



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2010-2011**

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2010-2011](#))

**Members:**

**MS M HUNTER (The Chair)**  
**MR Z SESELJA (The Deputy Chair)**  
**MR J HARGREAVES**  
**MS A BRESNAN**  
**MR B SMYTH**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**THURSDAY, 27 MAY 2010**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Dr S Lilburn (Ph: 6205 0199)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

## APPEARANCES

<b>Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services.....</b>	<b>1366, 1431</b>
<b>Department of Land and Property Services.....</b>	<b>1366</b>
<b>Land Development Agency .....</b>	<b>1366</b>

## **Privilege statement**

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

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

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

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

*Amended 21 January 2009*

## **The committee met at 9.01 am.**

Appearances:

Stanhