended on upgrades and improvements.

Some \$43 million will be spent on the repair, maintenance and upgrade of public housing, largely through the total facilities management contract, with an expected \$27.1 million to be spent on planned works and upgrades to the Housing ACT portfolio.

In addition to the capital expenditure, the homelessness national partnership agreement will enable the following initiatives to be implemented to assist in reducing homelessness in the territory: community outreach for rough sleepers to assist rough sleepers to engage with mainstream services and achieve long-term stable and sustainable housing; building housing partnerships, which delivers a range of services and support to vulnerable families to improve their living skills and enable them to undertake training and find employment; expanding transitional housing to provide an additional 10 exit points from crisis accommodation to ensure that the emergency accommodation is available to those most in need and creating additional pathways to long-term appropriate housing; the housing and accommodation support initiative, HASI, to provide long-term stable housing with appropriate support and assistance for those with mental health issues; a centralised intake service to ensure that access for homeless and housing services can be accessed through a single point; housing assistance for victims of domestic violence by removing the perpetrators and ensuring that the victims are provided with safe and secure long-term accommodation; and a youth foyer model which provides transitional housing and support for young people to maintain stable housing and engage with education and employment opportunities.

The ACT has led the way in addressing homelessness. The ACT's homelessness strategy, breaking the cycle, was launched in 2004 and the final report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in June 2008. The strategy delivered a range of reforms to the homelessness sector, including additional sector capacity and new service models to respond to homelessness.

Building on the outcomes of breaking the cycle, the ACT is well placed to continue a leading role in delivering innovative approaches to addressing homelessness through partnerships between government and the community sector. Over the last four years, 50 houses have been allocated to homelessness services; there are some 44 homelessness services in the ACT, including accommodation, outreach and other support services.

The government has not shied away from the difficult issue of youth homelessness, with funding being provided to fund 14 youth services through the supported accommodation assistance program.

Turning to the management of our public housing tenancies, we do this so successfully by working in partnership with our tenants and our community sector. I would like to commend the excellent work done by Housing ACT's major tenant participation forum, the joint champions group. This group comprises some 80 tenants representing a broad spectrum of tenant interests which meets regularly with Housing ACT staff. During 2008-09, the group continue to provide high-level advice and feedback on policy and procedural matters, including input into a review of tenant responsible maintenance procedures for Housing ACT.

For many of the most disadvantaged in our community, Housing ACT remains the housing of last resort, with the majority of new tenants in public housing—that is, 87 per cent—being those in greatest need. Housing ACT provides generous subsidies, with rental rebates being provided to eligible tenants to ensure that the tenant household does not pay more than 25 per cent of assessable household income or market rent, whichever is the lower. In 2008-09, over 88 per cent of tenants in public housing were provided with rental rebates. The total rental subsidy provided to tenants was over \$101 million. This compares to almost \$89 million in 2007-08. As at 25 May 2009, 5,165 Housing ACT tenant rental accounts were two weeks or more in advance.

Notwithstanding this, some of our tenants have difficulty in meeting their rental obligations, and Housing ACT manages rental arrears within a framework of sustaining tenancies by negotiating a repayment plan that is sustainable. Current rent accounts debt, excluding Currong, as at 25 May 2009, were as follows. The rental arrears amount to 1.6 per cent of the net annual rental income, which is \$1,279,052.83. Some 1,441 accounts, or about 12.8 per cent of all tenancies, are in debt. There are very few tenancies as a proportion of our total tenancies which owe over \$500. Some 551 tenancies have arrears in excess of \$500.

The great news, though, in terms of sustaining tenancies and avoiding evictions and homelessness is that the percentage of public housing tenancies over \$500 in arrears on an agreement to repay the debt is 82.13 per cent. Housing ACT has a process in place to advise tenants as soon as their rental account falls into arrears and to assist them to repay that debt. Eviction is a last resort and not the best outcome for tenants. It also imposes significant costs on the support services that will be needed to support the tenant if evicted—which, of course, are also funded by Housing ACT.

Given the circumstances of many tenants, it can take some time for a debt to be repaid. Therefore, debt levels will reduce only slowly. The overall purpose of the process is to offer assistance to tenants to help them meet their rental commitment and, when they experience financial problems, to ensure that they are given the opportunity to repay their arrears at an affordable amount. This assists tenants to retain their home and to avoid the possibility of homelessness.

Housing ACT also supports tenants to sustain their tenancies by working with a number of community partners and other government agencies to provide support services. These include advocacy groups such as Mental Health ACT, Care Inc Financial Counselling Service, the Public Trustee and the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre. Housing ACT funds a sustainable tenancies program under the community linkages program provided by Woden Community Services on Canberra's south side and Anglicare on the north side.

Despite the global financial crisis, the government has continued to progress to the development of a shared equity scheme for public housing tenants. This will allow public housing tenants the opportunity to partner with the government to buy their homes. A procurement process to engage a financial institution to provide first mortgage finance has commenced, and the first stage of the process closed at the end of March 2009. Tenders were received from the National Australia Bank, St George Bank Ltd, IMB Ltd and Community Sector Banking, which is Bendigo Bank. Stage 2

will commence this month and is expected to be concluded by the end of June this year.

As with housing, in the last five years the ACT government has made significant changes to disability services in the ACT. Through challenge 2014 and future directions 2004-09, we committed to improve the lives of people with disabilities, their families and carers. Challenge 2014, in particular, laid out a 10-year vision for disability in the ACT. It challenged the whole community, including the government, to take responsibility for effective change.

And much has changed for people with a disability. For example, people with disabilities and their families now have greater access to generic services, including an enhanced local area coordination network. Opportunities with the business, arts and sports communities have been enhanced to increase presence, participation and respect for people with disabilities across the community. People with disabilities and their families have also benefited from strengthened cross-government linkages. There has been a strong focus on early intervention through the development of a family-centred, flexible intensive response model and the development of a policy framework for children and young people with disabilities and their families.

We have worked to strengthen individuals, families and carers through initiatives such as the annual quality of life grants, the continued growth and development of the intensive treatment and support program and increased support for a number of family-governed networks. And there are long-term strategies to respond to and manage demand for specialist disability services through the young people in residential aged-care program.

There are now more transparent prioritisation processes for accessing funding and services. This includes the development of a comprehensive individual support package policy. Also, there is now a stronger voice for people with disability in policy development and decision making. Right now, there are new strategic priorities being consulted upon by the strategic governance group, and these priorities will guide policy, planning and service delivery for the next five years, 2009-14.

The government's track record in meeting the needs of people with a disability in the territory is evidenced by successful negotiation with the Australian government for a further \$15.23 million over five years under the new national disability agreement. This agreement commenced on 1 January this year. The funding will deliver additional accommodation, respite, community access and support services to people with disability in the ACT.

Disability ACT is also significantly advanced in a number of the priority reforms identified in the agreement, including early intervention and prevention, lifelong planning, increasing the independence and social participation of people with a disability and increasing the workforce capacity. The ACT is working proactively with the commonwealth, states and territories on other reform areas around quality improvement systems, population benchmarking and better measurement of needs, making older carers a priority, Indigenous access and service planning.

The ACT government funds individuals and services to best meet the needs of people

with a disability within the resources available and within the eligibility criteria as defined by our funding agreements, including those with the Australian government. These agreements do not include the expectation that all disability needs will be met.

This government has increased funding to disability services over the past seven years by 65 per cent, from \$41.5 million in 2002-03 to \$68.6 million in 2009-10. This increased funding has gone directly into services and supports for individuals and families. Accommodation and support places have increased by 31 per cent. Community support hours have increased by 55 per cent. Community access hours have increased by 70 per cent. Respite bed nights have increased by 11 per cent; flexible respite hours have increased by 96 per cent. The individual support packages, the ISP program, have doubled over the past five years.

This government has continued to support people with a disability through funding initiatives in the 2009-10 budget. We have allocated \$240,000 annually for special care packages for extraordinarily high need clients. This initiative supports future direction 3.4. It will be used to supplement the accommodation support options for the one or two clients each year who have highly specific needs and behavioural issues. These clients require a highly specialised approach and long-term measures. Capital funding has also been provided for the special purpose upgrade of a residential property.

The ACT companion card is an important and new initiative. It supports future direction 1.1. The card will enable people with a disability who need a carer at events and venues to participate without paying for the cost of—

THE CHAIR: Minister, this is getting quite lengthy.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I know, but I have got—

THE CHAIR: Is there a long way to go?

Mr Hargreaves: I have probably got about a minute—a minute and a half, maybe.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Chairman, I did ask your indulgence, and I do appreciate the gift.

Around \$104,000 annually has been allocated for the program. This is for the companion card. I announced on 26 May that the program will commence accepting cardholder applications in August this year. The program will be part of a national companion card scheme, making it possible for ACT cardholders to use their card in 1,800 businesses across Australia that currently accept the card.

The government is providing \$3 million over four years for the transition of individuals in hospitals in the community. It supports future directions 3.2 to 3.4.

Compared to other jurisdictions, we have got a good record of preventing inappropriate placement of young people with a disability into residential aged-care facilities. The ACT has a range of specialist, high-support accommodation options

provided through both government and community programs. Along with a priority in our ISP program, which has doubled over the past five years, the ACT has been successful in diverting young people who are at risk of being placed in inappropriate accommodation.

This funding will enable Disability ACT to further meet the needs of people who are at risk, in particular people who are in hospital and are ready for discharge. Disability ACT and ACT Health are already working closely together to prioritise the support needs and commence transitioning people to appropriate long-term housing and support arrangements. Each individual will have different needs; therefore, each support package will look different. The needs of each individual will determine how many people can be supported within the funding and what other programs and mechanisms can supplement the support arrangements, including housing modification, environmental controls, aid and equipment and family and natural supports.

Finally, the ACT government has allocated \$200,000 annually to a flexible support fund. This initiative supports future directions 2.4 and 3.2. It is an opportunity to bring together a range of existing grant programs aimed at providing enhanced quality of life through small, flexible support grants to individuals and their carers. These grants will fund practical initiatives that enhance the ability of individuals and their carers to maintain and expand their natural support networks.

The initiatives in the 2009-10 budget continue to deliver on this government's commitment to improving the outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers, a commitment which has seen an increase to funding of disability services and support of 65 per cent since 2002.

Mr Chairman, I thank you and the committee for your patience and for your indulgence. I am happy to take questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: Before I do, I am quite happy for the secretary to have this, which might assist Hansard.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. For the information of members, given that we have got Disability and Housing, I would roughly like to split that up between before morning tea and after morning tea. We have gone a little bit over time with the statement; so that means it will push morning tea back a few minutes, but that is fine. It will depend on what questions there are. Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. My question goes to page 237 of budget paper 4, which is about the services provided by Disability ACT. I understand in 2006 the ACT government reviewed its role as an actual provider of disability services. I also understand that non-government organisations that were funded to provide disability services were audited to make sure that they meet the disability service standards. My question is: do the services actually provided by Disability ACT have to meet the disability service standards, and what audits have been conducted or will be conducted to ensure the standards are met?

Mr Hargreaves: The short answer is that it would be totally inappropriate for us to require other people to meet a standard we do not achieve ourselves. I will ask Lois Ford, executive director responsible for disability matters, to respond directly to your question, though.

Ms Ford: Yes, the disability services that we provide are required to meet the national disability service standards. Those standards are implicit in our policies and procedures, that all of our policies and procedures match back to the national disability standards. We have undertaken the self-assessment audit that all of the other community providers were asked to undertake some time ago, and we continue to monitor the development of our services. We have had, as you would be aware, a recent audit of our respite services.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is purely self-assessment? I am aware of the Auditor-General's report. Is that the only external auditing? No-one accredits Disability ACT?

Ms Ford: We have not more recently done but will do into the future another audit of our services, yes, an independent audit. We do a random five audits of the non-government organisational community providers, and we intend to do one of our own services as well against the national disability service standards.

MS LE COUTEUR: But you are not accredited by anyone else?

Ms Ford: Disability services are not required to be accredited. Some of the community providers do become accredited but disability services are not required to have any particular accreditation. However, under our new service funding agreement with the commonwealth government, providers will be required to have a prerequisite accreditation. That is not going to be nationally determined. It will be determined by each state and territory as to what that framework will look like.

We are currently working on what we are calling a prequalification framework, which will cover all of the areas of accreditation that we would expect of a provider. It will cover things like organisational governance, compliance with standards and legislation, the way in which their services are set up, directly related to what it is they are actually delivering. So that is a process that we currently have in place of developing that prequalification.

That will have a considerable impost on our community providers. Therefore, we will need to negotiate with them very closely on what that framework will look like. But we will apply that to our own government-provided services as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: As well as the community?

Ms Ford: Yes, absolutely.

MR SMYTH: A supplementary question before you move on: if Disability was required to be accredited or the government chose to get accreditation, who would provide that accreditation?

Ms Ford: We would use the same process as we would use with community providers. So accreditation would naturally need to be done reasonably independently. Some of the discussion we have been having on the whole process of accreditation for community providers—internally, I might add—is how would that be done and who would do it. We would consider that our own services would be subjected to the same type of accreditation as community providers.

MR SMYTH: Who does that for the community providers?

Ms Ford: That is what I was saying. Currently, there is no accreditation process for community providers. There is no impost on community providers to have an accreditation system. Many of them do; many of them would use the ISO100 or do some different types of accreditation but there is not any regulation on that.

MR SMYTH: But the Healthcare Standards Council, when they accredit the hospitals, do not provide a similar service?

Ms Ford: No. I think that this is a really good move forward for us to have an accreditation framework. We were discussing this before it became something that needed to be done through our national partnership agreement. But we are very aware of the impost that that does put on, particularly, small community providers.

MS HUNTER: What support will the government be giving those providers to go through this process?

Ms Ford: We are still looking at what the framework would look like. We have not moved forward to how that would be implemented. We would be doing that in consultation with the community.

MS HUNTER: It would be part of the discussion?

Ms Ford: Absolutely. It would not be something that we would determine on our own.

Mr Hargreaves: One of the things that you might recall, in fact, when we did some reform in the housing sector about three years ago, is that we were aware that the capacity of the sector to actually engage people to assist in that process was not there and it would be inappropriate, in a way, for us to require change and then to expect people to stump up for the cost of that change. We actually allocated \$245,000 in that year to be applied directly to that process. So, if we are going to change the paradigm, we will make a budget submission for support funding to go out there and assist the process.

MS LE COUTEUR: Talking about changing the paradigm—hopefully you will not—what work has been undertaken to ensure that your services are Human Rights Act compliant?

Ms Ford: We have looked at our policies and procedures against human rights services. We have a person employed in our policy area who is a human rights lawyer and who has a significant commitment to this. He has a significant disability. He is

currently going through discussion with the Human Rights Commission on what does the human rights framework and particularly the changes to the human rights framework mean in relation to our service delivery. So we are going through the process and, more broadly, what it means in terms of our contracting all of our systems and processes.

He does only work two days a week but he is currently going through a process for us of looking at that integrity to ensure that we are human rights compliant. That includes things like our individual support funding policy, the way we allocate our funding, the prioritisation process; they are the sorts of tools we use to do that. Obviously, as we were setting them up, we were checking that against the previous framework.

Mr Hargreaves: One of the things that would be worth recording—and it is very brief, Mr Chairman, so you can settle down—is that we are very conscious of the fact that providing disability support services is about making sure that people have an equal opportunity in all this. To that end, not only is what Ms Ford has described correct but I have also encouraged—and it has occurred—a conversation between the Disability Advisory Council and the human rights commissioner so that we actually talk about going forward within the framework of the Human Rights Act as a guiding principle.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan, you had a follow-up, and then Mr Smyth and Ms Burch.

MS BRESNAN: Yes, just a quick follow-up. You mentioned the respite care audit and that you were hoping for other audits to be undertaken. Is that something which would be dependent on the resources and the time of the Auditor-General or is it something that—

Ms Ford: No. On an annual basis we do five random audits of services every year. We would include our own services in those random audits. They are done independently and funded through us. So we would not be depending on the Auditor-General to eventually get—

MS BRESNAN: No, I was just checking that. When you say “random”, is that over the financial year that those audits will be undertaken or is it the calendar year?

Ms Ford: We implement them within the financial year but the audits, because it is quite a significant task and because it involves a huge degree of discussion with the community providers as an outcome of it, as would any audit, sometimes end up being over a 14-month period or sometimes longer. At the moment we are just finishing off our audits from 2007-08. We are just finishing those off. We need to re-enter into that audit program.

MS BRESNAN: It is Community Services plus Disability?

Ms Ford: Yes, we will be auditing our own services as well.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Thanks. Minister, as a result of the budget, are any of your services being moved; and, if so, which services, where are they currently and where are they going?

Mr Hargreaves: Not to my knowledge, no.

MR SMYTH: There was some suggestion that the loans scheme might go to—

Mr Hargreaves: That is not part of this service. That is part of the health service.

MR SMYTH: That is in Health, is it?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. It is part of the aged and rehabilitation service. You are talking about the equipment loan service?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: The government's intention was that it would move to former Village Creek primary school premises. I understand that is still on foot but that is a matter you need to take up with the Minister for Health.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I have a supplementary on that? Minister, a lot of people under Disability, with disability issues, are very concerned about this move. Should you or your department not be playing a more active part in where that relocation is going to occur?

Mr Hargreaves: I have to put this to you: firstly, I have not personally seen anybody's concern about that. I would love to see it. If you have got some, I will take it.

MR DOSZPOT: I will present some to you.

Mr Hargreaves: I am very happy to do that. Secondly, I confess that I was a director of that service for five years before coming in here, and the premises that they occupy at the hospital are grossly inappropriate and very difficult to access, when one considers the actual types of equipment that we have there. This is something the Minister for Health would need to address for you but I am not unhappy at all about having the equipment and appliances that are going to service the clients that we look after being located in another spot.

The wheelchair storage is a problem there. The hospital bed storage is a problem. Once upon a time, you just had a bed and it was not any great problem but now they are electrically operated and they are heavier, they are larger and you cannot stack them. They have to come in flat.

MR DOSZPOT: You may be very comfortable with it—

Mr Hargreaves: I know that.

MR DOSZPOT: Your constituency in Disability—

Mr Hargreaves: I have not seen that—

MR DOSZPOT: Can I just finish?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: They do have a real issue. Amputees who have reason to not just pick up equipment but to actually visit the hospital for further interaction are now being totally inconvenienced by this move.

Mr Hargreaves: I actually have to disagree with you on the total disturbance. I think there are some cases, quite a number of cases, where it is going to be considerably better for them. The vehicular access is going to be considerably greater for them. The access to large pieces of equipment that I have just described to you—

MR DOSZPOT: Public transport is not going to be better.

Mr Hargreaves: The public transport is something we can argue about for ages. I can tell you that there is a bus stop right outside it. Remember too that in that service there is a home delivery service, and that has to be housed somewhere. That delivery will deliver and pick up such things as hospital beds, commodes, a range of things like that for my clients. But I have to tell you, and plead with you, it is not my decision about where it is located.

I have made my comments to the Minister for Health and, quite frankly, I fully support its location at that particular spot. I had the most incredible difficulty and a great series of complaints when I was running it at its current location.

MR DOSZPOT: I will provide you some information from people.

Mr Hargreaves: I am more than happy to see it.

MR DOSZPOT: I would be very pleased if you could have a look at it, thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, sure.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth will finish and then I will move to Ms Burch.

MR SMYTH: There was a rumour circulating that perhaps even the Independent Living Centre would move down to near Village Creek or Mount Neighbour. That is not so?

Mr Hargreaves: I have not heard it before; I really have not. I will have a look into it now you have given it to me, but I honestly have not heard it before. The Independent Living Centre, last I heard, was still fine.

MS BRESNAN: It was actually raised. It went to a forum. It was not related to that particular matter, but it did get raised. A representative from ACT Health stated that plans were being looked at to move it to Village Creek. So it is actually on the agenda.

Mr Hargreaves: I have to tell you that is another issue that is not part of my portfolio. Again, taking Mr Doszpot's point, we do have an interest in it but we needed to appreciate where it was in Weston. It is smack in the middle of the community; it is not stuck in a hospital site. We will have to see; I do not know.

MS BRESNAN: That was the issue being raised, because it was a very good central location.

MR DOSZPOT: It was a good location.

MS BRESNAN: I appreciate it is not in your portfolio, but an ACT Health official did say there are plans to move it there.

Mr Hargreaves: When I had responsibility for it, Ms Bresnan, I can tell you that I had complaints from people in Belconnen about its location. You can't win all of them all of the time.

MR DOSZPOT: It is going further.

MR SMYTH: It is going further from Belconnen.

Mr Hargreaves: I have to say, as the member for Brindabella, bad luck.

MS BRESNAN: I do not know about that.

THE CHAIR: Obviously not as the minister for all people—

Mr Hargreaves: No. At least I live in my electorate, though. That is something different around the place, isn't it?

MS BURCH: Referring to budget paper 3, page 81, there has been some recent comment around the transition of individuals from hospital to the community. I am just interested in what that is, what benefit it will bring and when it will come online.

Mr Hargreaves: Conversations have been held about this for some time. For the purposes of the record, the last I heard was that there were eight people in hospital and as part of the decision-making process the opinion was that these people could be discharged. These people have varying acquired disabilities and it is particularly difficult to support them in the community. We need to make sure that packages are wrapped around them. The amounts of money that were available for us to transition the people out of that particular facility have been exhausted, so with each individual client we are looking at individual ways of getting them settled in the community.

This initiative provides \$3 million over four years to assist in that process. It will be apportioned to those people based on need, not on length of tenure in the hospital, shall I say. It will require a partnership between ACT Health and Disability ACT to make sure that the package supporting people in the community is sustainable. We need to make sure, for example, that housing modifications are made to receive people. We need to make sure that a range of community medical support is provided,

such as community occupational therapy, community nursing and outreach physiotherapy, if necessary—the range of medical services that are provided by the department of health. Then we need to do carer support in line with our ISP process from Disability ACT. It will require carer support where families cannot or will not provide that particular support. We try to put a package together because sometimes the families will do the care for a couple of days a week and we bring in somebody to do it the rest of the week. That happens a lot.

The \$750,000 is recognition on our part that people should not stay in a hospital any longer than they need to, but the guiding paradigm for us is that the person is safe in the community. We have to make sure that they are safe. I do not propose that we should just say to people: “You’re ready for discharge in accordance with the opinion of the doctor that has responsibility for you. Therefore, we’ll get you out and we’ll take you out straightaway.” If the environment into which these people are going is not safe, they are back in hospital a couple of weeks later through the emergency department. I am not going to go down there.

This \$750,000 in the first year will be matched by a further \$750,000 in the other years. I note also that in the lead-up to the last election the Liberal Party promised \$800,000 in the first year but nothing in the following three years. I recognise the fact that at least in the first year there was \$800,000 put forward. I just worry about the absence of it in the outyears. At least we have put something in there.

MS BURCH: Would this then become part and parcel of the suite of services you are able to provide?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. The interesting thing about individual support packages is that they do not go for four years and then stop. These people have an acquired disability and they keep that for the rest of their lives. Whenever we allocate some money out, we know that it has got to go into the base and stay there. In this case we are talking about \$750,000 that will stay there for the next 30 years for these people, because we are trying to keep them alive and well. It is going to go on forever. What you do not see is a program which stops and then another person can get access to it going forward. It does not work that way. There is an ever-increasing demand on the public purse to keep these people okay.

MS BURCH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter has a supplementary and then we will move to Mr Doszpot.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much, Chair. Minister, you have been talking quite a bit in answer to a question from Mr Doszpot and also Ms Burch about the cooperation between your department and ACT Health.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS PORTER: One presumes there are many examples of that interaction going on. Are there examples of how the department works cooperatively with other departments to ensure the best outcomes for people with disabilities?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, there are. I thank you for the question because often people do not realise the partnerships that exist. We have the dual disability service, which is a joint program between Mental Health ACT and Disability ACT, and we have arrangements in place between Education and Disability ACT. Ms Ford is probably better placed to answer that than I am, so I am happy for her to do it.

Ms Ford: We work very closely with Education, particularly around young people leaving school and transitioning to adult life. We have a working group. We have spent a considerable amount of time over the last four years shifting what was called our post-schools option program from a fairly rigid one-size-fits-all program—"You get it for three years and at the end of three years, hey, guess what, you still need some support but it is not there"—to a transitional program where people genuinely only need a little support for a short period of time to engage in supported employment or full-time employment or other activities in the community, a program where people will now feel reassured that when they get that support it will be ongoing and they will have it for the rest of their lives or so long as they require it. We are also talking to families, particularly when there are what we consider to be quite high needs, and letting them know that we are going to have a relationship with them for a long time and that relationship needs to start off really well, or as best as we can make it with the imbalances of power, I guess.

The work that we have been doing with Education has been to start looking at how we can offer future planning and get families to think of some of the really different arrangements that can be put in place when they are young—when a family member leaves school, letting them know that young people with a disability can leave school earlier. At the moment, you would all be aware that a lot of young people with quite significant disabilities stay in the school system for year 13 and sometimes year 14. We are aware that by the time a person leaves school at 20, many of the opportunities that would normally be afforded to a school leaver have passed them by a little bit. We are working very closely with Education to look at the supports that we need to put in place to enable families and individuals to have a lot more choice about when they leave school and what they do when they leave school. That is a significant and really quite exciting piece of work.

The other piece of work that we are doing with Education at the moment is looking at an awareness program, which will be a civics program, and how that could be integrated into the curriculum. That is a very new and early piece of discussion that we have been having with them. It is about addressing the issue of future leaders going out into the community and having a much better awareness of the needs of people with disability and the need for those people, young people particularly, to be able to engage in the social and cultural and economic life, in this case, of the ACT community. Education are very positive about that. It is a huge piece of work, and we absolutely recognise it. They are working very closely with us on that.

Let us go to the other end of the continuum, which would be for people who have very extraordinary, very complex needs who are more than likely through their life to come in contact with the criminal justice system because they have an intellectual disability and a mental dysfunction which has a huge behavioural component with it. The ITAS team works really closely with the dual disability team in Health and it works very closely with Mental Health and with the hospital in-patient unit, as well as

the criminal justice system, to make sure that we have a really comprehensive response to those young people. We have—we did not always, four or five years ago—a key case management role with that. We identify that our service provides case management, that we are responsible for ensuring that those links are made for those people, that we are working behind the scenes on assistance to make sure that the systems will accommodate those very diverse and often very unpredictable needs that come out of that. So that work is very complementary.

With Health, of course, we do quite a lot of close work. We do a lot of work around—and we have talked to Mr Doszpot about that—the pathways to hospital; and not just the pathways to hospital, but young people in residential aged care. The ACT has a really good history of preventing admission into residential aged care compared to other states and territories. We have a number of well-established services for people that are much more individual and age appropriate. Our individual support package has always been tailored towards ensuring those people with the highest needs are the ones that will get their needs addressed and that when dealing with young people—for the committee, those under 55—we are able to divert as much as possible the possibility of a young person going into residential aged care. You would be aware that it is just not the place for them.

There are a very wide-ranging number of ways in which we engage across the whole of government. Obviously we work really closely with Housing, being our close partners, on making sure that the support and the housing match up, because it is not always, as you would understand, a funded resource package. Often we can find the house but it is not in the locality the person wants it. They want it at another locality. Sometimes we have to work really closely with Housing to ensure that we can as much as possible meet the preferences of individuals. You would have to realise that we cannot always do that. That gives you a fairly broad span.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much, yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Ford. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, further to both Ms Burch's and Ms Porter's comments on transition from hospital, as you are aware, I have a reasonable interest in a constituent who approached me to assist. I asked for a briefing from you, which you provided through the department. Subsequently I was told that that briefing was not a full briefing. Being new to the Assembly, I did not know that we had light, medium or super briefings. Can you just elaborate on why you were concerned that I did not get a full briefing?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. Ordinarily, you think, "What on earth? We don't do that. What we have, you can have," as it were. I have always been of that view. But I understand, in fact, that the pieces of information that we were not able to provide you were not within the jurisdiction of me or the officers that were there. They were Health-related matters which we were asked by the CEO of the department of health not to divulge. I can offer you no more than that. Perhaps Mr Hehir, the CEO of Disability, Housing—

THE CHAIR: Why would such a request be made? What was the reason for that, Mr Hehir?

Mr Hehir: The minister had actually initially asked whether Health could attend the briefing, and when I discussed that with Mr Cormack, he said no, Health would not attend the briefing. His view was that the medical records and the medical information for the individual were completely confidential. We respect that, we understand that. And that information has not been passed. So that is why Health declined, because they did not want to inadvertently provide any of that information.

MR DOSZPOT: With the information you are talking about, would the advocate normally have that information?

Mr Hehir: I am not aware of what information the client has provided to the advocate, and I would not be able to tell you that.

Mr Hargreaves: You would have to really take it up with—

MR DOSZPOT: I know what the advocate has got.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, but you would need to take it up with either the Minister for Health or the CEO. The reason I say that is that we do not get that information, nor should we. So we do not have it to give you, as it were. It is not an area over which I can make any kind of decision, anyway. I can only suggest that we have given you every single thing that we have about our person, and if you think there is something that you need to assist in your advocacy for your constituent—and I would respect that—I would respectfully suggest that you take it up with the Minister for Health.

MR DOSZPOT: Sure. Minister, I had no inclination to doubt what the department had told me. It was all I needed to know.

Mr Hargreaves: Sure.

MR DOSZPOT: You are the one that told me that I did not get a full briefing. In fact, you were so concerned that you followed up with a separate briefing—

Mr Hargreaves: That is right, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: which we received, in fact, with my colleagues the Greens, and at the second briefing, which is now the full, super briefing, I did not receive any other bit of information that I was not aware of. So I am just trying to get to the bottom of this. Are we playing games with people or are we trying to get to the bottom of what the issues are?

Mr Hargreaves: It is very simple. I was concerned to ensure that members were given as much information as was available to me as minister for disability. I cannot give you information that I do not possess, that I do not have and that I cannot access. I am satisfied that my undertaking to you and to the Greens that you would get the fullest possible briefing from my officers has been, in fact, satisfied. I can understand you thinking, “Oh, the government’s got something to hide.” It is actually a matter that you need to take up with Health.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I have no inclination to think that the government had anything to hide at all. You are the one that told me.

Mr Hargreaves: Notwithstanding whatever your reasons are, if you have discomfort around a lack of information coming forward to you, I can only suggest that you take it up with the Minister for Health. Everything that we have given you is what we have had. We have held back nothing.

THE CHAIR: Why wasn't Mr Doszpot informed prior to that initial briefing that there were aspects in the possession of the Department of Health which they did not want to share—

Mr Hargreaves: Well, he was.

THE CHAIR: so that he could then know—

Mr Hargreaves: We did.

THE CHAIR: Sorry?

Mr Hargreaves: Sorry, Mr Chairman; we did do that.

THE CHAIR: So you told him that it was not a full briefing?

Mr Hargreaves: That is why the second briefing was organised.

Mr Hehir: Part of this may have been a communication issue with us. When I contacted the Chief Executive of the Department of Health, I then did inform the minister's office, but I did not personally inform the minister. It is perhaps something that I should have done. I certainly did not suggest that that information should have been passed to Mr Doszpot. So I am not sure where the communication broke down, but it is quite clear that Mr Doszpot was not advised that we were not going to give a full—

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, because certainly—

Mr Hargreaves: Just to bring you back—

MR DOSZPOT: if I had been advised—

Mr Hargreaves: Just to bring you back a peg, Mr Seselja, to partly answer the question, when I spoke to Mr Doszpot, indeed, in the chamber about this, and he indicated to me that he did not feel as though he received as full a briefing as he could have been entitled to, we had a discussion—

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, that is totally wrong—

Mr Hargreaves: If you let me—

MR DOSZPOT: That is totally wrong.

Mr Hargreaves: Let me finish, please, Mr Doszpot.

THE CHAIR: I will let Mr Doszpot respond in a moment.

Mr Hargreaves: Then you can come and respond.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: My memory has it that I indicated to him that I believed that he did not get a full briefing either and that I would go away and try and effect that. I indicated to him that I would try and get both Disability officers and Health officers in the room at the same time. That was my understanding of my undertaking to Mr Doszpot, and I went away and tried to effect that. As it transpires, I was able to have my officers attend that briefing but I was not able to deliver the Department of Health officers.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister—

THE CHAIR: The second briefing was not any different from the first briefing?

MR DOSZPOT: There was absolutely no difference.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Hehir?

MR DOSZPOT: In fact, Ms Ford—

Mr Hargreaves: Before we go on, I need to set a parameter, Mr Chair. It is not—

MR SMYTH: No, the committee sets the parameters here.

Mr Hargreaves: Well, you can, but I am going to tell you what is going to happen.

MR SMYTH: Well, that is good, but the committee sets the parameters here.

Mr Hargreaves: You might think that—

MR SMYTH: No, the committee sets the parameters of what happens here.

Mr Hargreaves: but I am not going to discuss an individual case before this committee.

THE CHAIR: I do not think anyone is discussing an individual case.

Mr Hargreaves: If we talk about the generalities and the processes—

MR DOSZPOT: We are not talking about an individual—

Mr Hargreaves: I am happy to talk about the processes and the generalities around it—

THE CHAIR: I think that is a bit of a diversion, minister.

Mr Hargreaves: but the minute we go down into the—

THE CHAIR: I think that is a bit of a diversion.

MS PORTER: It is not a diversion; it is not appropriate to talk about—

Mr Hargreaves: I am not going to do it.

THE CHAIR: No-one is.

Mr Hargreaves: It is not a diversion; I am just telling you.

MR DOSZPOT: We have not raised any issue that is pertinent to an individual.

THE CHAIR: No-one has raised that, so it is a diversion. Mr Doszpot will respond—

Mr Hargreaves: There is one constituent issue.

THE CHAIR: and will ask a couple of follow-up questions.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. Minister, you were the one that approached me to say that you were concerned. You did say you were concerned about releasing information about the individual. You did say that.

Mr Hargreaves: That is right.

MR DOSZPOT: I said I had no intention of putting any information into the public arena. You said to me you were concerned that I did not get a full briefing. I was under the impression I got a full briefing, that everything the department knew was given to me. Had I not been, I could have approached the department of health to seek the other bit of information that may have been lacking.

Mr Hargreaves: All right. We are going around in circles.

MR DOSZPOT: The second briefing that I had was in the presence of our colleagues the Greens. Your advisers were there. I said to Ms Ford: "I have not heard anything different to what we heard in the first briefing. Have I now got a full briefing?" I was told yes. That is all that was available to you, Ms Ford, if I recall correctly.

Ms Ford: That is correct.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Doszpot has had the fullest briefing from the officers of Disability ACT that can possibly be given. We are going around in circles here.

MR DOSZPOT: We are not going around in circles, because the only one that cast any doubt on the briefing was you, minister, not me.

Mr Hargreaves: The point that I am making—

MR DOSZPOT: If you do not believe that your department gave a full briefing—

Mr Hargreaves: The point that I would make—

MR DOSZPOT: Then say so here too, please.

Mr Hargreaves: You are behaving like Mr Hanson.

MR DOSZPOT: I am trying to get to the matter rather than obfuscating.

Mr Hargreaves: I am trying to give you a response and if you just settle, petal, we will get one. The point is: if I had a concern and voiced a concern to a member and had gone away and arranged a briefing to address that concern, and that briefing did occur, is that not the end of it?

THE CHAIR: The question appears to be whether anything changed, whether Mr Doszpot simply had his time wasted by having the same briefing again and, potentially, whether this was a diversion, because I understand this was in the context of a discussion about a motion in relation to this issue.

Mr Hargreaves: It was post that. It was actually post the motion. On top of that, the issue of concern that I have that the details of the individual would find themselves in the public arena, which was the subject of the motion, was still going to go ahead. I sought, then, to make sure that everything within my power that could be delivered was delivered.

THE CHAIR: So did anything change from the first to the second?

Mr Hargreaves: I delivered everything within my power. I have to reiterate this: if I have asked my officers to deliver a briefing to members and they have done so and they have given us a complete briefing, my concern was that Mr Doszpot did not have the total information on the medical records and the conversations between the medical experts and the disability experts and I sought to get a meeting together to have the Health officials in the room at the same time as my own people.

That was not achievable. I could not deliver that. But my officers gave everything to the member that they had. As far as I am concerned, I have said I will deliver a full briefing. I have, if Mr Doszpot's story is correct, delivered it twice.

MR SMYTH: So why did it require—

Mr Hargreaves: So where is the problem? You have to go somewhere else to satisfy your problem.

MR SMYTH: I am asking you. So why deliver it twice?

MS BURCH: I think the minister has answered that. He really has.

Mr Hargreaves: I am sorry, I did not hear it properly.

MR DOSZPOT: I think we are going around in circles. I simply state for the record that this committee should consider the actions—

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, okay. You have got the briefing.

MR DOSZPOT: of the minister in terms of the information that was given to me in the first place and the reason for bringing up why his department did not deliver a full briefing. I was not aware that it was not a full briefing. I was not the one that sought a further briefing.

Mr Hargreaves: But you got two briefings, did you?

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: You got twice as many briefings—

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: A thank you is a good way to go. About time.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you for doing it twice, but thank you for wasting my time as well.

Mr Hargreaves: I can soon fix that in the future.

MR DOSZPOT: You have. You have done that very well.

Mr Hargreaves: We will fix that in the future.

MR DOSZPOT: You have done that very well in the past and you are doing it now. Thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: We will fix that in the future. I will make sure that your time is not wasted in the future.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan?

MS BRESNAN: I do have a quick follow up but then I do have another question.

MR SMYTH: Please do not waste the minister's time. It is precious.

Mr Hargreaves: My time is not wasted. Mr Doszpot's is.

MS BRESNAN: If I could just ask my question. It is something, Ms Ford, that you mentioned when we were talking about the consultation that goes on between different departments. You mentioned something about young people with disability as well, which is more the point I wanted to follow up. Sorry for the long introduction. On page 272, I want to quickly ask about some rollover funding for helping out

people with disabilities in residential aged care.

Ms Ford: Sorry, which?

Mr Hargreaves: That would be 4, right?

MS BRESNAN: Sorry, budget paper 4, on page 272.

Mr Hargreaves: Rollover funding?

MS BRESNAN: Rollover for young people with disabilities in residential aged care.

Mr Hargreaves: The CSTDA 150?

MS BRESNAN: It is the one below that. It is 500, helping young people with disabilities in residential aged care.

Mr Hargreaves: Okay.

MS BRESNAN: I want to check why that funding has been rolled over.

Mr Hehir: I might ask Mr Collett to answer that. It is a capital item and that is the building of the actual accommodation for the package from the Australian government for young people in residential aged care. That program actually had a number of different components to it. So it has an outreach component; it has a diversion component; and it has a construction component in terms of the specific building and that is that building, in my recollection.

MS BRESNAN: And that is what is being rolled over?

Mr Hehir: Yes. And the timing for that?

Ms Ford: That will be completed in December 2009.

MS BRESNAN: Sorry, when?

Ms Ford: December 2009, which is when its target completion date was established, and we are on track for that.

Mr Collett: The site was quite specific in terms of the needs of the young people. Lois Ford has already talked about the complex needs of the young people who are in the aged care system. We were keen to find a site that would suit their purposes. A site was identified and plans were lodged, but there were objections by the neighbours as part of the process. They had to be notified by the ACT Planning and Land Authority. It took some time to address those concerns, and of course the approval process took longer as a result, but the tender has been let. The tender is on budget, the work has started and, as Ms Ford just advised, we are on target to complete it.

MS BRESNAN: So you are on target to be completed. How many places are in that?

Ms Ford: Four places.

MS BURCH: And where is it?

Ms Ford: It is in Johnston Street, Narrabundah.

MS BRESNAN: Great. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Now the other one?

MS BRESNAN: My other question is in relation to page 237 of budget paper 4, looking at a comparison with last year's budget. I note that there has been an increase. Can you advise on the government's position in regard to work which was done in terms of the unmet need in 2005-06; that was from 2005-06 to 2011-12, I believe.

Mr Hargreaves: Which one are we talking about? Sorry, Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: I am referring to work which has been done on unmet need.

Ms Ford: Are you referring to our published funding plan?

MS BRESNAN: Yes. It was from 2005-06 to 2011-12, and it is on your website. It shows that if we were tracking as planned there should be about \$74.5 million allocated to disability services and we are, as you know, at about \$68.5 million. Can you advise us where we are going in terms of tracking that unmet need, which was identified through that process?

Ms Ford: So are you talking about what process we are engaged in to—

MS BRESNAN: I am referring to work which has been done. You identified that to be meeting unmet need I think at this stage we should be at about \$74.5 million but I think we are at \$68.5 million, so I am just wondering how we are going in terms of tracking that unmet need in relation to work which has been done.

Ms Ford: To the budget?

MS BRESNAN: Yes.

Ms Ford: Are you saying what is the quantum of unmet need that is left or—

MS BRESNAN: I am referring to work which you have done—

Ms Ford: I will answer broadly and then if it does not satisfy we will go down further. Is that helpful?

MS BRESNAN: Yes, sure.

Ms Ford: When we undertook our funding plan from 2004 to 2006, because it is quite an extensive exercise, we have broadened the scope of disability over the last three to four years, so we now have as priority areas, which we had not included in our

funding plan previously, children and young people with a disability and then people who have neurological and degenerative disorders. We are currently in the process of updating that funding plan, redoing it to include that broader base. So we will no doubt come out at the end of that with a different figure from what is in our current funding plan, but I will hand over to Mr Whale to talk you through where we are at currently with the unmet need and where we are going. Is this heading in the direction—

MS BRESNAN: We will see what Mr Whale says and see how we go then.

Mr Whale: I am struggling a little bit with the focus of the question but I will—

MS BRESNAN: I am looking at work which you have done. It is on your website and it was looking at that planning process about funding for disability services and looking at unmet need. I think they are together, those two things—

Ms Ford: Yes. Absolutely.

MS BRESNAN: It identified by this stage in terms of funding that we would need to be at around about \$74.5 million and I think at the moment we are at \$68.5 million. So I am just asking how we are tracking in terms of that.

Ms Ford: I think Mr Hehir would be able to answer, because we may need to go back and get those figures that you are quoting.

Mr Hehir: Yes, I think that at that point we identified there is roughly an \$8 million shortfall in terms of there is \$8 million worth of unmet need. That identified unmet need work was prior to the Australian government funding which was recently received. So, in terms of the progress against that, that will for 2009-10, given that agreement was signed on 1 January this year, see a reduction of that \$8 million unmet against those original parameters. My recollection of the funding pattern from the Australian government is that in the final year it is approximately \$6.2 million, so that will actually substantially address a reasonable proportion of that originally identified unmet need.

Unmet need will continue to grow; disability continues to be part of a growth factor for our society. There will continue to be people with acquired brain injury. There will continue to be young people born with a disability. There will be people who acquire disability through other methods, through degenerative issues or degenerative diseases. So that will continue to occur. That is why we have recently re-engaged with Treasury to look at updating that. We had seen quite a substantial increase in funding for disability both through the ACT government and Australian government funding, which would, to a large part, have gone to meet that unmet need over the next three to four years as identified at that point.

It is important for us not to rest there but to look at where we are going, whether there has been a growth in any of those other areas beyond our originally predicted growth. We are certainly aware, through work that we have undertaken, that families with young people with a disability are an area which needs further work, which is why we have incorporated it into the model that is currently being revised. Yes, those young

people get services, but we do need to think about their lifelong needs in a sense, to make sure we are working with their families and planning with their families very early, to make sure we get the best possible outcome for that young person.

We have done a little bit of work in that area over the last few years. Affirm is a project that springs to mind. It works with a number of families with children below the age of 12 to support some children with some pretty high and complex needs in their family home and provide the parents with support and training to sustain that child in the family home for as long as possible so that we do not have an additional call on government services. It is a best possible outcome for that young person and for the families to get the support they need rather than having that living arrangement disturbed. So we have been doing a little bit of work, but this planning work will certainly allow us to see what more we need to do.

MS BRESNAN: Okay. So the planning work you are doing now is updating the work that was done previously?

Mr Hehir: That is right.

MS BRESNAN: And the federal funding that is coming through, so can we expect in next year's budget or the budget beyond that we will be reaching that level that we thought we should be at?

Mr Hehir: I think it is the third year, from memory. The process is that it starts relatively low. I think we have outlined about \$15 million, so from memory the first year is in the order of just over \$1 million and the second year is still relatively low, but it is in the third year that it starts to ramp up. I think it moves up to about \$4.4 million.

Mr Whale: Sorry, it goes from \$1.7 million to \$2.8 million to \$4.4 million and then to \$6.25 million in the fourth year.

Mr Hehir: That is certainly a profile I am quite happy with in terms of having it ramped up again. That is the one they are benchmarking off and that they have got now set in their base in the way forward, so it is actually a good outcome from us.

MS BRESNAN: So the third year would be 2011-12 or would it be 2012-13?

Mr Whale: The third year would be 2010-11 and 2011-12 would be the final year.

Mr Hehir: And those figures are in the budget paper at page 245.

MS BRESNAN: Very good.

Mr Hehir: Yes, I was trying to do it by memory, but it was 6.3, Andrew.

Ms Ford: Yes, the final year.

Mr Whale: It is 6.25 so you could raise it up to 6.3.

Mr Hargreaves: At 6.25 we round up; he is the boss, Andrew.

THE CHAIR: I have got a few members with questions—Mr Doszpot then Ms Le Couteur, Mr Smyth and Ms Burch.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, in respect of individual support packages, ISPs, that are mentioned in the budget, what is the maximum funding for a support package and what is the minimum?

Mr Hargreaves: It is 125.

Ms Ford: We cap it at 125. How that has been averaged out—this is in our ISP policy—is that we go up to 125 and that is in recognition that \$125,000 roughly would provide a reasonable level of in-home support or the ability for a person to live reasonably independently. If it goes over that, we need to look at other arrangements, which would be sharing with another person or possibly two. However, I think we have through historical funding about seven or eight packages that go beyond the 125. We are now revisiting any of those packages that are large, to start talking to people about what other arrangements we can put in place to make them sustainable into the future. The lowest package: under 5,000 to 7,000 we tend to do it through direct grant programs, through our quality of life program, but some people do have packages as low as 7,000, 8,000. What people have told us is that those small direct grants are far more useful in many cases than a small individual support package because they can use those far more flexibly. So we are tending to move towards that far more now.

MR DOSZPOT: And from what you have said, even though the ceiling is 125, in special cases you can accommodate greater amounts?

Ms Ford: Assessed on needs, circumstances. Generally, we try to be as equitable as we can around this, as you can imagine. It is really difficult when you have a person, for example, whose family are giving them a tremendous amount of support on a 24-hour basis. An example may be that they are completely paralysed. Mum and dad want that young person to live at home; they have set up the house to enable that to happen. Mum and dad put in a tremendous amount of support themselves, at great expense to themselves, I might add, in many cases, and the support needs are beyond that \$125,000 package. We have to make a decision with that family about what is the best way that we can do this. So, yes, it does from time to time go above that.

MR DOSZPOT: How many individuals will benefit from the additional funding that has come in?

Mr Hargreaves: The \$750,000?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: The \$750,000 will be, as I have indicated, distributed on the basis of need for those people who are covered in hospital and are wanting to go out. It is about clinical need, in terms of medical and health clinical need, and also disability clinical need. It is also about the actual package for these people. There is a combination of things; it is not just a case of giving people money. As I am sure you

will appreciate, there are other supports which come into play and which we are paying for in another area altogether. So it enables us to put that significant component into the package for these people.

We still look at it against the guidance of \$125,000, but, as Ms Ford has indicated, you look at the total package. For example, if there is a total package of \$350,000 and single accommodation is required, but you can bring it down because you have got two people in one house with shared supports, those are the sorts of conversations we have with the family, with the person with the disability and with the providers of the service. We try to work out what is most cost effective.

It must be remembered, of course, that as people age their costs go up. We are talking about young people in hospitals going home. With respect to young people, sub-55—and I could think of a couple of cases—we have got young people on ISPs in the community who are receiving significant support from elderly parents. When the elderly parents drop away, we need to look at the package again. If it goes over \$125,000 we search around to see where we can get the money.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Hargreaves, I am asking—

Mr Hargreaves: But I cannot give you a number; I will not give you a number.

MR DOSZPOT: Won't or can't give me a number?

Mr Hargreaves: Maybe I can't. I can't, because the assessments of those people in hospital have not been completed. Also, I think it is inappropriate, quite frankly. I am not denigrating the question here but I think it is inappropriate that somebody in my position is being asked to say that one particular person in hospital has a greater need than another.

MR DOSZPOT: All I am asking is how many, minister.

Mr Hargreaves: I know you are not, but I want the record to show that I need to not allow that process to occur—that the person in a particular situation who screams the loudest gets the thing. It really has to be based on need, and I need to take advice from Health and Disability ACT and leave it to those experts to make sure that we get the best outcome for all of those people over time.

MR DOSZPOT: There is one final question.

THE CHAIR: Then I will move to Ms Le Couteur.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a final question about the ISP packages. I do understand the greater amounts that sometimes are required. I also understand that there are issues sometimes with reducing the amount of support and sometimes with actually withdrawing the way that support is given. How do you handle that—when people have been used to receiving a greater amount of money and then having to withdraw that? What is the process that you go through?

Ms Ford: The process we generally engage in is that we start by having the

discussion. We signal really clearly to the family. We used to be a bit fussy around this stuff, as you know, many years ago, back in the good old days. We just did not quite know—and I am talking about six or seven years ago—how to approach these things.

We are quite pragmatic about that now; we have to be. We are much clearer about the dollars, where they go, what we have, the eligibility and how we prioritise. So we start by having a discussion with the families and signalling really clearly to them that this package is not going to be sustainable into the future. Whilst they have a certain arrangement in place, that arrangement, as their needs increase, particularly as their natural support decreases, which often happens as a family gets older—families shift away, friends et cetera are not quite as willing to contribute the level of support for a person to stay in their home, which is often the basis for some of these higher cost support arrangements being set up—we need to start looking at what arrangements we have got in place. Then they get a formal letter from me, saying, “Your package is substantial, it’s over the limit, it’s not sustainable into the future and we’ll work with you on looking at how we can make that package more”—

MR DOSZPOT: I have a specific question, without mentioning an individual case, but there are a number of cases that fall into this category. There is a case at the moment where Hartley Lifecare is providing support to one of these individuals and that support has been withdrawn. The question that has come to the minister as well as you, and I have received a copy of it as well, is that the family of the individual feels they are being very much strong-armed into making a decision by 30 June; otherwise things will happen. Is enough compassion being given in these considerations? I guess that is the question I am asking.

Ms Ford: Whilst I cannot discuss any one case, I do need to say that I am not aware of any person in Hartley Lifecare. I would need to go back and check but I am personally not aware of anybody at Hartley Lifecare—

MR DOSZPOT: I will give you some information.

Ms Ford: where we are withdrawing support. From time to time, certainly, where a support arrangement is put in place and that support arrangement is in anticipation that it will be a shared arrangement, if that initial shared arrangement breaks down, for example, and there is a high level of support going to one person in that setting, we would signal very clearly to the family that this was set up on a shared arrangement basis and we would work with them to look at other opportunities to share and work through a process with them. We are very transparent about what that process will be. But we are very clear that we have an absolute expectation that that arrangement will return to an affordable shared arrangement or we will have to make other arrangements. You would be aware that it is entirely inconsistent and inequitable for one person to be getting a 24-hour supported accommodation arrangement that was never envisioned to be that, and that other people have to sustain.

MR DOSZPOT: I guess that is the question. The information is there, and I know it is a difficult case, but we are aware, apparently, of the long-term nature of the support that is needed, and at a certain point it is withdrawn and there are not too many

alternatives.

Ms Ford: I am not aware of any support that would be withdrawn outside of an assessment of need, where it has been assessed that the need for that level of support would no longer be required. I do not know who you are talking about but we would not arbitrarily, to my knowledge—and I have a fairly reasonable knowledge of what is happening out there—withdraw support from somebody who needed it.

MR DOSZPOT: Sure.

Ms Ford: In fact, there is every evidence to suggest that we increase support to maintain current arrangements wherever possible. However, we are absolutely clear that, if an arrangement is set up under a certain arrangement around funding and that arrangement falls apart, we have to look at a different way, if that arrangement has a huge amount of funding going into it and it is not sustainable into the future.

THE CHAIR: Okay, we might have to finish up on that one. It has probably been dealt with. We do need to finish by 11 because we have got Housing to deal with. Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: In budget paper 4, at page 227, you mention that you are working on the policy frameworks for disability in the ACT. Can you advise the committee whether that new policy is intended to work within the framework of the UN convention on disability and the national disability agreement?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes to both of them?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: The Gallop report: are you aware whether you have met and continue to meet all the recommendations that you agreed to from the Gallop report?

Ms Ford: Certainly.

MS LE COUTEUR: Hopefully yes, also.

Ms Ford: In 2004, we met 75 per cent of the recommendations in the Gallop report. Over the last four years, through our strategic priorities, the remaining 25 per cent were largely around systemic arrangements and the way in which services were delivered and broadening the person-centred type of arrangements, the different ways in which we would fund services into the community. Through the implementation of our policy framework, which is future directions, we have met the majority of those remaining recommendations. In fact, in many cases now it has been subsumed by a significant change in direction over the last five years, having regard to the way in which disability is rolled out.

Mr Hargreaves: One of the things that I would ask you to consider—and I am happy for Ms Ford to give you details—is to remember that Gallop was done around a given

landscape and a certain paradigm. Whilst we have been moving to satisfy those recommendations, the landscape has changed as well. That is why we are updating future directions and going forward. So we are not just saying: “If we satisfy all of the things in Gallop, that’s fine. That’s going to satisfy the community’s needs and all the rest of it.” It is not, and we know that. We need to have a different direction. So, if you like, we have done the substantial work around Gallop, but the whole picture has changed now.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are there any substantive recommendations which you have not been able to meet?

Ms Ford: Not to my knowledge. I would need to go back and check again, but through the process of developing our strategic priorities we are looking at our performance against the previous policy or the policy framework 2004-08, which was extended for a year. So I would need to go back and do some checking of that. But, to my knowledge, we have met the majority of the recommendations in Gallop, and those that we may not have fully met, we have substantially met.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would you be able to take it on notice?

Ms Ford: Certainly.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said—

Mr Hargreaves: Just before we go, can I just ask—I am happy to take it on notice—could we get some clarity around exactly what you want us to respond to, please?

MS LE COUTEUR: It was not clear, but it sounded like you thought it was possible that some of the substantive recommendations from Gallop you still have not implemented.

Mr Hargreaves: Well, we will just—

Ms Ford: No, sorry—

MS LE COUTEUR: That was what I thought you had said—

Ms Ford: What I said was there are some which we have substantially implemented, and I am quite happy to go back and have a look and see where there may be areas where the landscape has changed or where we have implemented it in a different way.

Mr Hargreaves: We will give you a reconciliation of where we are at at the moment relative to the Gallop recommendations and also an indication of where that landscape has changed.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. That would be interesting.

THE CHAIR: That would be useful.

MS LE COUTEUR: You indicated that your new policy was intended to be

consistent with the UN convention on disability.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: What work are you doing at present to reach that position of being consistent?

Ms Ford: Well, currently we are consulting on our strategic priorities. As we move forward to implementing those strategic priorities, we will do what we have been doing over the last little while—making sure they do stand up against the human rights, the UN convention, all the legislation and regulation that Disability needs to be able to meet to deliver a fair and equitable and a transparent service to people in the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

THE CHAIR: All right. A quick one, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: On page 237 of budget paper No 4, accountability indicator f relates to client satisfaction as measured by your survey. The target was 75 per cent; the estimated outcome was 75 per cent. The target for next year is 75 per cent. It all sounds pretty flat. I notice in recommendation 13 of the recent report from the Auditor-General that DHCS notes the overall satisfaction level at 85 per cent as a good result. Are these the same surveys?

Mr Hehir: The answer is that that client satisfaction survey is the same. What we have, however, done is actually change our survey methodology and also try to make sure we increase the number of people responding to that survey. So while we note the 75 per cent is below that, the satisfaction level achieved previously, given the change in the methodology and the attempt to reach more people, the 75 per cent is—

MR SMYTH: But why would you declare the outcome as 75 per cent if the outcome was 85 per cent?

Mr Hehir: Sorry. That is the previous year—

Ms Ford: No.

Mr Hargreaves: No. The target is 75.

Mr Whale: The figure you are referring to of 83 per cent goes back to the survey we did two years ago. We have not completed the results of the survey that is referred to here, which is why it is a target.

MR SMYTH: All right.

Mr Whale: So when the survey was done two years ago, the outcome we achieved was 83 per cent.

MR SMYTH: So what have you changed to make the survey more effective? The

auditor notes that very few people responded. Twenty-six per cent responded, and only 44 per cent of the total number of respondents provided comment. So what is the reliability of that figure if so few people respond?

Mr Hehir: Well, 26 per cent is not fantastic. We are aware of that. That is why we have actually undertaken the work. My understanding is that we have actually already started the process prior to the Auditor-General's recommendations to actually look at the methodology. We are seeking to increase the return.

MR SMYTH: Sure.

Mr Hehir: Because we would like to be able to increase the reliability of that figure. So, in a sense, that is work that we have identified ourselves.

MR SMYTH: So what have you actually done?

Ms Ford: We have simplified the questionnaire and we have started to look at different ways in which we can—previously what we would do was send the questionnaire out, ask people to fill it out, resend it if we had not got a return, and then work on the returns we have got. What we will be doing is sending it out and offering assistance for people to fill it out and looking at different ways, and some of the ways that we are looking at is for staff, when they go out to visit the clients, when they are interfacing with the clients, to ask them to fill in that questionnaire, follow it up and flag it to see that it comes back. We anticipate that we can improve that return rate by being more proactive and getting that response back.

MR DOSZPOT: Just a follow-up to Mr Smyth's question there, there is a point here in the Auditor-General's report on management of respite care services, which I think focuses on an aspect of this as well, and that is a key finding which states:

The operations of the Disability ACT Information Service were not efficient and the process for collection and management of data was not effective. Databases maintained by the Information Service were not complete or updated in a timely manner.

I guess it is a concern. Is that a concern to you?

Ms Ford: Certainly.

Mr Hehir: Yes. I think you will see from our response that that is work that we agree needs to be done. I think there was some difference of opinion about the intent of some of those databases when they were originally set up, but we certainly agree that we need to have a better informed database and better maintained database.

MR DOSZPOT: But it just appears—

MS BURCH: There are a number of recommendations in the Auditor-General's report on respite care. Are you, again, addressing those over time, given the increase in hours?

Mr Hehir: My understanding is that we are substantively progressed against a number of those recommendations. Where we have agreed with that recommendation, it is our intent to get that work done in a relatively short time frame.

Ms Ford: Absolutely.

Mr Hehir: Our response to the Auditor-General has committed to providing the Auditor-General with a time frame in which that work will be done and also progress against that as we proceed.

MS BRESNAN: Because there was another one there about staff relying on corporate memory and things were not being written down.

Ms Ford: Sorry, I just need to correct something.

MS BRESNAN: Yes.

Ms Ford: It does not say things were not being written down. What it does refer to is that it is not written down in the form that is intended.

MS BRESNAN: Yes.

Ms Ford: The Auditor-General got written information. So it is written down; it is just not written on the form that it is meant to be written on.

MS BRESNAN: Yes.

Ms Ford: We do have to redouble our efforts—

MR DOSZPOT: Or in a consistent place.

Ms Ford: It is a very dynamic environment—

MS BRESNAN: I understand that.

Mr Hehir: Yes. I think that actual finding there was that approximately 303—I should not say approximately because that was the figure—reports were recorded on Riskman. They identified that a further 37 had not been put on Riskman in a timely fashion. So that issue indicates that Riskman, which is our major risk management tool, is being utilised; it is just not being utilised as consistently as we would like.

The policies and procedures are there for it to occur. The training is there for it to occur. We do need to have a look at how we support that training into the workplace, given that those workplaces are very dynamic. Also, we need to work with staff around identifying a risk again. So it is going to be a continual process.

One of the key challenges for us as an organisation is: how do you support training into the workplace? The best place for training, in my view, tends to be in the workplace, but given that our disability services operate from over 70 different locations and they are very small workforces, it is very difficult to get training into

those places. So the process is to bring them in centrally and then support the training into the workplace to make sure there is consistent application. There is application, and application to a reasonable degree; it is just not consistent.

MR DOSZPOT: About 15 per cent of the total incidents reported—

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, I think we—

MR DOSZPOT: Can I just—

THE CHAIR: Well, I think we have dealt with it. We are well over time. We will have to—

Mr Hargreaves: Can we take other questions on notice, please?

THE CHAIR: All these questions can be placed on notice. We do need time for Housing ACT. So we will leave it there and we will come back in 15 minutes. Thank you.

Meeting adjourned from 11.06 am to 11.24 am

THE CHAIR: We will move now to Housing ACT. Minister, budget paper 3, page 100, indicates savings to be made by Housing ACT through an efficiency dividend. Are you able to talk us through what is going to be the process for finding these savings?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. We are going to get the department to examine their processes, the way we do things over the next 12 months, and then advise us on how we can achieve those dividends.

THE CHAIR: What kind of consultation will there be with the community and who will be consulted?

Mr Hargreaves: What we need to understand is that the figure, in my understanding, is about \$86,000. Any efficiency that we actually generate to effect that particular saving will not impact on the general public at all.

THE CHAIR: When the Treasurer talks about consulting on looking for savings, that will not be done through your department?

Mr Hargreaves: My department is not just Housing.

THE CHAIR: I understand that. I am talking about Housing now.

Mr Hargreaves: I remind you that not only am I not the Speaker, I am also not the minister for disability, housing and community services. In the Housing thing, you need to understand that it is a public trading enterprise predominantly and, I have to say, if you have a look at the chart, you will see that \$86,000 is quite achievable when we look at the administrative systems which underpin the provision of housing in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: It is not an onerous target? Do you think it is enough? Is \$86,000 all you will be looking for or will you be looking for more?

Mr Hargreaves: The task ahead of us over the next 12 months is to see how we can deliver efficiencies of that order. I do not propose to impose any greater efficiency on Housing than I would impose anywhere else.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. I would like to talk about the stimulus package.

Mr Hargreaves: Where is my friend Mr Collett? Mr Collett is the guru.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will try to resist the pun.

Mr Hargreaves: You sit back and enjoy the show. You are going to love this.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will definitely not go there. Mr Collett—

Mr Hargreaves: Ask me.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. How have you been working with community housing providers in making choices about where the new housing is going to go and what mix there will be?

Mr Hargreaves: Firstly, we need to correct a couple of things on the record. Some people have been observing in the media in recent times that we have not been supporting community housing particularly. Nothing can be further from the truth. What part of \$50 million revolving credit and \$40 million, which is 143 properties transferred to the community housing sector, do they not understand? We also talk about the requirement for the community housing sector to deliver 1,000 units over 10 years. That is a substantial increase, given that they have only got 600 to start with.

MS LE COUTEUR: How much of that, though, is going to social housing as distinct from affordable housing? I think that might be—

Mr Hargreaves: What we are seeing happening out there in the community at the moment is a difference in definition. The definition that drives us on social housing is that it is part of the continuum of housing from homelessness or imminent homelessness right through to homeownership and all of the features along the way. The social housing component of that continuum is crisis accommodation; it is community housing; and it is public housing.

In the interstate definition of “community housing”, they really employ the idea that community housing is affordable housing; it is cheap accommodation. It is for people who will go in there; there is no exit plan for them. It is not a transitional exercise at all. It is just another way.

An example, you might like to know, is the Tasmanian experience. Tasmania

announced just the other day that they are going to transfer all of their public housing tenancies into community housing houses—100 per cent. That is because they actually are operating on a completely different paradigm when it comes to community housing than we do. We believe in the continuum of enhancement of people's opportunities for a sustained, high quality of life. That is going from crisis accommodation.

When you go into community housing, for us, with the exception of small pockets of it, we believe, in fact, that people ought to have a transitional package delivered to them and that they can use the opportunity in community housing over two or three years to transition either successfully into the private marketplace or, if their circumstances are such that they never will, they will be embraced by the public housing sector.

MS LE COUTEUR: I know we have affordable housing in 15 per cent of new estates—

Mr Hargreaves: Say again?

MS LE COUTEUR: We have affordable housing in 15 per cent of new estates et cetera. That is totally different from what you are talking about?

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely.

MS LE COUTEUR: We heard—

Mr Hargreaves: It is affordable housing. I stopped when I said the social housing, for us, is public housing, community housing and crisis accommodation. The affordable housing bit, which is the bit where we want people to actually transition into the private marketplace but to do so at a rate which does not affect their own quality of life, is where we have the 15 per cent of a given estate must be affordable, where we mandate the numbers. You might notice that the Chief Minister has indicated he is issuing out some blocks, about 1,000 or so, but we have put the mandate on there that 15 per cent will be affordable housing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Affordable?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: But you were saying that the community housing sector were going to be delivering 1,000 social houses.

Mr Hargreaves: No, 1,000 community housing properties.

MS LE COUTEUR: Which is social or affordable?

Mr Hargreaves: No. Social is the generic term. Social housing, the way we apply that term, is the generic term for crisis accommodation, community housing and public housing.

MS HUNTER: Back to the question on the stimulus funding, though, I think that is where we started from and why we got Mr Collett up—

Mr Hargreaves: They are giving you a question now.

MS HUNTER: It was about how you are working with community housing providers in making choices about what type of housing and where it goes. I guess the link question there is: are you also talking to broader community services about where they see the locations and the type of housing?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. I will get Mr Hehir to answer that one first.

Mr Hehir: I might start with an overview. We did hold an information session in concert with the Australian government on the nation building scheme. The community housing sector were invited to that consultation information session. It was in terms of everyone having the opportunity to ask questions at that session, and a number of people did. I certainly recognised many of the community housing providers, including at the affordable range or what I tend to call the percentage of rent-based providers rather than the percentage of income-based providers. So we saw a range of people there.

We have been working and talking with a number of organisations. I, along with Mr Matthews, met with the board of Havelock Housing and encouraged them to bring forward proposals. We certainly discussed some of the inherent difficulties in the guidelines the Australian government had set at that board meeting but, certainly, I encouraged them to come forward. I know that Mr Collett has met with a number of others. In terms of where we have encouraged them, we have said that we are looking for packages in in-fill areas as well as greenfield.

MS HUNTER: Are you identifying those sites for them or do they have to identify them themselves?

Mr Hehir: They have to identify those sites themselves. It was a request for proposals or a call for proposals. So it was up to the proponents to come forward and identify sites themselves. Indeed, that call for proposals closed on Friday, and a number of people, a number of organisations, have come forward with specific proposals and locations identified within that. Mr Collett may be able to expand on the consultations and processes he had.

We have certainly met with the sector as a whole, along with the commercial builders, because they were certainly part of that process. But there was a specific invitation sent out to the community housing sector. I personally have met with Havelock and discussed at some length with their board the need for them to come forward with proposals, in my view. I know that we have had similar conversations with Community Housing Canberra and said we believe they need to come forward with proposals.

But in terms of consultation with the broader services sector, no, we have not, particularly not in areas of need. But given that it is actually a call for proposals, it really has been up to the individuals to identify the land and locations themselves. It is

a bit hard to specify that we want this area if there is no land available and we do not know whether the land is available. So the process has been up to the organisations themselves to do it. I am not sure whether Mr Collett wants to add to that.

Mr Collett: Just briefly, the effectiveness of the conversations that the chief executive and I have had with the community housing providers and the success of the information session that was attended by the minister as well as a representative of the commonwealth is reflected in the fact that we have got three solid proposals—sorry, we have got three local community housing providers with a number of proposals in excess of that, that have come forward through the call for proposals; then we got three external community housing organisations.

MS HUNTER: Interstate?

Mr Collett: External to the ACT. They range from small community housing providers who very much meet the traditional usage of that term, in the sense that they have a small number of properties and are closely involved with the tenants and provide quite a specific tenancy management, through to the largest tenancy manager and the largest growth provider that we have got in the territory. They have all made submissions. In fact, one of the submissions is a joint venture between ourselves and the growth provider on a site that we identified. That is the call for proposals.

MS HUNTER: How did they go about identifying sites? What sort of assistance were they given? How did they go about that process?

Mr Collett: As the chief executive has reflected, we were keen to see what sites were out there. Except where we were approached about sites, we have left it to proponents to identify sites. There is an issue on the availability of land; so we will continue to work on that. That was the call for proposals. We will need to do more work. It will not deliver the full 320 that are required.

Mr Hehir: In terms of that, there is quite a range of proposals. We talked about the range at the information session. For example, one of the very small organisations said, “We have got some old, dilapidated houses; would we be able to bring a dual occupancy proposal?” We said: “Yes, so long as you can demonstrate that it really is quite dilapidated and would likely need to be knocked down; then you will probably be able to argue that there are two new housing stocks effectively. Otherwise it might only be counted as one if the first house is in good condition.” They need to have a look at that. Other people talked about church organisations, and we said: “Absolutely. If you have got land, you can come forward with”—

MS HUNTER: If they have got excess land?

Mr Hehir: Often they have got underutilised land. In fact, there have been proposals to the government before on underutilised church-based land from those organisations. We said we would love to see that come forward. Other people said, “Can we just identify any site?” I said, “My preference is for you to own it,” because that really is about bringing the additional investment that the Australian government is seeking from everybody into the program.

Certainly, at that session, I expressed a preference for people to identify land that they were in control of rather than land that somebody else was in control of. I think it is faster, I think it is more effective and more certain if they do that. But there have been quite a broad range of proposals that have come forward.

MR COE: Minister, has your position on this changed? I recall you saying—

Mr Hargreaves: Sorry, what had changed?

MR COE: I will get to that. Sorry, I recall you saying that it was your preference that 100 per cent of the stimulus money go into Housing ACT property and investment and that you would be taking a proposal to your federal and state colleagues to that effect. Did you take that to your colleagues?

Mr Hargreaves: Let me put some perspective around that. What I was actually doing in the total context of it was indicating that at that particular time the indications were that the sector was probably not necessarily capable of delivering on the time frames that the commonwealth government was setting. I did not believe that it was necessarily going to be so, that some housing providers could actually deliver. I expressed, I think—I am quite happy to do it again today—my concern about Havelock Housing's ability to deliver.

THE CHAIR: What is your concern with Havelock Housing?

Mr Hargreaves: I am concerned about it because—I need to be, I suppose, reassured in this, and I am sure the Assembly would, too—if we are going to be asking an organisation to deliver and manage properties to support our attack on homelessness, we have got to make sure that they actually have the capacity to deliver that. At the moment, they have got the easiest real estate management contract, I think, in the ACT. There are 216 units of postgraduate accommodation in Currong apartments; 140 of them at this moment are actually occupied, I think. The postgraduate people there are absolutely no trouble. The units were refurbished for those people to go in when we started that process a couple of years ago. Havelock returned those leases to us to manage because they cannot cope with it. When you get something like that occur—I hope you will agree with me—you start to think that it does put a question mark on their capability, and I need to be sure about that. Having said that, though, I do not know whether you were talking about the whole package, Mr Coe, or whether you were talking about the first stage.

MR COE: The first \$102 million.

Mr Hargreaves: There is not a first \$102 million.

MR COE: Okay; that is the second stage. That is stage 2; sorry.

Mr Hargreaves: The first stage—

MR COE: But it is still the first \$102 million, though; there is still the first \$102 million.

Mr Hargreaves: That is true. That is very true. I think we have achieved a milestone: you and I have agreed on something.

MR COE: That is right.

Mr Hargreaves: We will never do that again, will we?

MR COE: I hope not.

Mr Hargreaves: The first part of the package, of course, had to be delivered in a time frame that was just too tight. We have actually done that; Housing ACT has done that. The second stage is where we have invited the proposals—to come forward. It has to be in those two parts: there is public and community housing.

We are at the point now where we have received the submissions and we have to evaluate them from our perspective. Then we have to submit them to the commonwealth for the commonwealth to approve them from their perspective. That is when we move forward. This is not just a thing where they give us \$102 million and say: “Here; off you go. Deliver 320 properties to us. You can also deliver us 247 properties which have been maintained from derelict to okay.” We have to take each one of those proposals back to the commonwealth and get them to tick it off.

MR COE: Regarding the actual position, though, did you actually take this position to your federal and state colleagues?

Mr Hargreaves: The first one? The first stage was approved by the commonwealth, yes.

MR COE: But did—

Mr Hargreaves: The second stage has not gone back to the commonwealth, because we have not finished the evaluation yet.

MR COE: But have you taken a position to your federal and state colleagues that you think Housing ACT should get the first \$102 million?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MR COE: Okay.

Mr Hargreaves: Did I take the first stage? Yes.

THE CHAIR: So you do not have confidence in Havelock—

Mr Hargreaves: I have question marks, Mr Chairman. I do not want to say that I totally lack confidence. I would like to see the proposal that they come forward with in the second tranche.

THE CHAIR: You seem to be—

Mr Hargreaves: I would like to see if they can do it.

THE CHAIR: You seem to be prejudging it pretty strongly.

Mr Hargreaves: I am going to approach it from that position of suspicion, yes.

THE CHAIR: It is pretty hard—

MS BRESNAN: Is it appropriate to be talking about—

THE CHAIR: Unfortunately, the minister put that on the record, and I want to ask him about it.

Mr Hargreaves: I have put it in the public arena. It is in the public arena.

THE CHAIR: Is it appropriate to be—

MR COE: If you have got concerns, do you think they are appropriate to be managing as many properties as they currently are?

Mr Hargreaves: I think it is a reasonably good trap question.

THE CHAIR: It is not a trap question at all; it is a fairly straightforward one.

Mr Hargreaves: You did not ask it; don't get jealous of your colleague just because he did ask it. I do not want to express a lack of confidence per se in Havelock Housing Association; I do not want the record to show that at all. But I have to say—

MR SMYTH: But you have expressed a lack of confidence in Havelock Housing.

Mr Hargreaves: Well, hang on; I will just write down the number of interjections we get. The point is that I tell you that, when we are going forward with the stimulus package and we are calling for submissions, you judge them on whether people have the capacity to deliver or not. If I have just received evidence to make me a little bit suspicious about that, it would be irresponsible of me to do otherwise.

MR COE: Do you have confidence in their management of their current properties?

Mr Hargreaves: I have no reason to doubt their ability on their current set of properties, bar the 216 properties they are just about to surrender.

MR COE: If that is the case, what is the basis for you having not total confidence—

Mr Hargreaves: The surrendering of 216 of the easiest managed properties in the ACT.

MR SMYTH: On what assessment?

Mr Hargreaves: They gave them back.

MR SMYTH: No—

Mr Hargreaves: What part of “gave them back” don’t you understand?

MR SMYTH: That they are the easiest managed properties in the territory.

Mr Hargreaves: I beg your pardon?

MR SMYTH: It is not the giving back; you have just made the statement that they are the easiest managed properties in the ACT.

Mr Hargreaves: Havelock Housing Association—

MS HUNTER: Minister, at the time they handed them back, did they give a reason as to why they had made that decision?

Mr Hargreaves: They could not manage the properties. They did not believe they had the ability to manage the properties.

MS HUNTER: Beyond saying that, was there a list of reasons or another, better explanation given to you about that?

Mr Hehir: My understanding—it may be that Ms Sheehan can answer this in more detail—is that they indicated that they were not able to manage the properties within the funding envelope that was provided because of the amount of resources it actually took to manage those properties.

MS HUNTER: So it was a funding issue that they were putting forward as a reason why they did not feel they could continue?

Mr Hehir: I might get Ms Sheehan to expand on that, but it is about the resources they believe needed to be applied to that.

Ms Sheehan: Havelock Housing Association has had considerable discussions and negotiations with Housing ACT over the last year or so about the funding of the various Havelock programs. The Currong program does not function as public housing or community housing, and that is very important to remember. The Currong apartments became available because Housing ACT was intending to take Currong to the market, which it did, and the public housing tenants were relocated from Currong. Therefore, we were not able to put new public housing or community housing tenants into Currong without using the standard priority and high needs and so on allocation processes, which was not appropriate to manage apartments that would be available on a short-term basis.

Because there was a high demand for student accommodation, Havelock took on the management of Currong as a special program for student accommodation quite outside the framework of public or community housing. They have run it in conjunction mostly with the Australian National University for mostly overseas students who come in without the very low income requirements that you will see in public and community housing. Havelock were funded directly for tenancy

management of those tenants. What you can see immediately is that it is not people with high and complex needs, it is not people on low incomes; it is people that are coming in under quite a different program.

In terms of the funding that was allocated, Housing ACT believe that to tenancy manage 140 students—as the minister said are in there at the moment—the funding that was allocated for that was more than generous. The Housing ACT property manager manages over 260 tenancies—as the committee knows—and these are people with high and complex needs. One hundred and forty international students do not present any of those sorts of challenges.

Havelock came back to the department early this year, having managed the program since 2005, and said that, based on the attribution of overheads across all of Havelock's programs and allocating a proportion of those overheads to the Currong program, they felt it was not profitable. The department fed back to Havelock strongly that we did not see it as appropriate to be allocating a proportion of Havelock's total overheads to the program, bearing in mind that the rest of the program is, as the committee understands, focused on the provision of housing to particularly low-income and disadvantaged people, that this is a very different type of program and that it should be able to operate in a profitable way for Havelock as a stand-alone program.

The rents there are not the rebated rents, which the committee is aware of, which are based on very low amounts of 25 per cent of income, where we see massive rebates provided by way of housing assistance to individuals. These are affordable rents based on 80 per cent of market value. It should have been a highly profitable program for Havelock.

MR COE: What was the maximum length of a lease that Havelock would have been able to offer, given the guidelines that they were working under at Currong?

Mr Hargreaves: I will just take you back a peg. When we decanted Currong, we had a choice of doing two things: we could have just boarded it up and proceeded to try to put it up for sale or we could have used some of the apartments there, once they were refurbished, to relieve some of the stress on student accommodation which was around town. We went with that option on two levels. One was because that stress was around and the other, more importantly for us, was that having an occupation in that particular area was a better idea than boarding it up and putting security on it. We said that we would do this academic year by academic year. So every single year we say whether or not we are going to continue into the next year. We make the decision so that the educational institutions have plenty of time to plan for it. But it is dependent upon where we sit in the marketplace around the disposal of those units.

MR COE: When would you make the decision for the next academic year?

Mr Hargreaves: We would be looking at probably August, September, October, around there.

MR COE: When did you make it for the last—the current academic year?

Mr Hargreaves: Last time?

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: About that time last year.

MR COE: When? August, September, October?

Mr Hargreaves: Somewhere around then.

MR SMYTH: Does somebody know when it was?

Mr Hargreaves: We do it fairly early in the year. Please understand—

MR COE: It is not a loaded question. I would just like to know—

Mr Hargreaves: I know it is not a loaded question. If you just hang on—

MR COE: when you came to an agreement with Havelock Housing regarding this year's Currong apartment deal.

Mr Hargreaves: Just settle down for a second, mate. You don't have to get upset.

MR COE: It is a pretty simple question.

Mr Hargreaves: You are getting upset for nothing.

MR COE: You are the master of emotion, John; you are the master of it.

Mr Hargreaves: You are going red for nothing. I am trying to let you know that in each of the years that we have had this particular process available for the educational institutions there have been different environments around the marketplace for its disposal. Depending on which institution you are talking about, we know that across the whole of the ACT we have problems with the universities, we have problems with the CIT and all that sort of stuff. In the context of Currong, we would say it would differ year to year, but within the time frame of an August to October thing that is when the conscious decision is made.

MR COE: I would like to know when you came to an agreement with Havelock Housing for the 2009 academic year.

Mr Hargreaves: I will get you that date and I will put it through to the secretary.

MR COE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: That would be good. Minister, the next tranche of money under the stimulus will be allocated, presumably, through a tender process. Is that right?

Mr Hehir: That was the corporate proposals process that I outlined earlier. The process is that the corporate proposals are in; we will undertake an assessment of

those proposals; that assessment will be forwarded to the Australian government; and the Australian government, as it is funding these properties, will make the final decision.

THE CHAIR: But the call for proposals, you have just said—the minister has just said that Havelock will be looked at suspiciously.

Mr Hargreaves: My oath.

THE CHAIR: How do they expect to get a fair hearing in this process if the minister has said they will be looked at suspiciously?

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Chairman, with regard to all of the submissions that we get in, you look at the actual thing—whether it meets the parameters of the invitation to submit—and you also look at the capability of the organisation to actually deliver on the suggestion that they are putting forward.

MS HUNTER: Do you then package that up and set it up federally with recommendations?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. We both have to agree that it is a viable proposition. When it comes to—

MS HUNTER: Do you share that with the community housing providers, so that they know—

Mr Hargreaves: What happens—

MS HUNTER: how you have assessed them and what sort of information has gone out?

Mr Hargreaves: The normal tender process is that if people are unsuccessful in obtaining a tender, they are invited to discuss their lack of success with the decision-making authority. That is when they are given the reasons why. For example, if a small builder proposed to build 20 houses, we would look at that builder's history and capability to see whether or not they could actually deliver in the time frame. If we found that they were only a recent entrant to the building marketplace, we might say: "We don't think you have the capacity to deliver that. Had your proposal been for five units, it may have been a different ball game."

MS HUNTER: So what you are saying is that at the end, once you have been told that you are unsuccessful, you would have some sort of debriefing or feedback. What seems to be being said is that they put in their proposals last Friday, they would be assessed, they would be packaged up and they would be sent to the commonwealth.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS HUNTER: The community housing providers will not know what the assessment is at that stage?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MS HUNTER: That has been sent to the commonwealth?

Mr Hargreaves: That is correct.

Mr Hehir: If I can just continue my answer—

MS HUNTER: I am sorry, there is just one other bit. If they come in and you look at them and you can see that with a bit of tweaking or whatever it may have even more success—

Mr Hehir: Yes.

MS HUNTER: are you going to be having those discussions in that process of assessment?

Mr Hehir: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: If it is obvious in their submission that they have got this little bit wrong but for an action on somebody else's part we could fix that—

MS HUNTER: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely. We want them to be successful in this sort of thing. We are not interested in stopping anybody.

Mr Hehir: Given the time frames around this process, we are going to have to be a little bit flexible in terms of how we communicate with people. There is no doubt that if there is clarification that we need, such as checking of numbers or checking of duplication, we are going to need to do that. The assessment panel that we have put out has community sector representation on it. Jeffrey Dalton from Shelter has been asked to be on this assessment panel. We are trying to ensure a level of transparency for the sector through that. The panel will report to me and then I will make the submission for the government's consideration. The process is the panel will make a recommendation to me, I will ask the minister to take that to the cabinet and the government will then make a decision about what gets forwarded to the Australian government.

MS HUNTER: Just to clarify that, are those who would be unsuccessful in that and who would not be forwarded to the federal government told at that time or not until the whole process—

Mr Hehir: Sorry, when I said "our assessment", that includes those people whom we do not identify as being our preferred. They will all go up. So it is not only what we select that will go up. The whole lot will go up. The Australian government will see it all. It will be there. If people worry that we are trying to exclude someone, we will not be doing that. Their proposals will be assessed. There are a number of factors that we will be looking at.

Certainly the time frames for delivery of these properties are very tight. So we will be absolutely worried about capacity of individual parties to deliver on the time frames required. There is a little bit of leeway for a small percentage of properties within the total package, where we can have a look at perhaps some of the smaller builders' or smaller organisations' capacity to deliver within a slightly longer time frame. But given that the majority of the packages need to be built by December 2010, we are, of course, very worried about making sure they are delivered. It is a risk to the territory, in terms of any funding we get and any future funding, that we meet the time lines and the deadlines set by the Australian government.

That is one factor that I will, when I look at the proposals, be very careful about. Certainly, there are issues for a number of organisations in terms of their capability to deliver large numbers of properties within relatively short time frames.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur needs to go; so I would like to give her the opportunity to ask a couple of questions before she goes. If it is the wish of members to come back to it, we can.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, I would like to go back to the subject we were talking about earlier—social and affordable housing. Yesterday the LDA were here and they told us about the thousand units which you spoke about. They described that all as affordable housing. Social housing now includes all the affordable housing that is being delivered? They were clear it was affordable housing. I am just confused.

Mr Hargreaves: Affordable housing—that is predominantly what it is. Not only do we have the 15 per cent that we need with those blocks out there, we are saying we would like them to be under \$300,000. That is why we are trying to do this range of other options within the public housing sector. That is why we are doing the shared equity scheme, the sale to tenants scheme.

It is about affordable housing—I will start again—affordable homeownership. Also, we talk about affordable housing as being not only the delivery of homeownership through the affordable housing strategy; it is also about delivering a rental level which is sustainable. And that is where we have got the national affordable rental assistance scheme kicking in. So the affordable housing, in fact, actually straddles quite a few bits and pieces in the continuum.

Mr Hehir: This is an area where I think there has been some evolution over the last five years. A lot of it has occurred interstate but we have certainly been doing it ourselves. Some of the language has got, I think, a little bit inconsistent or people are using the same phrase for quite different products.

When we talk about social housing, our broad definition of that would be generally where there is less than a market rent being charged or being provided through a public housing entity. Generally where there is a subsidy, in effect, to reduce the costs to somebody, you would say that is social housing provision. That is a broad definition. For example, that would pick up the NRAS scheme, which is 20 per cent below market rent; it would pick up what we call the affordable housing growth providers typically who charge rent at 74.9 per cent of the market rent; it would pick up those housing providers who use an income-based rent as a means of achieving

affordability. That is, I suppose, a broad definition of our social housing.

Affordable housing has a range of connotations and you would certainly regard social housing as a key component of affordable housing but not the complete set within it. So it is a subset of the affordable housing picture, if you like.

That is the way I tend to contextualise it. It helps me. I am not sure whether it has helped you. But certainly that is how I tend to see it.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch?

MS BURCH: On BP3, pages 83 and 85, there are a number of initiatives. I would like an expansion of the transitional housing program and housing and accommodation support initiative in particular. Whilst they are separate lines, can you talk to me about those?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. I will get Ms Sheehan to go through this. She is the expert on this one.

Ms Sheehan: Thank you. Housing ACT already has a transitional housing program. The philosophy of the transitional housing program is that we have initially used properties that have the potential to be redeveloped and would have otherwise been vacant for a period of time and that we were able to bring in tenants who would use it for a transitional period in their life and we would bring in support to help people in that transitional period to then move on probably to public housing tenancies. But it could be community housing tenancies or affordable tenancies, with the idea being that once the supports have been brought in people's lives would stabilise and they hopefully could re-engage with education and employment, particularly young people.

So the transitional housing program that we have at the moment has around 22 properties in it and it includes a youth stairwell, which we have talked about often with this committee, at Kanangra Court. That is a very successful program where Barnardo's provides support to young people. We are particularly focusing now on linking them into education and training—Kanangra is very well placed, near the CIT—and to other educational institutions as well.

We are very glad to be able to expand that program by 10 properties. The link, I guess, with the transitional housing program and how it alleviates homelessness is that one of the things that we are trying to achieve is that, when people are in crisis and they are in a more traditional supported accommodation service, they need eventually to move on to their final housing but it may be that they need a bit more support than they would expect to find in the accommodation and it would become their permanent accommodation. That is why transitional housing is a good model, because it enables that extra bit of support. Then when people are ready to go—we call them ready-to-go clients—they move on into their final housing.

The HASI program is modelled on a New South Wales program. It is particularly on mental health support and it is at the high clinical end. And the supports that you would see in that program would be a combination of clinical support and community-based support. We are working very closely with Mental Health ACT at

putting that program together. The funding that you will not see in the budget papers but which is associated with the rollout of that program is another program funded by the commonwealth—the acronym is PHAMS—the personal health and mentoring scheme.

In the HASI program, you can probably see from the figures there that you are actually looking at about \$30,000 per support, per person. You can see there that is a very high-cost program. That is because of the nature of the support. Clinical supports are obviously quite expensive and, if you are having a greater number of hours in the community, the costs are greater. With the other program, the PHAMS program, it is about \$10,000 per client. It would not include a clinical component but it does include that support in the community component.

That program is being developed at the moment by Richmond Fellowship, and Housing ACT has entered a partnership—

MS BURCH: The PHAMS?

Ms Sheehan: The PHAMS program, with Richmond Fellowship, to bring the housing and the support together. You can see, at the lower end, they are the lower support end. The HASI would be then at the higher support end. So it is a very exciting time for Housing ACT to be involved in that partnership with the clinical providers and the community-based providers.

In the PHAMS program, we are looking at about 50 to 55 supported places; and in HASI we are looking at 10 at the high-needs end. So that is a very good amount of support for people who would have otherwise of course ended up in public housing but without that level of support that we will now be able to roll out in partnership with the support providers.

MS BURCH: They can still be a client but these are the wrap-around services; the services are wrapping around?

Ms Sheehan: That is right, and the benefit is that we, in partnership, will be able to wrap supports around people who may already be public housing tenants, in addition to people who may be coming out of homelessness or may be coming out of long periods as an inpatient, for example, where we can bring the support and the housing together at the front end. So it is quite holistic in the way it is able to address housing and support needs, whether it is a support need where you are a tenant and most likely your tenancy would be at risk, but also if you are coming out of a period of care where you do need to bring the housing support together at the time that you are discharged from hospital.

Mr Hehir: If members are interested in having a look at that, there is actually an assessment of the HASI pilot on the New South Wales Health website.

MS BURCH: That would be useful. I am curious about the 10 exit points from crisis.

Ms Sheehan: Yes, it is 10 new exit points from crisis. The ACT actually has 300 accommodation places. That is not just 300 people but it is a combination of

places for singles and families. In the most recent data that was released from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, on average, 468 people were being accommodated every night in the ACT. We have actually increased our support places over the last three years from about 258 to 300; so it is 10 additional places, and very welcome additional places.

MS BURCH: And the conversation on the support structures made me think of case management across different departments and portfolios. How do you manage that?

Ms Sheehan: Under what used to be called the SAAP program, the supported accommodation assistance program, but which has now formed part of the national affordable housing agreement, all of the funding to agencies in that program depended on the agency agreeing to operate within a case management framework. That has been absolutely essential to the provision of homelessness services.

All of the data on the provision of homelessness services in the ACT shows that we consistently perform better than the national average on all of the benefits and outcomes for people that you would expect to see if they had actually been case-managed. For example, we have the best rates of people who do not fall back into homelessness within 12 months; we have very high rates of people who may have entered a homelessness service with no income but who exit with an income or who might exit with employment; and so on. In our homelessness services, we have absolutely operated within a case management framework.

With respect to people who require support in public housing, we do attempt to operate within a case management framework. Very often, though, Housing ACT would not be the case manager themselves. For example, if we go back to someone with a mental illness, it may be and probably would be that Mental Health ACT or a community-based mental health organisation may be the primary case manager but Housing ACT would be part of the team that was providing assistance.

Housing ACT might very often organise the initial case management meetings, though, because of the centrality of Housing in the provision of services. We actually have a pre-allocation case conference and we are allocating from the priority housing list to make sure that, when someone is going into a new tenancy, their tenancy is sustainable because they have the supports in place and, because Housing is so central, we make sure that support providers come around the table and discuss how it is that the tenancy will be maintained.

It also gives us the opportunity to identify whether there are support needs, where we do not have a provider, and we are able to engage with the provider. Very often that provider would come from the homelessness services but then, on other occasions, it might come from other parts of the service system.

MS BURCH: I have a final question on the links with the centralised intake service.

Ms Sheehan: Yes. That is very exciting, the centralised intake service. At the moment—and it was funded under the old SAAP program, which is now the national affordable housing agreement—we have a service called CEAS, Canberra Emergency Accommodation Service, and part of that is run by Lifeline, part of that is run by

Anglicare. Lifeline maintains a 24-hour telephone line where people can ring in and receive advice and referrals to homelessness services.

The service system itself has developed a policy which is that every door is the right door. The idea there is a homeless person should not have to navigate 44 homelessness services in order to get a service. Wherever it is that they come into the service system, they should be able to be connected with a service. That is a good philosophy but the next stage has to be that we actually move to a central intake point.

It is something that the homelessness service providers have suggested themselves and are very enthusiastic about. It was their recommendation mark 2 of the Chief Minister's affordable housing task force and we are very glad to be able to put up some additional money through the homelessness national partnership agreement to move to the next stage. It will require quite a bit of work across the service system because we will need to investigate, for example, what are the technologies that we need to enable people to be not just referred in terms of a hot referral with a phone call but to make sure that we can know how many places are actually available in homelessness services on a particular night, what client profile could a particular service take when someone makes the call.

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In terms of a central intake point, the next part for us in Housing ACT will be that we would then like to link the central homelessness intake point in to the allocation of public and community housing. That is a really exciting prospect. We have already started meeting with the community housing providers on a single and common waiting list for public and community housing and we are quite hopeful that we will be able to achieve that by the end of the year. Then we are really well positioned to have one intake point from crisis through to safe, secure, affordable housing.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Bresnan has a follow-up, then I will move to Mr Smyth and Mr Coe.

MS BRESNAN: I was actually going to ask a number of questions.

MS HUNTER: Could I have a supplementary on this one?

THE CHAIR: A quick sup, then I will move to Mr Smyth, then Ms Bresnan and then Mr Coe.

MS HUNTER: Will Anglicare and Lifeline continue to run this enhanced or centralised intake service?

Ms Sheehan: That is something that we have not discussed with Anglicare or Lifeline or the service system generally. People would be aware that, when we are establishing a new service, the government takes the decision on whether it can be done, as you would say, at the margin by an existing service provider who has an expertise or whether what you are scoping is something so completely new and different that you would want to look and see what is available generally in the community services system or more generally to see who would be the right provider.

MS HUNTER: When do you expect to have it up and going?

Ms Sheehan: I would not like to say by Christmas but, as you can see from the funding and in the outyear funding, we have got a comparatively small amount allocated in the first year because we know that it is going to take some time to scope it, to work with the service providers and then to roll it out.

Mr Matthews: Ms Sheehan, it might be worth while just mentioning to Ms Hunter that discussion has already started with the sector. A subcommittee has been formed of the joint pathways process. That has been in place for several months now, so there is very active consideration already around what the model will look like, what are the issues with services in terms of how they engage with the common intake arrangement and exactly, from a client pathways perspective, how that will add to our existing service systems. So those discussions are, I would say, advanced and we would like to, as Maureen said, move those forward to getting a model in place and then confirming those procurement arrangements and being able to take advantage of this proposal.

Ms Sheehan: On the Housing ACT side, as you can see in budget paper No 4 we have already started looking at co-locating that common intake service with Housing ACT out at Nature Conservation House. We have already begun having a look at the building and what we might need to do in order to house a non-government provider in the building so that we do have that single point of entry.

MR SMYTH: Minister, on page 272 of budget paper 4 is the money for the third appropriation, \$2.5 million for the “a place to call home” initiative. Will that be expended by the end of this financial year?

Mr Hehir: From memory, that was for the purchase of land and my understanding is that it will be.

MR SMYTH: It will? Okay. Across in the balance sheet on page 275 I notice the estimate on your investments in your non-current assets was to be \$7½ million and the outcome is now zero. What has happened there?

Mr Hehir: Sorry, which line are you talking about, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Investments in non-current assets. You started the year with the budget to be \$7.425 million and the estimated outcome is now zero.

Mr Hehir: I will have to ask my chief financial officer to—

Mr Hubbard: When we are calculating and formulating the budget, of course we put in numbers for investments into the future, and that was a flow of investment that was associated with various joint ventures. As the year transpired, we made the sale at Fraser Court, so that came in as cash, and some of the redevelopment associated with that obviously is not on the balance sheet.

MR SMYTH: All right, so then in 2010 it bounces back up to \$2.475 million. What is that in expectation of?

Mr Hubbard: What I will do is give you a reconciliation of the movement there. There are a lot of ins and outs there.

MR SMYTH: Lovely. Two lines down, your intangibles were meant to be \$2.8 million but they have come in and you are now estimating zero. What has prompted that? And what did you expect the intangibles to be?

Mr Hubbard: That is on page 275?

MR SMYTH: Yes, just two lines down from your investment.

Mr Hubbard: The intangibles are the valuation we put on IT. That intangible was the value associated with the HomeNet implementation. That has taken us a bit longer than we thought it would. Once that software is in place, that will become an asset on the balance sheet as an intangible.

MR SMYTH: So that is why it bounces up as at 30 June 2010 to \$1.9 million?

Mr Hubbard: It has moved across, yes.

MR SMYTH: What is the delay in the installation? Why the delay?

Ms Sheehan: The main business system that Housing operates with is called HomeNet. It is a localised version of a system from the UK which has operated in the UK, New Zealand and, I think, Canada. We are going through a process of upgrading that system at the moment because we are dealing with a sole provider from the UK. Because it is a major business system, it has taken us a little longer to scope up the changes that we needed to do and to roll it out. But we are in the process of rolling it out at the moment and it will be completely rolled out by the middle of July.

MR SMYTH: On page 281 in your notes, you note on non-current assets:

the decrease of \$102.951 million in 2008-09 estimated outcome from the original budget is largely due to the write down of the property portfolio in March 2009 ...

What occurred there and what prompted it?

Mr Hehir: We revalue the property portfolio every year and it is just done to market. So in the March 2009 valuation process they have obviously advised that it has gone down slightly from the previous year.

MR SMYTH: So the value of the houses has gone down? What happened to the value of the land during that period?

Mr Hehir: I do not have that split but Mr Hyland might.

Mr Hyland: The land amount is up and housing is down.

MR SMYTH: So land has gone up and buildings have gone down? Okay. That is

interesting, and just—

MR COE: Sorry, if I may just quickly: when will HomeNet be operational?

Ms Sheehan: HomeNet is already operational as our business system but the upgrade will be fully operational by the middle of July.

MR COE: Middle of July; okay.

MR SMYTH: Finally, on page 270, I noticed accountability indicator e, overall satisfaction of tenants with the provision of public housing, is at 71 per cent, and h, overall satisfaction of tenants with the provision of community housing, is at 73 per cent. Minister, why the difference, and does it not say that we perhaps should therefore be putting more emphasis on community housing?

Mr Hargreaves: In answer to your second question, firstly, I do not think so because I think we need to have a blend of public housing and community housing. As I indicated earlier, my attitude about community housing is that, predominantly, with some exception—I will admit that: with some exception—we like to see it as a transitional exercise, wanting people to springboard into a better life. We do know that some people will not; some people will never get an income, for example, greater than \$35,000 a year or some people will always have dual diagnosis issues or various issues which affect their quality of life and they will always be, I suppose, in a supported accommodation perspective. When we talk about that in public housing, if you go back and visit our criteria for allocation of public housing, it is with that intention. So we need that balance there.

MR SMYTH: So community housing, you started by saying, is only for transition—

Mr Hargreaves: No. What I am saying is that in my view—this is my view for the moment—it should be predominantly for transitional. When we talk about long-term transitional, I have to say, we are talking about people going out of crisis accommodation into a community housing setting for, say, two or three years, where we actually bring together the support.

For example, if somebody's life has turned to custard and it is because they have got a gambling addiction, an alcohol addiction or something like that, what we try to do is get them crisis accommodation. Sometimes it is with the families intact and sometimes it is not, which is tragic. Then I believe that we need to get those people back on their feet, and that can be done if we bring the right support package to play while they are in accommodation. I believe that they are better off in a community setting, so the community housing sector, which is all really about the community embracing its own members as a system. Then, once these people get to a certain point in their life, they will hopefully be able to go into the private marketplace because they have got over the gambling addiction or the drug or alcohol issue and they are holding down a really good job, the kids are settled at school—all those sorts of things. Their lives are fine, they have been rebuilt, and then they go into the private sector.

If they get to that point, however, where they just cannot, they will come to the public

housing sector and in that sector is considerably greater rental subsidy and the same range of support packages.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hargreaves, I know this is a very important area but I might just get you—

Mr Hargreaves: I am just answering Mr Smyth's question.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I understand that but there are a couple we would like to get through unless you would like to extend beyond 12.30.

Mr Hargreaves: No. I am just answering his question.

THE CHAIR: We might just bring it to a close.

MR SMYTH: If I can just finish: does the community sector have your full support?

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely.

MR SMYTH: Apart from Havelock, of which you have doubts and suspicions?

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely, Mr Smyth, and the evidence of that is in our giving the sector that initial 143 properties. They had just under 500 properties and then we gave them 143 to get up to about 600 and then we also gave them the \$50 million revolving line of credit, at our AAA rating. The idea for us is that we grow the sector. What I am really keen to do is to grow the public housing sector and in a systemic way as part of the continuum of housing that I talked about earlier.

MR SMYTH: All right. So Community Housing Canberra has got your full support?

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you. Ms Bresnan and then Mr Coe.

MS BRESNAN: My question is in relation to the commonwealth funding which is coming through in the homelessness national partnership agreement. I believe that is a matched funding arrangement; is that correct?

Ms Sheehan: Yes, it is matched funding. The ACT matched contribution is the support services for people exiting the Alexander Maconochie Centre which will be established over the next year.

MS BRESNAN: Okay, because it is quite unclear in the budget papers where that matched funding has gone to.

Ms Sheehan: The government allocated funding for that service last year in the budget and that included capital funding to Housing ACT and support funding to Justice and Community Safety. But, of course, because the prison did not open until quite late, the service has not yet been established.

MS BRESNAN: Okay, so that funding will be going to a particular service?

Mr Hargreaves: It is over two budgets. So it is in there.

MS BRESNAN: Yes, I understand that. Is it possible then, just because it is fairly unclear to see where there is new funding and where there is old funding, to get a list of the commonwealth and ACT funding, where they are going and what homelessness services they are funding?

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely.

MS BRESNAN: It would help.

MS HUNTER: And what the new funding is and what is ongoing funding.

MS BRESNAN: Yes. You were talking about your various transitional services which are being funded. I am wondering, in light of the white paper and the statement that no-one should be exited into homelessness, what the ACT is doing in relation to that. Appreciating that these figures are hard to get, do you have any figures on the number of people who are getting access to services and those who are not? I believe there was a report that came out this week that said that over 50 per cent of people were being turned away from homelessness assistance. That was an Australian report, but in light of those two factors—

Mr Hargreaves: I have to tell you that I am not particularly encouraged by the report. It does highlight some of the things that we need to go forward with, and we are happy to embrace those. However, I need to add a word of caution. This is the Institute of Health and Welfare report?

MS BRESNAN: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: The figures were taken from two weeks and a daily average was determined from those two weeks. One was in November 2007 and another one was in May 2008. So we are talking about some elderly numbers, firstly. Also, making a systemic judgement on what is essentially a daily average taken over a week I think is fraught with danger.

MS BRESNAN: No. I agree and obviously—

Mr Hargreaves: I just want the record to reflect that. One of the things that came out of the report, which is something that was highlighted by Ros Dundas on the radio report that she gave very precipitously yesterday, was that with the community housing sector we seem to be missing exit plans—and she is dead right.

There are two big issues for the failure of homelessness services. The first one is the notion that if somebody is really bad as a public housing tenant we should evict them straightaway. All they do is go into the homelessness stats and back into the system again. So we need to have a different way of approaching that.

The second one is that, if they do not have an exit strategy when they go into crisis

accommodation and/or community housing, you get bed block, and that is what we are experiencing. As Ms Sheehan pointed out before, out of the demand for 500, we are getting 486 in any one night. We should have a greater throughput than that and people should be moving on into a situation where they are not homeless but are moving through to sustained tenancies.

MS BRESNAN: Do we have any idea in the ACT how we are going in terms of that?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, well, we will have to get some numbers and bring them back to you.

MS BRESNAN: That would be good.

Ms Sheehan: In terms of exits from facilities into homelessness, two of the measures that you can see here are actually directed at that.

MS BRESNAN: Yes.

Ms Sheehan: The first one—well, you cannot see it here; we just discussed it—is the very well funded service from leaving Alexander Maconochie, which is going to be at about \$700,000 a year, which is a very well funded service indeed. That will stop exits from the prison into homelessness. The second one is, of course, the mental health supported accommodation that we were just talking about. So there is the HASI, which should stop exits from the psychiatric inpatient unit into homelessness. The other service that we spoke about, the PHAMS, the personal help and mentoring scheme, would form part of that service system as well. I might just ask Mr Matthews to talk about the youth homelessness issues and the services that we have there.

Mr Matthews: Thank you, Ms Sheehan. I know that youth homelessness services are of significant interest to the committee and there are a number of initiatives operating both within Housing ACT and within the community to support youth homelessness.

I will just quickly touch on our youth housing program which we have introduced over the last financial year. We have got two specialist officers supporting young people to establish and maintain long-term tenancies in public housing. That is a very important initiative because our experience and that of service providers is that the first few months of any tenancy is very important in terms of a long-term outcome for those people.

The second one, which is reflected in the budget papers as well, is the establishment of the youth foyer program, which is not due for establishment this financial year, but next, which involves a capital facility and also service delivery to provide young people with pathways into education and training. That is something that we will be doing in partnership with learning institutions, including the CIT and also local service groups like Rotary to ensure that young people are supported and mentored when they are living in those sorts of environments.

MS HUNTER: I also just want to pick up on the rough sleepers program because you say you are going to have a focus on young people. How are you intending to roll that out? What will it look like?

Mr Matthews: That rough sleepers initiative will be an extension of our current effort and the outreach places that we have within the system generally. It also goes to the issues of centralised access, which Ms Sheehan touched on earlier on, which is that the purpose of that program is to access rough sleepers that are not currently connecting with the service system and to do that in an assertive outreach fashion, to go where people are living.

In including young people, we recognise that primary homelessness manifests itself differently for different target groups, and for young people we are concerned about their safety and we are concerned about their long-term outcomes. Within that initiative we will be looking at specific strategies and initiatives to connect with young people and ensure that they are connected appropriately to services and the sorts of long-term options that the youth foyer model, amongst others, present.

Mr Hargreaves: We need to be very careful about the use of the term “homeless”, and I would just encourage the committee to think about what constitutes homelessness. I mean, we have got imminent and all that, but we need to understand that couch surfing is homeless; living under shrubbery is homeless, but also living with relatives when you do not have a house of your own can be also regarded as homeless. For at least two of those, the element of safety has been taken care of. So we need to understand that when we just talk about homelessness it is not just a single subject; it is quite a complex subject.

MR COE: Minister, do you have any new strategies for curbing antisocial behaviour in public housing?

Mr Hargreaves: We have a disruptive tenancy strategy and process which is available for anybody to see. It recognises our responsibility to the community to try to effect change in our tenants’ behaviour and will take the form of a conversational intervention or eviction, and somewhere in the middle. We do not have the power to evict people. As people would know, the ACAT only has that power and we would never want that power.

We need also to appreciate that disruptive tenancies are in two groups. One is the behaviour which is invading the amenity of the people around the place; the other one is criminal activity or matters for the police. Now, it is not—

MR COE: The question was about new strategies. Do you have any new strategies?

Mr Hargreaves: No. The strategy that we have in place at the moment, which is new to you because you obviously have not read it—quite clearly to me, you have not read it.

THE CHAIR: He has asked you if you have got any new strategies.

MR COE: Based on a one-line question.

Mr Hargreaves: One of my new strategies is to get Mr Coe a copy of our disruptive tenancies strategy so he can read it. The other thing, of course, is there are memoranda

of understanding being developed with a range of other agencies and bringing these things into play. We also have in place legislative changes to enable us to take information to the ACAT more readily. We have been in difficulty in the past because people have been reluctant to give evidence before what was then the Remuneration Tribunal for fear of retribution and a whole stack of other things, and so—

THE CHAIR: Which tribunal?

Mr Hargreaves: It was called the Remuneration Tribunal.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Hargreaves: I am sorry, the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Hargreaves: It is now the ACAT.

MR COE: You have read that, haven't you?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I have.

MR COE: Just checking.

Mr Hargreaves: I have, actually. It is funny you should say that. You get good marks for that one. The issue for us is that people have been reluctant to provide evidence to what is now the ACAT and we have actually introduced changes recently to make it easier for people themselves to have their case considered and evictions, if necessary.

The other thing that we have introduced, which is new, is the notion that the tribunal can have behaviour orders. They can actually have an order on the tenant to change their behaviour and also the HASI initiative that you see in this particular thing. You see, the tenancies that we have are very complex tenancies. Just to say to people, "Well, you are misbehaving, out you go," just does not work. We need to think about that.

MR COE: Are you happy with the strategy?

Mr Hargreaves: The other initiative that we are actually addressing in terms of disruptive behaviour is that a lot of the issue around disruptive behaviour happens in our multi-unit complexes. Now we are not talking about the 10s and 12s units; we are talking about the couple of hundred units. I would ask the department to do a body of work to see how we can get out of those multi-unit properties because I do not believe they need to exist any more.

MR COE: Are you happy with the suite of options and with the implementation of those options?

Mr Hargreaves: I am very happy with the implementation of the options. I am happy

with the suite of options at the moment. We can certainly do better. If somebody has got great ideas, I would love to hear them. But I have to tell you that it is considerably greater than the options that were there before when I became the minister because, in fact, during your party's tenure there was nothing.

MR COE: Great. You have spoken earlier about the transition from people who are in worse situations to improved situations. We have got 1,370 tenancies that are paying 100 per cent of market rate, market rent. I know you are working on shared equity. I know you have got the buy your own house scheme, but in addition to those two what is being done either to encourage people to take homeownership in the private market or to move on and free that property up for someone that is perhaps in worse circumstances?

Mr Hargreaves: That is a very reasonable question. I am happy to answer for you. Firstly, we do not believe that we can evict these people and say, "You are on your own," just because they are earning, let us say, \$110,000 a year. We do not believe that. However, we do believe that we have the right to say to people, "Would you please consider the premises that you are in because there are, after all, more people in greater need than you?" We do have that conversation with them.

Until very recently we did not have the ability to know whether or not people have a certain income level. Now, that has been passed. I think from 1 July this year is when we start the collection because it needed to go to the end of the financial year. At the end of this year we will have a good handle on how many of those people who are paying market rent, out of your 1,300—let us say 1,400 and round it off—can actually be in that \$100,000 type of category.

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: We need to understand that some of those people are in bedsits and paying \$90 a week, and that is all they can ever afford, so you need to take them out of the equation. We need to look at people who have an income of a certain amount of money, and that is sustained. You cannot say that if you have got an income now, it will be there tomorrow. If we find there are people about to retire with \$100,000 and they are going to drop down to an income of \$60,000 on their pension, there is a different attitude again. We do not know that.

Once we have collected all the information on their income, we are going to go and see every single one of them and have a chat with them about it. But please understand that if all of these people left the system, we would be losing that market rent, which offsets our repair and maintenance bill, and we will need to find the money to do that.

THE CHAIR: Ms Hunter has a very quick one, and then we will finish.

MS HUNTER: Just going back to the comment you made before around the sort of high density sites, the multi-unit sites, this has been discussed. Twelve years ago I was sitting on a committee discussing how to re-arrange the stock. I am assuming there is still an asset management plan that is updated. Is this part of the asset management plan?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MS HUNTER: Is this a new body of work?

Mr Hargreaves: It is a new body of work.

MS HUNTER: Is it going to build on the work that has been done over the years? I guess the other critical thing is: is it going to take into account that, although it may be desirable in many cases to have lower density on sites, it is not desirable to put people in far-flung places—

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MS HUNTER: not close to—

Mr Hargreaves: Can I answer that question first? The answer to that is absolutely. We are not abandoning the notion of multi-unit premises. That is a bit of a misnomer. We are abandoning the notion of towers of it. For example, we would be quite okay about putting 10s or 20s together in a two-storey block system where people who need that—

MS HUNTER: But we would not necessarily be losing some of those locations close to town centres and so forth?

Mr Hargreaves: No, not necessarily; no, not necessarily at all. The reason I have asked for this body of work to complement the asset management strategy is because I believe it to be probably a 40-year program which builds on what has already happened so far. We have taken Burnie Court out. That is coming along nicely. We have sold Fraser Court—

THE CHAIR: I will get you to make a fairly brief answer, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: We have closed Fraser Court and disposed of Fraser Court. We are on our way with Callam Street. We need to do this thing in a managed way. We know that if we can have something like a 17 per cent churn, we can actually do it under control, but it needs a proper plan to happen so that we can salt and pepper and build those things in the rough areas that you are talking about as well, roughly in those areas.

THE CHAIR: All right, thank you. We will leave it there. We will break—

Mr Hargreaves: I am sorry I could not get going with the question more fully.

THE CHAIR: We will break until probably just after 2 pm, 10 past 2. We also have a private meeting, members, if you could just stay for a brief private meeting. I have just received word of it. Thank you. If officials could clear the room as quickly as possible, we can have a private meeting.

Meeting adjourned from 12.40 pm to 2.10 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the Minister for Industrial Relations, John Hargreaves. Minister, we might move straight to questions, if that is okay.

Mr Hargreaves: I have an opening statement, chair.

THE CHAIR: Is it a long one?

Mr Hargreaves: I hope not.

THE CHAIR: Okay. We have got about half an hour for this area, so could you keep it reasonably brief.

Mr Hargreaves: The year 2009-10 will be a very busy year for the industrial relations portfolio. OH&S, harmonisation and Safe Work Australia are among our major features. I am delighted to note that since this time last year we have witnessed a monumental shift in the industrial relations landscape across Australia. Work Choices is now dead and buried, and major achievements to date by the commonwealth, states and territories are the establishment of Safe Work Australia and agreeing on a model for new national harmonised OH&S laws.

Safe Work Australia is the replacement body for the Australian Safety and Compensation Council and is responsible for driving national policy development on OH&S and workers compensation matters in cooperation with the states and territories. The ACT is well represented on the Safe Work Australia Council.

The government is continuing its commitment to national OH&S reform with an investment of \$569,000 over four years to support the establishment of Safe Work Australia, an investment based on the ACT's population. Over the next year, Safe Work Australia will be responsible for drafting national OH&S legislation and its supporting regulations and providing them to the Workplace Relations Ministers Council for agreement. The Office of Industrial Relations will be heavily involved in this process, both through its position on the Safe Work Australia Council and through representation on a number of interjurisdictional working parties that will assist in reviewing and commenting on the draft legislation.

While the ACT government is committed to national OH&S harmonisation, we are not forgetting our own OH&S legislative requirements. It is likely to be another two years before nationally harmonised OH&S laws are introduced. In the meantime, the government is continuing with its plans to introduce modern OH&S laws in the ACT. The Work Safety Act 2008 is currently the most modern piece of OH&S legislation in Australia and is the main reason why it is such a short step for the ACT to move to the nationally harmonised legislation. In many instances, it is about other jurisdictions playing catch-up with the ACT.

In 2007, when Family and Community Day was introduced, the government gave a commitment to review its future after the abolition of the draconian Work Choices legislation. To honour that commitment, I sought the views of the public as to whether the day should be abolished, left where it is or moved to another day with more significance to the ACT. The consultation period finishes today and it has drawn more

than 1,000 responses from the community. While last submissions still need to be tallied, close to 90 per cent of respondents want to keep the F&C day, with a substantial majority of those preferring that the day be moved to a day which has more significance to the ACT. I am delighted that so many people in the community took the trouble to respond. I look forward to considering the responses and discussing the issue with my government colleagues and, of course, the Greens. I welcome questions from the committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, you said to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that you were preparing a cabinet submission for a ban on fireworks. You said:

... do not ask me if I am going to recommend this ban; just ask me when ...

Have you recommended a ban to your cabinet colleagues yet?

Mr Hargreaves: I have not taken the cabinet submission forward to cabinet at this point. There are two other pieces of conversation, at least, that I want to have. I did actually mention to Mrs Dunne in the chamber, a few days before we rose last time, what I was doing, what direction I was going in and that I wanted her to let me know what perhaps the Liberal opposition had by way of a feeling towards it. I have had conversations with individual members of the Greens, some of them more detailed than others. I have also had conversations—a very brief one with Ms Le Couteur today, and I acknowledge her giving me that kind of time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: I have had an enormous amount of contact with the general community, as you might imagine. But also it is interesting that I have been approached by members of parliament, both federal and state, urging me to take a cabinet submission forward to ban fireworks on the basis of the illegal use of them in their jurisdictions. I also can tell you that I brought the matter up at the last Workplace Relations Ministers Council meeting that I attended. With the exception of Tasmania—no, with the exception of the Northern Territory; I beg your pardon—all of the ministers there encouraged me to bring forward a cabinet submission to ban them. I think Tasmania, to be more accurate, did not actually voice an opinion but did not say, as the Northern Territory did, that they did not want me to do it. All of the rest of them, including the federal minister, said, “Please do that.”

I am motivated to do this. I am still motivated. I will be taking a cabinet submission forward and I will be recommending that they be banned, and I will be doing that on the basis of my position on animal welfare and also on the illegal use. In a priority sense from where I am sitting, it is about community safety, but it is about what happens with animals. Just by way of a couple of comparisons, in 2004 we had 255 complaints and we had 510 complaints in 2008. In the fires department—this is directly attributed to fireworks—in 2004 there was one fire, in 2005 there was one, there were none in 2006, in 2007, when the regulations were really strict, we had 14 and in 2008 we had 17. In 2004 one dog died that can be directly attributed to fireworks, four in 2005, one in 2006, four in 2007, and six in 2008 when these regulations were at their tightest. The only positive statistic that can come out of any

of this is that the reported number of dogs injured went down from nine to five—that is still five, which is more than in any of the other years—and also the number of dogs lost and found went down; it halved, from 183 in 2007 to 92 in 2008.

I cannot pre-empt what cabinet will decide on this, but you did ask the question about where my intentions lay, and I think it is only fair that I, and I am quite happy to, share them with the community. I will, however, be paying all members of the Assembly the courtesy of letting them know, at the earliest possible opportunity, once cabinet has decided where to go with this, so that we do not have a debate in the chamber, unprepared.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister.

MS BURCH: Just on fireworks—and I apologise for being a moment or two late and perhaps you have already made comment on this—in the lead-up to preparing the budget submission, talking with the community and listening to their thoughts, has that been covered, because I would be interested to know about that?

Mr Hargreaves: There were a couple of surveys, and essentially for the last couple of years the surveys have been split 49-51, of that order. But we need to split those stats down just a little bit, because they go “strongly agree”, just “agree”—that they should be retained—or “strongly disagree” or just “disagree”. If you take the ordinary “agrees” out, you find that the number of people who are opposed to having consumer fireworks out there is greater in both years. In the 2008 one, I think it was greater. I could get the years wrong. But it is split fifty-fifty and, in my view, if it is split fifty-fifty then we can look to another reason other than the popularity contest. We need to be responsible about this.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, in your introduction you talked about the family day holiday. When will an announcement be made?

Mr Hargreaves: I need to get the figures totally tallied. That will not happen today, because it is close of business today when the thing actually finishes, but we can see a pretty clear indication. Ninety per cent of people are saying they want to keep it but they want it on another day of significance. What we need to do, Mr Smyth, is to analyse that. One of the days that was proposed—I have forgotten by whom but I saw it in the *Canberra Times*—was the Monday after the Floriade long weekend opening so that families could go out and enjoy the Floriade festival as well. That is an attractive option for me as an individual, but I need to see how frequently that has popped up in the 90 per cent before doing that. Then we will probably make a determination and let people know.

It is going to be the first Tuesday in November this year because, as you know, it was gazetted and, most importantly, because most people have organised their year around that. But I will be announcing it in plenty of time so that people do not go printing calendars with the wrong date in them.

MS BURCH: Again on that, that has been a topic of community input. You have had

a process?

Mr Hargreaves: About 1,000 submissions were received, and 90 per cent of them wanted it but wanted to move it to another day.

MS BURCH: So now it is just about finding a day?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I think so.

MR SMYTH: On a slightly different issue, are Industrial Relations responsible for occupational health and safety?

Mr Hargreaves: The policy of it, yes, but not the enforcement of it.

MR SMYTH: On page 32 of budget paper 4 it says:

develop policies and initiatives to improve injury prevention and injury management across the ACT Public Service.

Do policies to stop that not exist?

Mr Hargreaves: I am advised that this part of it is actually within the Chief Minister's portfolio and not mine.

MR SMYTH: Okay. Would Ms Hudson like to—

Mr Hargreaves: She is not here in that capacity, I am afraid. Notwithstanding that, if there is a particular area that you are interested in, I am quite happy to see how it does touch on our stuff and respond to—

MR SMYTH: I am just intrigued as to—

Mr Hargreaves: No, there is; of course there is. With respect to workers compensation legislation and policies, within the public sector, of course, we are committed to regimes. We are trying to reduce our workers compensation premiums by introducing those practices. Those policies actually apply relevant to the specific type of employment category that we are talking about. We need to look at it in those particular instances and then at the globality of it. We are implementing new work safety legislation, guidelines et cetera in the public service itself. Part of our issues, of course, is that we would like to influence the private sector as well, but we cannot; we do not have a mandate over the private sector. So we are working by way of leadership rather than mandate.

MS BURCH: On OH&S, there is a media release and it talks around harmonisation of OH&S legislation and Safe Work Australia. Is that—

Mr Hargreaves: I will ask Robert Gotts, who is the acting director in charge of OIR, to give you some detail on that.

Mr Gotts: There has been a process going for quite some time to develop nationally

harmonised OHS legislation. That reached a point on 18 May where the workplace relations ministerial council agreed on a model for nationally harmonised OHS. The model is now going to the newly created Safe Work Australia Council and the organisation Safe Work Australia, where draft legislation will be produced. That is due to be ready in August or September this year, from where it will go back to the workplace relations ministerial council for approval.

MS BURCH: Are we progressing in line with other jurisdictions on that?

Mr Gotts: Yes, we are. As the minister said in his opening statement, we have new OHS legislation in the ACT. As a result, the difference between our legislation and the proposed national model is not very great at all.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan has a question.

MS BRESNAN: Does the IR section have anything to do with the community sector portable long service leave process?

Mr Hargreaves: We are looking at the process. We have got the long service leave authorities—the construction and the cleaning industries: We know that there is a desire on the part of the retail sector—

MS BRESNAN: I am talking about the community sector.

Mr Hargreaves: and the community sector. I am just coming to that. One of the issues, of course, is how that portability will work. There is one model that was being looked at which I do not think is a very good one, and I will explain why, if I may. That is to create a number of authorities and put them all into an overarching one, so that we have got a construction one, a cleaning one, a community sector one, a retail one and a soft industries one. The problem for us is that there will be people who will work in many of those silos. Therein lies the difficulty when you are talking about the formula to apply to the amount of reimbursement that will be applied to effect the long service leave provision.

The other thing is that we need to be aware that the microbusiness part of the ACT is a significant part of industry in the ACT. That is where we have got a possible compliance issue. The way in which you fund this stuff is through a percentage of payroll. So if you are talking about the construction industry, you have got very few smaller players in it; they are big ones, and you can actually put that levy on their payroll. Microbusinesses are really difficult in terms of this enforcement. So we need to come up with a regime to do that.

We are looking at the ways in which we can effect a model which will fold the community sector into the other two. But I do not want to just add it on, because I do not think it is going to work.

MS BRESNAN: I am a bit unclear about what you are proposing.

Mr Hargreaves: Instead of having these models, the way the two authorities exist at the moment is that they are run by a board. The board has representation of industry,

representation of unions and staff, and that sort of thing. Putting those together, you would have certain expertise. If we add in another industry, we are just going to widen and widen it, and we will end up with a board with 30 people on it. That is not going to work. So we need to have a model which has expertise at the top, which is about making sure that the long service leave is provided and that the portability applies across those sectors within a one-silo model, not a multi-silo model. That is what we are working on at the moment.

MS BRESNAN: Obviously, for the community sector, one of the issues with having that portability is that it does increase their ability to be able to retain and attract staff.

Mr Hargreaves: Agreed.

MS BRESNAN: So I am just wondering, in relation to the community sector, whether there is a time frame for when you expect that it will—

Mr Hargreaves: No, we cannot.

MS BRESNAN: We do not have a time frame?

Mr Hargreaves: We cannot, Ms Bresnan. We were working towards a timetable in the very near future, coming up with the model and talking to people about this. We still will.

MS BRESNAN: I know that work has been going on; that is why I am wondering—

Mr Hargreaves: It has, but we have stumbled across this other bit, and the other bit is that you will have people working in the community sector who may wish, for example, to take their credits from one organisation in the community sector to another. But they might also be working in David Jones on a Saturday morning. We need to make sure that the portability goes from all three employers, so we are still working on it. It is a priority for us; can I just put it to you that way. We are not mucking about.

MS BRESNAN: I was wondering whether Ms Hudson—

Mr Hargreaves: The other thing I am being pestered about by those to my right—you will notice, for those Labor Party people, that there is nobody to my left, which is the way it should be—is that the community sector is actually the responsibility of Minister Gallagher, in her capacity as the Minister for Community Services.

MS BRESNAN: I realise that. That is why I was asking if the IR section had anything to do with that.

Mr Hargreaves: We are going to get a model together, and we will carry the legislation when it comes through.

MS BRESNAN: So you will carry the legislation?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, but it is mainly—

MS BRESNAN: So you do not have any idea when that is going to—

Mr Hargreaves: No. A shake of the head times three.

Ms Hudson: I am aware that there has been some extra actuarial work done within DHCS, and that will go to the minister, I understand, shortly. That work will then inform what we need to do in terms of the legislation.

MS BRESNAN: Thanks.

Mr Gotts: To clarify the roles, we make the legislative changes on behalf of, in this case, at a point in the future, DHCS.

THE CHAIR: Before I go to Ms Le Couteur, just a reminder that questions for the Cleaning Industry Long Service Leave Authority and the Construction Industry Long Service Leave Authority are here, and we have got about another 10 minutes before we move on to other areas. Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, you appear to be talking effectively about an ACT-wide private service—

Mr Hargreaves: Pretty much.

MS LE COUTEUR: So that is where you are going; the idea is that you register once, in effect, with this authority—

Mr Hargreaves: Pretty much.

MS LE COUTEUR: in whatever capacity, and your long service will roll over.

Mr Hargreaves: Pretty much.

MS LE COUTEUR: Great.

Mr Hargreaves: The only sort of caveat I put on it, Ms Le Couteur, is that there are some organisations which are so large that they have got adequate provision already within their permanent full-time workforce. What we are talking about is a portable long service leave process for casual and part-time people. We do not care where they work.

MS LE COUTEUR: Only casual and part time? You are not talking about full-time then?

Mr Hargreaves: No. If, for example, you have got a person working for the university full time, they have got their own system. We are not going to have those folded into that. We are looking at those people who do not have a portable long service leave system, and we will make it available to them. Do you want more examples?

MS LE COUTEUR: I might talk to you offline about that.

Mr Hargreaves: Please feel free. I am happy to do it. I am happy to get you a briefing. Just contact my office when you have looked at your own diary, and we will get one of the officers to come and talk to you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doszpot and then Ms Burch.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, your left-right ratio is noted.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you. But I do note that you are on Ms Bresnan's right, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Always have been.

Mr Hargreaves: And it is going to be that way forever.

MR DOSZPOT: In budget paper No 4, page 242, there is an accountability indicator regarding ministerial reports. Minister, you may recall that I contacted you with regard to some issues that were raised with me regarding grants process that were experienced by one of the multicultural groups here in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, we are going to move on to multicultural once we have finished with industrial relations.

MR DOSZPOT: My apologies.

Mr Hargreaves: No problem. We will do it later.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: The ACT Construction Industry Long Service Leave Authority.

Mr Hargreaves: Do you want to bring them to the table, Mr Chair?

THE CHAIR: If there are questions for them, sure.

MS BURCH: I am looking at page 2 and your business priorities for 2009-10 around implementing new procedures to support the establishment of a single authority and new long service leave and a new staffing structure. There is also comment around a new IT system. It is the last three dot points under part 2, which is around a new computer system, and there seems to be some reconfiguration internally of the authority. Can you talk to us about that?

Mr Collins: As the minister pointed out, there are a number of changes that we are looking at in the overall framework of the authority itself. We are making preparations as required for the incorporation of a community sector long service leave scheme, which will involve a restructuring to some extent within the authority in terms of additional staff members to manage what could be a fairly large scheme. We are also looking at developing and either purchasing or leasing a computer system

which will cater for a considerable expansion of the authority. Our existing computer system is about 20 years old. There has been a lot of work done to it over that time, but it is a very old generation system and we are looking at replacing it.

MS BURCH: Is that the TasBuild system?

Mr Collins: We are looking very closely at the TasBuild system. In fact, the TasBuild system came into live operation last week. I was in Tasmania this week looking at that system. We have done a lot of work in terms of the modifications that we would have to do to that system to cater for a multischeme approach which we have. That will certainly be one of the options that we will put to the boards at some later time.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: If we could turn to page 8 of both the statements of intent. I notice that the performance of both of the funds was somewhat different. Could you comment on why, in particular, the construction fund did so poorly?

Mr Collins: The bulk of the construction fund money has been invested in an investment fund which was run by Suncorp. That was subject to the vagaries of the marketplace. Given, obviously, the global financial crisis and the impact on investment funds, that is why the fund suffered in terms of its financial performance, its negative return, whereas until recently the cleaning fund had been purely invested in bank deposits, basically; it was not in an equity fund.

MR SMYTH: Is there a view now that the bulk of the funds should not be in a single source of income?

Mr Collins: In conjunction with the Department of Treasury and an independent consultant, the authority developed an investment plan, which was approved by the former Treasurer last year. The basis of that investment plan is that the bulk of the funds of both authorities would be invested by Vanguard in a passive managed conservative fund. The construction fund also owns the Manning Clark building in Tuggeranong and a small office suite in Campbell as well. That mix of a conservative fund and property investment is a diversified portfolio for the construction industry. For the cleaning fund, again, the bulk of their funds will be invested with Vanguard. Vanguard is also the manager of the Treasury passive funds investment.

MR SMYTH: Do these returns affect your ability to make payments to members as they claim on the schemes?

Mr Collins: No, they do not affect our short-term liquidity or our short-term ability to make payments. We are still in a positive equity situation. Certainly we still have money to meet our day-to-day, short-term and long-term claims and our liabilities.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Members, any other questions on industrial relations? Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: My question is in relation to the review of the ACT workers

compensation system, which found, I think, that some of the recent changes had been detrimental in terms of employment terms for ACT government employees. One of the recommendations was around the process of exploring the possibility of withdrawing from the Comcare scheme and becoming a self-insured entity. I am just wondering where the ACT government is up to in terms of considering that recommendation.

Mr Gotts: Currently there is no government policy to change from the Comcare scheme to the ACT private sector workers compensation scheme.

MS BRESNAN: Will any of the recommendations that came out of the review be considered, or basically is it going to be staying as is?

Mr Gotts: No. A great many of the recommendations are being considered and acted on. The recommendations fall into different categories of recommendations, if you like. A number related to data, for example, and there were comments in the review on the importance of having good data on scheme performance and so on. A lot of work is going into improving the quality of the data.

MS BRESNAN: So is there any reason why you are not considering that particular recommendation about withdrawing from Comcare?

Mr Gotts: That one is not government policy.

Mr Hargreaves: I have not made a decision on it, Ms Bresnan. It is a matter of policy, and the officers are not in a position to respond to you on that. At this stage of the game I have not taken a position, nor have I sought comments from my colleagues in order to form one yet.

MS BRESNAN: Okay.

Ms Hudson: Further advice will be provided to the minister, but some of the timing issues linked to change of government at the commonwealth level and what was also happening—that followed when the review came. So it needs to go back to the OH&S council and then give further advice to the minister.

THE CHAIR: We are due to move on to another output class. There is one more question from Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Referring to your operating statement for the Construction Industry Long Service Leave Authority, I notice you have got a line under “Income” relating to the change in value of rental property, from which you expected to receive \$1 million, but it now rests at zero. Can you explain to the committee what happened there?

Mr Collins: In the past, we have had that valued on a yearly basis. The most recent valuation put that at that same value as per the previous year. There was no change in valuation, and, therefore, we have included that at the same value.

MR SMYTH: So you expected to receive a \$1 million increase, but it did not eventuate?

Mr Collins: Not expected to receive—expected to have a change in value subsequent to a valuation.

MR SMYTH: Did the valuation show a decline in the value of the built form?

Mr Collins: No.

MR SMYTH: So that was static?

Mr Collins: Yes.

MR SMYTH: And it did not show any change in the value of the land?

Mr Collins: No, it did not, not for that yearly period.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We might leave it there for industrial relations. Thank you very much, Mr Gotts, Ms Hudson and Mr Collins.

We will now move on to output class 3, community development and policy. We are now with the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Ageing. Minister, I will be a little bit guided by you, but are you happy to have questions going back and forth between the two, or would you prefer to deal with them separately?

Mr Hargreaves: I am quite happy to do it all in one lump. Could I do something a little different, Mr Chairman? I have a statement to make. In the interests of time, if you and the committee are agreeable—and I will give it to the secretary—could it be incorporated into the committee *Hansard*? Then it can be circulated. It will save us probably three or four minutes.

THE CHAIR: We will incorporate the statement.

The statement read as follows—

ACT BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009-10
FRIDAY 29 MAY 2009

Contribution.

It's a word with so many meanings but in the ACT it is particularly apt when it comes to describing the roles of our city's seniors and members of the multicultural sector.

Their dynamic contribution to our way of life helps to make Canberra the cosmopolitan, vibrant, knowledgeable and active place it is.

The ACT Government recognises, encourages and fosters this contribution through a range of recurrently funded initiatives targeted

towards boosting opportunities for senior residents and increasing diversity.

In 2009-10, the ACT Government has committed additional funds to enhancing the contribution of seniors and the multicultural sector through the ACT Budget.

This includes extra money to assist with settlement services for refugees and migrants, as well as an increase in funding for the Seniors Grants Program and a cash injection of \$1.5 million for a Tuggeranong seniors club.

As Minister for Multicultural Affairs for the past four years, it has been my honour to oversee the development of our city's multicultural sector.

Year after year, I am delighted to observe multicultural communities continuing to flourish while adding to the vibrancy and flavour of Canberra.

This can be directly evidenced through the ongoing growth of the annual National Multicultural Festival.

Each February, thousands of people flock to locations across the territory to share in the wealth of diversity that is now our way of life.

The annual National Multicultural Festival has truly become Canberra's premier cultural event.

To ensure it continues to entertain, intrigue and educate our community—and visitors to it—the ACT Government last year increased funding for the Festival by an additional \$100,000, bringing the total annual input to \$460,000, a figure reflected in this year's Budget.

The increase in investment has certainly paid dividends.

The 2009 Food and Dance Spectacular attracted a record crowd of 75,000 people into Civic for a taste of multicultural fare and fun.

The success of this year's Festival can be attributed to a range of factors, not the least being the contribution from the multicultural sector in the way of planning, guidance, performances and volunteering.

In turn, the ACT Government is committed to giving back to the multicultural sector through programs that help to promote harmony, diversity, skill-recognition and job opportunities.

Once such initiative, coordinated through the ACT Office for Multicultural Affairs, is the Work Experience and Support Program which helps migrants gain employment skills and actual work experience in a government environment.

Additionally, there's the Multicultural, Language and Radio Grants program which received increased funding last year, and in the out-years.

The grants help members of the multicultural community to participate in multicultural events and expand access in the areas of community languages and community radio.

In 2008-09, the total funding for the grants program was \$320,000, and for 2009-10 it will be \$350,000.

Significantly, in 2009-10 the ACT Government has increased funding to the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services—or MARSS—of \$200,000 over four years.

The money will be used by MARSS to continue its work in assisting refugees and migrants who choose to settle in Canberra through the provision of information, advocacy and referral services.

The MARSS money will also be used towards a series of information sessions on housing, aged care and employment pathways for young people in the multicultural sector.

The next six months will prove an exciting time for our city's multicultural community with the release of the 2009-12 ACT Multicultural Strategy, aimed at meeting the needs of the sector into the future.

Concurrently, the ACT Office for Ageing is developing a strategy aimed at enhancing the lives of older Canberrans.

Like the Multicultural Strategy, the Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing is community driven with much of its content gleaned during extensive community consultations through a series of Positive Ageing forums held earlier this year.

As Minister for Ageing, I have witnessed first-hand the vital contribution to our community of older Canberrans as family members, carers, friends, neighbours, volunteers, workers and consumers.

It is ensuring this vital contribution continues to thrive that led to the ACT Government partnering with the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council to develop the whole-of-government Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing.

The plan will focus on five key areas: health and wellbeing; housing and accommodation; support services; transport; and work and retirement.

Its key aim is to support older people to maintain a healthy, meaningful and enjoyable lifestyle, keeping them socially connected within a community which values their lifelong and continued contributions.

Older people in the ACT contribute greatly to their community through the provision of their time, wisdom and friendship—as workers, community volunteers, grandparents, neighbours and club members.

We want to see a community of older people who are socially connected and who continue to actively participate in community life, whether that is through continued paid work, volunteering, recreational activities or time spent with family.

Many are eagerly anticipating the draft of the strategic plan—which is being co-ordinated by the ACT Office for Ageing—and is due later this year.

With significant assistance from the Council on the Ageing ACT and National Seniors Australia, the final document is expected to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in December.

But before then, the ACT Government, through the 2009-10 ACT Budget, continues to support the contribution of older Canberrans through a range of measures including an increase to the Seniors Grants Program, from \$85,000 to \$100,000 per annum.

The grants promote active ageing and social inclusion among older people in the ACT.

Some of the projects funded in the 2008-09 Seniors Grants program include a supported shopping program, the Tuggeranong Men's Shed, a storytelling project and a women's roundtable to share understanding of service provision to older women.

I am also pleased to say that the ACT Government has honoured its commitment to establish a permanent seniors club in the Tuggeranong area, with an allocation of \$1.5 million for the refurbishment or construction of a facility for a Tuggeranong seniors club.

This follows the \$200,000 committed in the 2008-09 Second Appropriation for a feasibility study and design of a facility, including identification of the most suitable option for the location of the club.

Once this project is completed many in the south of our city will benefit.

Throughout 2009, I look forward to continuing to work with individuals, groups and organisations that comprise our city's multicultural and seniors sectors.

Their contribution makes Canberra a better place to live.

THE CHAIR: When you said “one lump”, you are happy to go between ageing and multicultural questions; you have no problem with that?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We welcome back Mr Hehir.

MR SMYTH: Probably he becomes the most capped CEO to appear before the estimates committee!

THE CHAIR: Certainly the most individual separate appearances. Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. I am going to talk about the Multicultural Festival, as would seem appropriate. Indicator 6 has a couple of indicators—

Mr Hargreaves: Could I ask what the page number is, please?

MS LE COUTEUR: It is page 231 of budget paper 4, indicator 6. How do you evaluate the success of the festival? The indicators you have here are for the number of multicultural groups and the number of community groups. I appreciate that it is very hard to get good indicators which are also measurable. Bearing that in mind, how do you evaluate the success of the festival?

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you very much for that, Ms Le Couteur. I am grateful for your acknowledgement that just using quantitative performance indicators is not going to give a true picture of this—remembering that multicultural affairs is not something that we can have in widgets. The indicators we have given here show just a bit of a growth. This is not the defining indicator on the success of the festival, but it does show a growth as of now.

Going back a bit, the numbers in 2008-09, 2007-08 and backwards were considerably lower than these. I became the minister, I think, in 2004 and in the 2005 festival there were three embassies and high commissions represented in stalls. Two years later there were 20. At the last festival there were 63. At the festival before last—I think it was the one before last—we had a street called Arab Street. All the Arabian countries were represented. Then we had Europe Street, which came on board again, and that was with the European Union doing their stuff. The following year we got two more streets added in.

Again, these are quantities which we can advise the Assembly and the community about, but they are not something which we would want to put into concrete necessarily. They are not necessarily the defining criteria. The reason for the Multicultural Festival existing at all is to promote the sense of harmony from a multicultural and ethnic perspective across town. We use a lot of subjective feedback on how it has gone. We take into account crowd numbers at specific events—whether the crowds are up, whether the crowds are down. We take into account the weather as well.

We have also seen a growth in the way the festival has developed over the last couple of years. We have used a couple of signature events to draw crowds in and give them a taste of multiculturalism, and then we see how we have gone. Those signature events do not necessarily have to continue if we are suggesting that the Multicultural Festival is about multicultural harmony, if they are not directly related to an outcome

which can be attributed to multicultural. We have had some from some of our embassies, for example.

The Chinese embassy have been particularly helpful over the last few years. They brought in the disabled people's performing troupe, for example, which had a flow-on to our own disability community. We had the Mongolian stuff. We had a brilliant production film brought in by the Egyptian embassy showing contemporary language, which is something we have been using as a target for ourselves for some time now.

But some of the other activities we have had are a bit iffy. The Show Us Your Roots one is a bit iffy. It is great comedy, but I do not know whether it actually contributes to promoting harmony. The Opera by the Lake and the Fringe Festival are another two which are, if you like, flagpole events that attract people. We measure those up against the harmony. One of the measures that I use is the degree to which the conversation about our festival resounds around the embassy circuit and our communities as I go around some of the community events. I have just been reminded that the Egyptians also brought the Egyptian disabled blind orchestra as well to Canberra, which was just sensational.

MR SMYTH: They had a wonderful belly dancing film as well.

Mr Hargreaves: I did not go to that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I take it from that that you are looking at possibly reviewing those signature events in particular, such as the Fringe Festival?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, you can. I can see where you are heading, and I am happy to go down that track. People have been trying to bait me into going down that track for some time, so I am happy to do it. The festival is reviewed every year for us to determine such things as the size. For example, at the conclusion of the 2007 festival, we decided to expand it out, given the interest that was expressed. It went into the Glebe Park part of town for the 2009 festival. I do not know whether going into Glebe Park was all that successful. When you take into account the feedback of the stall holders that were there, did they achieve what they tried achieve? In the evaluation, which I have not received yet, those sorts of things are looked at.

When it comes to looking at other events going forward, it depends on who is paying the bill—very much so. The big aim that I want to achieve probably by the end of this term, if I can—because I have been at this project for about 4½ years now—is the National Multicultural Festival becoming a community-owned and run event, not one put on by the government. It would be run by a board of multicultural community representatives—people with expertise, like the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the arts community. They would take it over and run it and the ACT government would become the major sponsor, if you like, but not the only group paying the bills.

MS LE COUTEUR: That must already be the case.

Mr Hargreaves: No, it is not. We actually pay most of the money for the festival.

MS LE COUTEUR: You are talking about a number of organisations donating

things to it, which is effectively—

Mr Hargreaves: To give you an idea of the construct, the festival can cost in one year anywhere between \$750,000 and \$900,000.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that the major part of your discretionary expenditure?

Mr Hargreaves: For the festival? No.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, I mean: is the Multicultural Festival the major part of your discretionary expenditure in multiculturalism?

Mr Hargreaves: It is certainly a significant one, yes, but it is dedicated to that. The amount of money that is spent out of the OMA budget per se quite specifically for the 2009 festival was \$400,000 or \$410,000. In previous years we have had sponsorship from the Tradies for \$130,000 and we have had sponsorship from other people for \$20,000 here, \$30,000 there. A lot of the events will be dependent upon whether those sponsorships which are directly related continue. If their sponsor walks, what we try and do is find another one. If we cannot, that is the end of that. But if it is really connected to a multicultural harmony outcome then we will try and look at our own priorities to shuffle things.

MS BRESNAN: Who actually makes the decision now—because you said there were a couple of things you did not think were appropriate—about what parts of the festival go ahead and what is included in the festival?

Mr Hargreaves: At the conclusion of the evaluation process—remembering that we start the planning of one festival before the conclusion of another—

MS BRESNAN: Who is actually making these decisions, though?

Mr Hargreaves: I am going to tell you that. It is a process, and I would just like to let you know the process. Once that is done with the evaluation and the proposals to go forward, which come out of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, we have a festival director and that festival director will put a concept of a festival together on lines that we have determined, based on previous experience.

MS BRESNAN: Who is determining that?

Mr Hargreaves: The concept is put together by OMA and brought to me. I make that decision. Then when it comes to the pieces within it, we go away and have a look at the cost of it and whether or not we have sources of funds to pay for it. For example, Opera by the Lake had specific funding. It was not the government funding that particular activity. When we determined that the sponsor was going to walk, all the stoppers were pulled out to try and get another sponsor for that. In fact, it took about three months longer than we had hoped, and we were unsuccessful. That is why we did not go ahead with it. The determination of whether or not something will go ahead, the final decision, rests with me.

MS BRESNAN: You said there are a couple of events that you did not think

promoted a certain part of the festival. I know you mentioned community harmony, but surely there are other things that are considered in that about promoting community participation and other issues about diversity. So there is no decision-making body that provides input as to what they think should go into the festival?

Mr Hargreaves: That is where I want it to be.

MS BRESNAN: I know you said that, but now—

Mr Hargreaves: We are not there now.

MS BRESNAN: So you make the decision.

Mr Hargreaves: I make that decision. I know it is a difficult thing for some people to grasp, when they would like the community to do it, but at the moment the government will carry the whole of the risk of putting on the festival. I do not want to do that. Secondly, we have quite a number of festivals or activities during the year which can provide satisfaction for that need that may emerge for other cultural opportunities. I tried to explain it to somebody the other day.

For example, we had a production of Beethoven's Ninth, a nice relevant one that popped up in Llewellyn Hall recently which was put on by the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. It is just part of their program. To me, that does not have an ethnic community connotation about it. If, on the other hand, it was put on and sponsored by the German community in Canberra to showcase a significant German composer, we would say, "Well, that could possibly have a run." So a particular activity may get a run, depending on what outcome is trying to be achieved.

MS BRESNAN: You said there is an evaluation.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS BRESNAN: Who does that evaluation?

Mr Hargreaves: The Office of Multicultural Affairs.

MS BRESNAN: I know you said that you look at how many stalls there have been and you talk to embassies, but who else are you talking to?

Mr Hargreaves: The stall holders themselves. The stall holders are not only people selling frankfurts—

MS BRESNAN: No, I know that, but I am just wondering who else you speak to.

Mr Hargreaves: There are information stalls and we speak to those people. It is about the collection of information in many different forms. Nic Manikis is the director of OMA and he can let you know the processes more definitely.

MS BRESNAN: It would be nice to know who you spoke to.

Mr Hargreaves: At the end of the day, though, I will look at this. I think this really needs to be known by the community. When the evaluation comes to me, I have a look at it. I have got this dedication to hand this over to the community to run. I am going to make sure that it does have the multicultural outcomes that I am seeking if I am going to be investing \$400,000 in it. Anyway, it is not the next decision.

MS BRESNAN: Do we have those outcomes articulated anywhere?

Mr Hargreaves: The multicultural strategy is essentially where our direction is. It is in that whole direction.

Mr Manikis: The evaluation report is a process where we receive feedback each year from the people that work closely in putting the festival on the ground. That includes our logistics coordinator, our festival director and the key people that are involved in all the other activities. They provide feedback on the ground. We also receive feedback from service providers—written, in most cases. We also receive feedback from the community, members who were there as audience, some solicited but we do receive both negative and positive feedback.

MS BRESNAN: So is that an informal process?

Mr Manikis: It is an informal process that we go through but we do compile a report at the end of it. It is not structured because essentially from year to year the elements of the festival remain the same. They have remained the same essentially since its inception.

Mr Hargreaves: About 20 years ago.

Mr Manikis: The main events have always been the food and dance spectacular, the Chinese new year celebrations, the Greek Glendi, the Latin-American community groups—

Mr Hargreaves: Carnivale.

Mr Manikis: Carnivale. They form the spine of the festival, I suppose. We do get feedback. What we have been doing over the years is taking note of that feedback. The reason the festival has got to the stage where it is today is that we have listened to the feedback that we have received. We have put out extra seating. We have spread the festival out further. We have put up better signage. We have promoted the festival in different ways that have come to us through feedback from previous festivals. We have engaged the embassies in different ways that have been suggested in previous years. It has been a cumulative effect over the years to get to the stage where we are today.

MS BRESNAN: When you say the stage we are at today, what is that?

Mr Manikis: The stage we are at today? I can describe the 2009 festival for you—

MS BRESNAN: No, I was there, so that is fine. I am just trying to get to—

Mr Hargreaves: You were not all over it. You just were there for a couple of events.

MS BRESNAN: I went to quite a few events, so—

Mr Hargreaves: I went five times more than you did.

MS BRESNAN: Unless someone was following me—

THE CHAIR: All right, we will keep asking questions. I was not cutting you off then, Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: No. What I am trying to get to is if there are any sort of set goals or outcomes that you set for the festival or is it an informal sort of process, which is just—

Mr Manikis: The goal of the festival from the outset is a showcase and celebration of Canberra's cultural diversity in the context of our multicultural groups and their traditions and heritage—full stop. That is the festival—my understanding of the festival and the team's understanding of the festival. That is what it was funded for from day one. It has been funded all the way through. We have had the fortune of the business sector coming on board throughout the years. We have had the arts sector coming on board. We have had the community sector very strongly supporting it. The Canberra community support, as you know, the events and the program. Some events are run autonomously and funded and are just part of the program. Other events are funded by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the ACT government.

The other goal, of course, is that it is one of the major opportunities throughout the calendar year for the diplomatic missions to come on board and feel that they are part of the Canberra community. The importance of that aspect of the festival, the engagement that occurs at the grassroots level and the opportunity for that engagement by the diplomatic missions, is sometimes overlooked. We get no end of comments from ambassadors and their staff about their engagement with the community and how that has a positive effect for them.

I must say also that there is another dimension of the festival and that is the promotion of Canberra itself offshore, overseas. Through the embassies and their participation in the event, we get quite a bang in terms of publicity. When groups come over here, there is a lot of publicity in the home country, in the cities that those groups come from. So there are a lot of angles and lot of dimensions to this festival. But at its core the objective that we try to achieve, given that we live in a multicultural society and we define multiculturalism as allowing individuals and groups to express their heritage and traditions within the legal frameworks of our community, is for those multicultural groups to have an opportunity to do that.

MS BURCH: If I can—

THE CHAIR: I will give a follow-up to Ms Burch and then on to Mr Doszpot.

MS BURCH: In the discussion around the festival and in response to a question from

Ms Le Couteur earlier, you said it was a significant part of your spend. So I am assuming it is a significant part within the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MS BURCH: Given across other jurisdictions the diversity, range and positioning of multicultural affairs, can you give us a snapshot about where it sits here and what are the major planks, in addition to the multicultural festival, that play an important part?

Mr Hargreaves: One of the things that we have noticed with regard to multicultural services is that in other jurisdictions, as with here, we concentrate on things like our language programs, cultural awareness programs, religious acceptance programs, migrant settlement services, and a range of things, specialised ones, around the typical new type of migrant; for example, cooking classes for Sudanese guys—all of these sorts of things. We put some money out into the multicultural sector to do that. For example, I have just announced \$60,000 going out in multicultural community grants to assist in the ethnic languages provision by the Ethnic Schools Association. Thirty-three organisations got some money to promote that.

But the other jurisdictions do not have a big hit to say, “We are a welcoming city”—or a welcoming area—“for refugees and displaced people” or migrants and that. They do not have that. They do not have that promotion of the good part of multiculturalism in the states to anywhere near the same intensity as we do and, as such, they do not actually receive the positivity and the respect that Canberra does.

I have actually encountered this overseas, on one business trip and on private trips. People have remarked to me about how wonderful Canberra is in terms of its multiculturalism. It is such that people from one part of Sydney came down and spoke to Mr Manikis about having a similar sort of effect in Sydney, so he has gone up there and given them the benefit of the way we do things here.

I would not say that ours is unique, but it is pretty close to it, and we use it unashamedly as a tool to show the rest of the world that we do not cop intolerance here; we do not cop discrimination here. We not only have human rights legislation and all that to prevent all of this stuff; we have our facing up to racism strategy, our multicultural strategy—and a third actual document in its draft form at the moment—and we do not just talk about it; we live it.

One of the beautiful things I must say about working in this Assembly is the bipartisan way in which we go about it. We argue the toss about the extent to which we do, not whether we do it, which I think is healthy.

MS BURCH: Are other organisations part of your overall strategy; not all the activities and functions come out of the office?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. This draft multicultural strategy is the third, as I said. The first one was the framework. I think it was done under your government, Brendan, actually, the framework—credit where it is due. When I became minister we had these forums and then had a summit, out of which came a community-driven strategy. Then, over the next four years, we delivered on that strategy and then had another summit and did

it. It is about them telling us what they want to do and us getting in a partnership and doing it with them. It is not about us doing it and dragging them along behind.

MS LE COUTEUR: So when will the strategy be finalised?

Mr Manikis: We have had quite a response to the first consultation. We sent out the draft late last year and got 26 submissions in, but those submissions were quite substantial with quite a divergence of views about how we should be going forward. We have analysed all those views and what we are trying to do is to give expression to as many of those views as possible in the way we structure the strategy. There were things coming back to us that the first draft was not even a strategy; it was just a report of a summit that we had last year; that it ought to be a comprehensive document with actions and indicators and what have you. There was an opposite view that it should be at the highest level and just contain a vision and the principles. So it is quite a complex task at the moment, we have been looking at it over the last month or so and we hope that certainly by the end of July we should be able to come out with a second draft that the minister will —

Mr Hargreaves: What I propose to do, Ms Le Couteur and chair, is to put a ministerial statement together showing the process that we have gone through, showing what the views are, table the draft strategy that will go out to the rest of the community for them to finally come forward and say, “This is it; that is what we want,” and then I will table that and that is our road map for the next four years.

MS LE COUTEUR: And what sort of timing, if any, is there for that?

Mr Hargreaves: About August, with a bit of luck; it may go a little bit beyond that.

MS LE COUTEUR: August this year, so it will be definitely in time to influence next year’s budget—

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely.

MS LE COUTEUR: for all your wonderful new initiatives.

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely. You will have to take the baskets for them, Ms Le Couteur—not with a Little Red Riding Hood cape, however.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has some questions.

MR DOSZPOT: Back to the original question: on page 242 of budget paper 4, accountability indicator relating to ministerial reports: minister, you may recall I contacted you with regard to some issues with the grants process that were experienced by one of the multicultural groups here in the ACT, and I thank you for the response. I believe that issue is being resolved. For the record, however, do any of the other ministerial reports identified in this indicator include any other complaints made to the Office of Multicultural Affairs about the grants process?

Mr Manikis: To my knowledge, that was the one and only complaint—

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. That is good.

Mr Manikis: that I am aware of.

MR DOSZPOT: That is good. I note that there are not a great number of accountability indicators under 3.2.

Mr Hargreaves: No. What page is that?

MR DOSZPOT: Page 242. On the previous page, 241, under community services, output 3.1, there are a couple of points that I thought may have relevance to multicultural affairs, points b and c .I am not sure if it might be useful to have this sort of report included in the multicultural affairs area.

Mr Hargreaves: I will take that on board. I think they are quite reasonable suggestions. I just have to see how, mechanically, it can happen. But I do not see a problem with it at this stage. So thank you for the suggestion.

MR DOSZPOT: The other supplementary on this with regard to multicultural affairs is with regard to the Theo Notaras centre.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Have there been any changes to the tenancy? Have there been any changes to the tenancy at this point?

Mr Hargreaves: In the last 12 months?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Mr Manikis: Yes, there have been. Some new groups have come in and some have left.

Mr Hargreaves: We will have to get you a list of those. We will get a list of those for the committee.

MR DOSZPOT: If you would not mind, thank you. How many groups currently occupy the premises, Mr Manikis?

Mr Manikis: Can I get the figure for you? I do not have the exact figure.

MR DOSZPOT: If you can give me some indication of that later on that would be fine. Thank you.

MR SMYTH: And with that could you tell us the meterage of each of the different groups? How much of it was occupied by public servants and how much was occupied by community groups?

Mr Manikis: I might say that we answered that question last time. There has been no change since we answered it in relation to the amount of meterage that has been

occupied by public servants.

MR SMYTH: That will be a very easy answer to provide then.

Mr Hargreaves: We will just look up the *Hansard* ourselves and provide it.

MR SMYTH: Yes, that is good. It is a different committee and it is entitled to have its questions answered.

Mr Hargreaves: I know. We do not mind doing the research. We will do the research for you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Thank you. There has been a multicultural summit and some youth input. Also, the committee has had its attention drawn to community inclusion around a youth service. I am just curious about what is happening with that program and what we are doing around multicultural youth.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you very much, Ms Burch. I am grateful for the question because we need to put a few things on record so that everybody is on the same hymn sheet. The Multicultural Youth Services received, from January 2005 to 31 December 2007, \$231,233 and then an additional amount of \$118,200 from January 2008 to 30 June 2009. Additionally, they received project funding this year of \$500 for a newsletter and \$4,000 for driving lessons for young migrants under the 2008-09 multicultural grants program.

That original amount of money, the \$200,000 and the \$118,000, was a one-off program called bridge to empowerment. It was to employ a full-time equivalent project officer to effectively address the gap for case management for employment, education, accommodation and community participation for 22-year-old to 25-year-old refugees and migrants in the ACT, which we saw as a significant gap that was not being addressed. It was never intended to be an ongoing program when the grants were issued. I also understand that the organisation has received an additional \$150,000 for case work for 12-year-old to 21-year-old refugees and migrants from FaHCSIA. Essentially, that project, as far as we were concerned, came to a conclusion on 30 June this year, didn't it?

Mr Manikis: 30 June this year.

Mr Hargreaves: That is right. That is where there was some misunderstanding. Some people felt that the amount of money we were talking about was recurrent funding and ongoing. It was around a drop-in centre. That was not the case at all. The drop-in centre is funded quite differently, as I understand it—it is from the commonwealth government and not by us. So that is where we are standing with that. We will continue, from time to time, to provide funds to various organisations based on our project funding.

MS BURCH: I think the understanding was that everyone knew that the community inclusion funds were coming to a close on 30 June and the funding was for the drop-in

centres.

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MS BURCH: It was not?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MS BURCH: So what was the community inclusion funding?

Mr Hargreaves: This is my information anyway. It was the bridge to empowerment project. The drop-in centre—

MS BURCH: I will have to check that because that is not my understanding.

Mr Hargreaves: I have to say a couple of things about that. The drop-in centre is something we have never, ever contemplated funding on a recurrent basis. It has never, ever been put to me to support it on a recurrent basis, never in the 4½ years that I have been minister—never once.

MS BURCH: Given that, I guess we do have a high proportion of new arrivals being young refugees in the ACT. You said there was a gap. That gap is still there. A high number of young people use that service every day, so the need is there.

Mr Hargreaves: I do not know about that.

MS BURCH: Well, there is.

Mr Hargreaves: I do not know about that.

MS BURCH: That is the information we—

Mr Hargreaves: The information I have is that that is not quite the truth, but—

MS BURCH: I do not know where you are getting your information from because that is what the understanding is. The question then is: what is actually being done for young refugees? Obviously there is a need. I think that is an issue which comes up with Indigenous services as well. There is that need for a specific type of service because they might not go to generalised services. Given that young people are identified as a priority in the multicultural strategy, what is being done?

Mr Hargreaves: What we need to do, though, is understand that Multicultural Youth Services is not the only way in which we connect with young people in the multicultural community.

MS BURCH: No, it is not. I understand that.

Mr Hargreaves: I am not making any value judgements on the MYS at all because I have been a big supporter of the MYS for a very long time. But there are other ways in which we provide assistance and services to young people who come either as

refugees or as members of families of refugees. I will get Martin Hehir to give you some more details.

Mr Hehir: We are still talking with the Multicultural Youth Services in terms of what we are trying to achieve. One of the concerns that we have with the drop-in centre model is that it is not achieving the full range of connections that you would want. One of the things that you try and achieve in terms of youth drop-in centres is that when people have issues you can actually connect them to other services when they need them. So you have got connections to other service providers and some specialist services. So if someone shows up with some concerns around sexual health, you would be able to connect them to—

MS BURCH: I think they do that work at Multicultural Youth Services.

Mr Hehir: My understanding is that they are actually isolated and they are not necessarily well connected to the mainstream service. I have only recently been briefed on this so I would need to go back and check and make sure of that. But certainly when my youth services team went out to have a look at it, they were a bit concerned that the drop-in centre was getting in the way of the case management. In fact, the staff were not really getting the time to do some of the full case management and they were forming the view that it was not really providing connection to other mainstream services to the full extent that we would like.

We certainly recognise that newly arrived immigrant and refugee youth are an ongoing area that we need to work with. We are looking at how we can best deliver that so we are still talking to Multicultural Youth Services. We are looking at the most effective means of delivering that service, but it would be fair to say that we are a little bit concerned that it is not making the connections to mainstream youth services that we would like it to.

MS BRESNAN: You say “mainstream youth services”. Where are you expecting those young people to go to? Given, I guess, they are not going to the mainstream services now, would that not seem to be an issue there?

Mr Hehir: It may well be. That is one of the things that we are talking with Multicultural Youth Services about—what is making it work in terms of the people that they are attracting. My understanding is that they are attracting predominantly one ethnic group. It is not exclusive but a significant portion of the clientele is one particular ethnic group. They are being successful, certainly with one and maybe some others, but we would need to have a talk about how that is going more broadly. We also need to be able to identify where some additional support could come in. One of the issues there is, again, there is not much other service being run by this organisation, so we would be looking to see whether there is a more efficient way of delivering a very similar service in terms of the overall cost structure.

MS BURCH: Because they do receive funding from other sources and other programs as well.

Mr Hehir: They do.

Mr Hargreaves: We give a couple of quid to Companion House that does a lot of work with young men because they need it, because they have just got here. There are a number of other spots around town. We have not only got people who are displaced and who are refugees, we have actually got the kids of migrants who have come into town as well who, for all intents and purposes, are not running away from something horrible; they are just here because they are. But they have a culture difference to get over, so some of our ordinary multicultural groups are tackling it as well. They have similar sorts of issues. We are just looking at which is the best model, but we need to consider this with MYS. It is against the background that this is not recurrent funding that they have lost.

MS BRESNAN: No, we understand that.

Mr Hargreaves: I think we are in furious agreement that we need to look at the services, but we are not going to do it that way.

MS BURCH: No. You said there are other spots around town. Are those other spots interacting with mainstream services? Are there any concerns with the way they are operating?

Mr Hehir: I am sorry; which other spots?

MS BURCH: The minister just said there are other spots around town and you are doing things.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. I will use the same example again: Companion House does that. They do specific things. For example, they teach the young Sudanese guys to cook. But they also need to put them in touch with mainstream services around getting a job, getting their education, because their qualifications are not recognised—all of those sorts—and connecting them with mainstream services.

MS BRESNAN: My understanding was—

Mr Hargreaves: Not just looking at that one little bit.

MS BRESNAN: My understanding is MYS does that as well. Perhaps you can provide me with some other information.

Mr Hehir: I am happy to check that, but the briefing I received the other day was that there was concern about the level of connection with mainstream services. I am happy to follow that up.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you seem to be disputing Ms Bresnan's numbers in terms of how much this service is used. What numbers do you have in terms of—

Mr Hargreaves: I do not carry them with me, but what we are actually seeing is an understanding—one member has an understanding of a certain flowthrough as being of certain significance, and I do not dispute that and I respect that, but it may not be the same as mine. You may have, for example, the idea that 20 people going through a youth centre is significant—

MS BRESNAN: How many?

Mr Hargreaves: I am just taking this as an example. Say—

MS BRESNAN: I guess my understanding is that they were receiving 60 a day.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, but I am not arguing about the number. Whenever we talk about the numbers a day, we need to compare it with other bits of things that you and I have all become acquainted with. It is a very subjective thing, and that was the only point that I was making really—that it was a subjective view on the significance of the numbers. I respect members' opinions if they feel that something is significant and I do not; I still respect that.

THE CHAIR: Okay, on those, are you able to get us the numbers that come through that?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS BRESNAN: That would be good.

MR SMYTH: And, beyond the numbers, Mr Hehir, you said you had a briefing on this issue the other day. Is there a document to substantiate what you have said?

Mr Hehir: No. It was a verbal briefing provided by officers pending negotiation with Multicultural Youth Services.

MR SMYTH: So when we issue grants do we not have an accounting process where people tell us exactly what they have achieved with the money that they have been given?

Mr Hehir: My understanding is that there is a self-assessment process as part of the CIF process, so they would have done that, yes.

Mr Hargreaves: Except that the CIF is going to disappear.

MR SMYTH: That is the acquittal of the grant?

Mr Hehir: Yes.

MR SMYTH: And what do they say? What does that data from that report say?

Mr Hehir: I do not have it on me; I would need to check that. I think we are disputing the figures that they have supplied to us. The officers from the youth services area within the department, as I said, expressed concern about the mainstream and whether that was the most efficient way of delivering that service.

MS BRESNAN: Sorry, just a quick—

Mr Hargreaves: But—

MS BRESNAN: It was actually not around multicultural—

Mr Hargreaves: I just want to tell Mr Smyth, though, that the CIF is actually administered by Minister Gallagher, not me, so I am talking from almost as much ignorance as you are.

MR SMYTH: So it is not funded out of the multicultural line?

MS BRESNAN: We have been passed around to everybody about that.

Mr Hargreaves: Okay. I will just flick you back to Minister Gallagher—sorry about that. If I had them, we could stop, but I do not.

MS LE COUTEUR: We ask everyone this question, minister.

Mr Hargreaves: I know.

MS BRESNAN: We hope someone will take responsibility for it

MS LE COUTEUR: Perhaps someone will.

Ms Hargreaves: Yes, well, take it up in your Tuesday meeting.

MS BURCH: I think the message is that we are desiring to see entry points for multicultural youth, really; that is the message.

MS BRESNAN: I guess the question then is: are we going to have funding for a multicultural new service?

Mr Hargreaves: Not in this financial year, no.

MS BRESNAN: That is obvious, not in this financial year, but, given that that has been identified as a priority in the multicultural strategy as well, what is going to happen around that?

Mr Hargreaves: With the multicultural strategy, when it comes to the funding of the initiatives which are contained within there, we look at it and say: “How much can we do to satisfy this particular outcome that is being required from the community?” Sometimes the outcome is determined by the amount of money we have available. To be brutal about it, the amount of money we have available to implement the strategy going forward is \$79,000, plus indexation.

MR SMYTH: Just on that funding, is it possible to get a breakdown of output 3.2 into how much is devoted to multicultural, how much to status of women, how much to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, how much to ageing, and any other?

MS LE COUTEUR: So the entire funding for 3.2 is \$79,000?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MR SMYTH: Sorry, is he taking it on notice or is he going to give it to us?

Mr Hargreaves: No. That is the amount of money that we have set aside for activities within the multicultural community. It is the amount of money that we used to hand over, just hand over—

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay, it is sort of a small grant.

Mr Hargreaves: to a particular body and say: “There you go. You go and do everything out of there in the multicultural community,” and, because that went belly up, I took that money back and said, “I will project fund from now on and I will be guided in the expenditure of those funds by the community’s expression of what they want the funds used for through the multicultural strategy.”

MS BRESNAN: Okay, so it is basically a small grants program really.

Mr Hargreaves: In a sense.

Mr Hehir: We have the break-up, and I am happy to table that if you would like me to. I am happy to read it out in terms of where we are up to. In terms of government payment for output, the Office of Multicultural Affairs is \$2.538 million. The Office of Indigenous Affairs is \$0.851 million. That is the GPO; there are other break-ups in terms other than your salaries, super, admin, grants, depreciation. I do not have the break-up with me of the women’s and seniors grants program but we can certainly do that. This identifies the grants programs as well.

Mr Hargreaves: We will table this document for you. You will find, for example, that it has got how much money we have apportioned for the National Multicultural Festival, how much we apportioned for the multicultural centre, the Notaras centre, how much we apply to citizenship ceremonies, community support funds, and how much general administration is—NAIDOC week et cetera.

MR SMYTH: If you are going to get the others and present them in a table form, could you also give us last year’s numbers so we can do a quick comparison?

Mr Manikis: Yes.

MR SMYTH: On page 235 the description of output class 3.2 actually says:

Provision of support and policy development activities, including—

these are obviously the main ones—

multicultural affairs, ageing, the status of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs

What are the other activities covered by this output class?

Mr Hehir: That is mainly Meredith's area. Hopefully I will not paraphrase you incorrectly, Mr Smyth, but the question was in terms of the group. The description reads "Provision of support and policy development activities, including multicultural affairs, ageing, the status of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs".

MR SMYTH: Yes, so they are the four major ones.

Mr Hehir: What else is included in that—in the support and policy development activities?

MR SMYTH: The task for the committee now is to see how many more of the staff we can actually get up here and see if we cannot fill the entire table—

Mr Hargreaves: Do you know, if you had it turned around the right way, instead of buggerising around with it like this, we might have been able to do that.

MR SMYTH: That point has been made.

THE CHAIR: That is not a decision for the committee, unfortunately, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: I thought you had more power than that, though, Mr Seselja. I thought you could walk on water—but clearly not with the holes in your feet.

THE CHAIR: The Speaker runs this place.

Mr Hehir: The funding includes our central policy organisational services area, which includes the policy—

MR SMYTH: For the entire department?

Mr Hehir: Yes.

MR SMYTH: It is included in this as well?

Mr Hehir: There is a very small team there in terms of the policy team that is within that. That provides quite broad-ranging policy advice right across the gamut of the department's portfolio responsibilities, so it is quite a broad area.

MR SMYTH: So how much of the funding goes to the central policy team?

Ms Whitten: That team works to Minister Gallagher, so I will have to take that on notice.

MR SMYTH: Okay.

Ms Whitten: And the Office for Ageing is \$1.17 million.

MR SMYTH: And the central policy team?

Ms Whitten: I will take that one on notice.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, I just wanted to ask you about the funding that is no longer being provided to the elder abuse advocacy program. What is the rationale behind that?

Ms Whitten: ADACAS received \$90,000 in 2008-09. As part of that funding it was—

Mr Hehir: Can I just clarify that? That was not additional funding; it was for an appropriation. That was something that we achieved within the department. There was an internal reallocation of resources within the department.

THE CHAIR: When it was funded.

Mr Hehir: The \$91,000?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Hehir: So that was not through a budget process of the Assembly. That was something that we looked at within our department and it was funded internally.

THE CHAIR: And found money for the elder abuse program.

Mr Hargreaves: It was a one-off too, I understand.

Ms Whitten: Yes, it was one-off. It was just a deed of grant for one year.

Mr Hargreaves: Just for one year.

THE CHAIR: It was a one-off. Is there any reason why it should not continue? Has it been successful?

Ms Whitten: The program still goes until 30 June. We have had one six-monthly report from ADACAS. I think that in April they had had about 17 cases; three have been closed. We really need to see the second report. We have also conducted a review of the elder abuse prevention program and we received the report in January this year. That report is on the website.

THE CHAIR: Is this a review of the program?

Ms Whitten: Of the whole program. We have spoken with our elder abuse prevention program network members on doing some policy work around what the program will look like into the future and then making some decisions about the support services that are needed in the community.

THE CHAIR: I understand that the review recommends a range of information and education strategies. Is that what is being looked at now in terms of going forward?

Ms Whitten: Yes. We want to look at a coordinated and persistent approach and also look at training to front-line workers. We already have some very clearly identified pathways for people to be referred to. We just want to see what else we need to do, particularly in terms of making people aware that elder abuse does occur in our community.

Mr Hargreaves: It happens to me all the time in the Assembly!

THE CHAIR: Given that it was not, as Mr Hehir said, specifically budget funded—it was funded out of departmental resources—is further funding likely to happen again or are we going to have to wait until the next budget round for next year's budget?

Mr Hehir: I suppose it will depend on how quickly the policy work is done and to what extent our budget can find that funding to do it. We would need to have a look at what else would have to be dropped off and discuss that with the relevant minister, particularly given how tight the budget is and we have still got substantial savings to achieve in the following years. We would want to have a look at how that was to be delivered. I am not ruling it out, but I am saying that it would be quite difficult to do.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think you were saying that you would not consider doing anything until after you finished the review.

Mr Hehir: The review has been completed and is available. There is a separate piece of policy work that the review effectively recommends.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you would not consider doing anything else until that has finished?

Ms Whitten: We think that the right thing to do is to work with our existing partners, including ADACAS.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said that there were 17 cases and three have closed. My maths says there are probably 14.

Mr Hargreaves: Four.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, I wrote down 17 cases and three closed.

Mr Hargreaves: No, I was just checking to see—

MS LE COUTEUR: Which leaves 14 open. What happens to them?

Ms Whitten: That is a matter that we need to talk about with ADACAS. They do have funding through the HACC program as well. I am sorry; just to be clear, I made a mistake. Four of the 17 have closed.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thirteen to go then—not a significant difference.

Ms Whitten: We still need to talk to ADACAS about those specific cases. I do not

have that detail here.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. So the situation is that, given all of this, there is no organisation which supports legally competent older people who are suffering non-criminal abuse from a family member. You are telling me that come 30 June that is the situation?

Mr Hargreaves: No, that is not right.

Ms Whitten: ADACAS takes on an advocacy role. There are a number of support services that already exist within our community and we have clear pathways to refer people to them. We have a document which was developed as part of the existing program which we can table for the committee if that would be helpful.

Mr Hargreaves: The Chinese community also, Ms Le Couteur, has a very significant anti-elder abuse program running where, if the community actually get on to their association executive, there are referrals out to look at that. Chin Wong is the person who runs that program.

MS LE COUTEUR: But for those older people who are not Chinese there is not any service, basically?

Mr Hargreaves: Every one of them needs a service; we guarantee that. But it is not true to say that the support services are not there. We are talking about the referral system and the network—that is all we are talking about—and SupportLink's role in it.

MS LE COUTEUR: So there is a support service but you think the referral network is the issue.

Mr Hargreaves: That is what we are working on at the moment.

MR SMYTH: If we go a little further: in terms of a continuity of service issue—and you might like to take this on, minister—isn't it a bit premature to stop a service, do a policy and then reconnect to something, when you could, if you needed to, tweak the service? Is there not some sense in continuing the service until such time as the policy work is completed?

Mr Hehir: I think I said earlier that it is going to be very difficult for us to find the money again this financial year. It is something that we could look at, but I think the presumption that there are no supports out there is quite wrong. There is actually quite a strong network in place.

MR SMYTH: But ADACAS was funded to do the advocacy.

Ms Whitten: And it was the extension of their program—

MR SMYTH: So who is doing advocacy?

Ms Whitten: They have already been funded through the HACC program. In terms of those clients, we would really like to talk with them about what other services are

available. When talking with the head of ADACAS in March, she indicated that there was some more flexibility around those arrangements as well. In terms of the other services that we could talk to, there is the Council on the Ageing, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and a range of other services that we can work with, including the Public Trustee and Victim Support ACT.

MR SMYTH: But, as a general principle, you would agree that stopping something to start some policy work and then come back to something might be inefficient in many ways? It begs the question: when will the policy work be finished?

Ms Whitten: We are looking at a six-month project.

MR SMYTH: So this will finish on 30 June. There is a six-month policy project being done which will deliver something to the minister at the end of December and will feed into the next budget round, which may end up leading to a full year's gap in terms of that service if it is found not to be delivered somewhere else. I just wonder if that is acceptable.

Mr Hehir: I suppose, from our perspective, there is a network in place. We want to look at what alternatives there are. As I have said, the conversations are ongoing. We have certainly said it is not our intent to do that funding again; it was one-off funding. I am happy to have a look at it, where I can, as I said earlier, but it will be a very difficult service to fund, particularly given that we need to look at the policy. I think the review was quite clear around the need to have a look at the policy as a whole.

Mr Hargreaves: I think Ms Whitten actually indicated that this is an extension to our relationship with ADACAS anyway; the one-off is an extension to it. We are not talking about the base here; we are just talking about an extension. We do not have the funds to continue the extension.

MR SMYTH: If you fund an extension, surely it is recognition of a need?

Mr Hargreaves: No, we recognise it as a one-off exercise. It was agreed at the very beginning that this would be a one-off, and we all know that one-offs come to a conclusion and that is the end of it. People sometimes mistakenly think that if the one-off is continued for whatever reason then it is going to have a life which goes forward. We have to make sure they do not think that; otherwise, what is the point in doing a one-off anyway?

MR SMYTH: Okay. That gets back to the rhetorical question: shouldn't you do the policy work and the review before the one-off finishes so you have some continuity, rather than stopping and starting programs? Or was it the intention—

Mr Hargreaves: There are two six-monthly reports required. We have got the first one but we have not got the second one. But the review has started before the end of it, yes.

THE CHAIR: How much will the six months of policy work cost, approximately? What is the full-time staff equivalent?

Ms Whitten: We are looking at a senior officer grade C.

THE CHAIR: So is it one senior officer working full time or part time on that?

Ms Whitten: Full time.

THE CHAIR: For six months.

MS BURCH: Just to be clear: what support networks remain? Have you lost any support structures or networks?

Ms Whitten: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: Well, yes.

THE CHAIR: We have lost the elder abuse program.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, we have lost one program.

Ms Whitten: The program for ADACAS had already been put in place. The HACC funding already exists.

THE CHAIR: But that is for ADACAS generally.

Ms Whitten: My understanding from the head of ADACAS at the time I met with her in March was that there was some flexibility around the HACC program.

MS LE COUTEUR: So basically you are expecting ADACAS to take up this work with their other funding. That is, effectively, I think what—

Ms Whitten: We will work with ADACAS if there are people who come forward about where clients can be referred to.

Mr Hargreaves: And do the work of another model if necessary, given the experience of the procedure with this \$90,000.

Ms Whitten: We look forward to receiving this second report in terms of the services that they have offered over the last six months as well.

Meeting adjourned from 3.41 to 3.51 pm.

THE CHAIR: We will recommence. We are dealing now with ageing questions. Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: The over 55 centre in Tuggeranong: where will it go, when will it open and is it new or a refurb?

Mr Hargreaves: Or all of the above.

MR SMYTH: All of the above?

Mr Hargreaves: There is no conflict of interest here, is there? You have got another five years to go, as I understand it.

MR SMYTH: No, I am not old.

Mr Hargreaves: You are 50 this year, aren't you?

MR SMYTH: I am actually more concerned about you having somewhere to go. I wonder whether there is a conflict—

Mr Hargreaves: I know where I am going; I am getting the bloody cemetery sorted out in Tuggeranong. I know exactly where I am going.

MR SMYTH: Well, we can work on a site for you, John.

Mr Hargreaves: And I am not going to be planted standing up either, Caroline, because I like lying down; it is very good.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is clearly the end of estimates.

MR SMYTH: Mr Hehir is taking things seriously. I will talk to you; they can babble.

Mr Hargreaves: The story about the seniors facility is that the feasibility study is still on foot. We have not had the results of it yet. You would be aware, probably, that there are a couple of sites being considered. There were three possibilities considered, I think. There are a number of issues. I will not go into them just yet because we have not got the formal stuff back from the feasibility study. The amount of money that is being provided in the supplementary appropriations is \$200,000; that will cover us.

We are hoping to get the feasibility study in by the end of June—that was always the target—with the idea that we would hopefully have construction determined, site determined and design done possibly by just after Christmas. That is why you will see that the amount of \$1.4 million is spread over two financial years, because we would expect it to go over to June, July or August—somewhere around there. Do you want to add some more?

Mr Hehir: About September 2010 is the end date.

Mr Hargreaves: There you go.

MR SMYTH: September 2010.

MS BURCH: Completion date?

Mr Hargreaves: At this stage of the game it is the total, yes. And I am not going to officially open it, Brendan, until it is ready.

MR SMYTH: That is probably a good start.

Mr Hargreaves: Just to let you know.

MR SMYTH: There is a rumour that it will be named the John Hargreaves memorial centre.

Mr Hargreaves: No, that is out at the cemetery; that is the little chapel.

MS BURCH: On the positive ageing strategy, can you talk a bit about that? There has been a round of community consults and there is quite a bit of language around community input, community driven, community positive, and all of that. How much has the community put into it?

Mr Hargreaves: A lot.

MS BURCH: Where are we up to with the strategy?

Mr Hargreaves: We have had a few fora—three of them. They have been very well attended, with between 50 and 70 people at each one, if my memory serves me correctly, give or take a one-legged pirate. The idea, of course, was to develop a strategic plan going forward, and that is on foot. We are at the stage now, I believe, of looking at the feedback information we got from those three fora and we are going to put it together in that draft strategic plan.

It is the same process that applied with the multicultural strategy. Once we have got the draft up and running, it will then be taken back out to those participants and they will be asked to give us feedback. It will also be put on the web for people in the general community to make any comments on. We will then refine it down and present it to the Assembly as a final document. The strategic plan will focus on the five key areas of health and wellbeing, housing and accommodation, support services, transport, and work and retirement.

MS BURCH: And it relates to ageing from 55 right through to—

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. We are essentially—

MS BURCH: drop-off time?

Mr Hargreaves: regardless of the retiring age at 67, we decided that 55 was a good figure because it sounds like a good number.

Mr Hehir: Certainly, 55-plus is one of the things we are looking at at the front, but one of the key messages that came through from the community consultation was that, if you are going to talk about positive ageing, you need to talk to people before they hit 55, 60 or 65.

Mr Hargreaves: This is where Brendan comes into it.

MR SMYTH: Which obviously means there is no hope for you.

Mr Hargreaves: A waste of time for me.

Mr Hehir: A lot of the things that we can do in terms of planning and looking after ourselves are actually occurring much earlier in life. So, in a sense, the community is saying that it is not just about telling old people what is there for us; if you want to talk about positive ageing you need to start much earlier and be a little bit more strategic in working with that.

That does not mean we are not focusing on people who would regard themselves as older now. That would be a key component of that, and certainly there are a number of issues identified through that consultation process that are quite age-specific. I think the other—

MR SMYTH: Is there a policy document to underline that approach to the age of 55? If you are saying we have to start before they get to 55 to help them after they are 55, where is that being enunciated?

Mr Hehir: Certainly, most of the health planning would represent that; most of the financial planning would represent that. I am not sure there is an overarching document that would support that, but if you talk to your financial planner they would be saying to start early.

MR SMYTH: But are you putting together a document?

Mr Hehir: Yes, that would be right. The positive ageing strategy—

Mr Hargreaves: The strategy itself. One of the things we noticed when we had the forums, by the way, was the number of people who were under the age of 55 who came along and had their say, which was quite encouraging—not enough, in our view, but this is why we would put things out on the web and in the publicity to be put out when it is available, to encourage people who are under the age of 55 to have their say, appealing to a vested self-interest. At the end of the day, people who are under 55 will be the people who are going to inherit the environment that we set now. So we want them to help us to set that and not just leave it to us.

MS BURCH: When the strategy is in place, will it come back to other areas within your portfolio, as well as Health, to drive their services and programs?

Mr Hargreaves: It is an expression of what the community wants us to go forward with in these particular areas. In itself, it will inform the policy makers in Health, Disability, and Children, Youth and Family Services in terms of grandparental activity and those sorts of things, as a contributor, as an informant document. And it is one that we have asked the community to help compile. It is like the multicultural strategy and the housing strategies that we put forward. The community has given us their thoughts on where they want us to go. It will not drive the policy but it will inform it.

Mr Hehir: It is also important to recognise that there is an interdepartmental committee which has representation on it from most of the major ACT government agencies. It also has the chair of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing. We have invited National Seniors and the Council on the Ageing to provide members to that interdepartmental committee. We are taking it out broader than we would

normally do, just to make sure we get good feedback from people who are experts in that policy field as well. The committee, in doing the drafting, will have input from right across government, as well as the community. Again, that draft will then go back out to the community so that it can be checked and verified.

Ms Whitten: We are planning for that to go out in August and September. The commonwealth have also been invited to participate on the interdepartmental committee, given the range of services that are offered.

THE CHAIR: Minister, how many times have you met with your federal counterpart in the past 12 months?

Mr Hargreaves: Justine Elliot? Once.

THE CHAIR: Obviously, we have seen the report this week, with figures of about 500,000 people living in Canberra by 2050, with a big increase in the over-65s and the over-85s. What are you doing to lobby the federal government to ensure that we get our share of aged-care places and funding for our ageing population?

Mr Hargreaves: Essentially, we lobby the federal government in terms of the portfolio specifics. When it comes to nursing homes and things like that, the Minister for Health takes that charge on. My role in policy setting is to stitch together what we are doing in the ACT. It has not been done, particularly in the past. That is part of the role of the strategy and stuff that we are going forward with in this policy of positive ageing.

We recognise that, significantly, we do have an ageing population, but we also recognise that a lot of our people who are ageing are actually reasonably well off when they retire, relative to other places in the country. We have a lot of people in the ACT who do not—who will not be in that category and who will do it tough, and we are recognising that.

Our attitude to nursing home placements, for example, was that there was a chicken and egg situation going on in the not-too-distant past whereby applications for nursing home placements would be made by an organisation for commonwealth approval, and they would say, “Well, have you got the land?” They would say, “Not yet,” and the commonwealth would say, “Go away until you have.” Then they would go to the predecessor of the LDA and say, “Can we have some land, please, for nursing home beds,” and they would say, “Well, have you got the approval?” They would say, “No,” and they would be told, “Go away until you’ve got it.”

It was actually the Stanhope Labor government that broke that nexus and land banked specific pieces of land so that we could give in-principle agreement to people going forward to the commonwealth to get those approvals. You have seen the results of that emerge. The most notable one is the Goodwin Homes development in Monash, which is a big one. It is the same thing with the senior citizens one for the Tamil community that emerged in Isaacs.

THE CHAIR: I have a quick follow-up on some of these aged-care facilities. I understand some land has been allocated to the Baptist Church for aged-care facilities

in Griffith?

Mr Hargreaves: You would have to ask the LDA about that. Off the top of my head, I do not recall.

THE CHAIR: So you are not aware of—

Mr Hargreaves: I have a sense of it, yes. I think that piece of land, if I am not wrong, is the old O'Connell education centre; it was part of the old Griffith primary school.

THE CHAIR: So that is to be a redevelopment of that facility?

Mr Hargreaves: As I understand it. But that is calling on my memory, yes.

THE CHAIR: All right. So you do not know the status then of where that development is up to?

Mr Hargreaves: No, I do not.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MR SMYTH: It is okay; it is just a development that has been delayed by a decade because the previous government put aged care, back in the late—

Mr Hargreaves: We did not realise such self-interest would be applying in those days.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am interested in how your office is involved—or is it involved—in the affordable housing plan? The 2008 progress report indicated that in stage 2, which we think is now, the work would be undertaken to identify more ways of assisting older Canberrans into affordable housing.

Mr Hargreaves: The answer to your question is that the reason why ageing, disability and housing are grouped together in the same department is the synergies at their executive level; they actually talk to each other about how to go forward. So, when we talk about our housing needs or the satisfaction of the commonwealth needs around a certain number of places for older people, the conversation goes on with the people in the ageing thing, housing thing, as well as at the senior executive level.

One of the things that we do particularly well here is the small estates for older people. One of the ones that I visited, which was absolutely sensational, was in Farrer, just off Lambrigg Street. There are about 14 or 15 units in there—townhouse and older persons units. That is the sort of development we are starting to look at. We are also doing some work around Hartigan Gardens, looking at redeveloping that particular area in the context of the stimulus package. It is that sort of conversation. We have had a concentration through Housing on this particular issue before, in fact, the Office of the Ageing was created.

Mr Hehir: Could I add to that? I am a member of the task force that you referred to, so that is how we make sure that there is feed-in from our agency there.

MS LE COUTEUR: In that case, can I ask you about a couple of specific ideas which COTA have suggested, such as extending the stamp duty exemption that applies to pensioners to include low-income, self-funded retirees—

Mr Hargreaves: You would have to take that up with the Treasurer.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay, looking at social housing, specifically, that addresses older people's needs—

Mr Hargreaves: That is the one I just talked about. It is exactly—

MS LE COUTEUR: That is what you just talked about—so those were social housing ones. I thought they were just random developments—

Mr Hargreaves: No. We are creating a community of 14 families when we do that sort of thing. They have a sort of common entertainment area around them. You can do your own thing in your own house, if you like—there is plenty of room in there—but this one had a common barbecue area, for example, coming in off the street, and, bang, there you go. But they have all got their lights out the front of the house. They all know a bit about each other's movements. They have all got the support bars in toilets and bathrooms. They are all adaptable housing.

Our policy is to enable people to age in place. What we are taking advantage of with respect to the stimulus package and our own development is identifying blocks of land or surplus properties that we can demolish and put other units on those blocks, but those units will be for older people so that, as people age in those suburbs, when the time comes for, say, a widow to get out of a three-bedroom home, we have got somewhere to offer them in the suburb in which they have been living for the last 20 years.

MS LE COUTEUR: So some of the stimulus money is going to this?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, it is.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you looking at expanding the eligibility criteria for ACT housing—

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

MS BURCH: MACA was mentioned and an increasingly ageing population. COTA was mentioned. Structurally, how do you hear from the ageing population to feed into your policy?

Mr Hargreaves: The ministerial council for ageing is our conduit into the older persons community. It is the make-up of that council which gives us quite a broad spectrum of opportunity. I also make sure that I go to and indulge myself in seniors expos, but also we have contacts with the Council on the Ageing and chats with them.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: Just a question on page 228, budget paper 4. It mentions that there will be an expansion of the seniors grants program. I could not see any additional funding for that so I am wondering how it is being expanded.

Mr Hehir: It is in BP3 at page 82, off the top of my head—

MS BRESNAN: It is BP3, is it?

Mr Hehir: It is on page 83 and identified under the agency absorbed.

Mr Hargreaves: What we did when we set the priorities within the department was announce it as an exercise so that we could identify to the seniors community that it was going to be an expansion to the grants, but the actual additional cost of that will be absorbed within the department.

THE CHAIR: No other questions?

MR SMYTH: I get a sense that others want to go, so I shall acquiesce.

THE CHAIR: All right. We thank you very much, minister, and we thank you, officials.

Mr Hargreaves: Just before you conclude, Mr Chairman, could I put on the record and express my appreciation to the officers of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and of IR for the support work they did not only in developing the budget itself but also in supporting me before the committee.

THE CHAIR: I also thank departmental officials who have appeared, not just from this department but from all departments, for giving us their time. I also thank committee staff and Hansard staff for all of their hard work, and, of course, the staff who have put together the wonderful morning and afternoon teas, which have seen a number of us put on some weight over the last fortnight.

Mr Hargreaves: A special thankyou to Lainie, and to Ray, the super fisherman up in the back room.

MR SMYTH: Goodbye, and enjoy the fishing, Ray.

Mr Hargreaves: And don't carp on about it.

The committee adjourned at 4.09 pm.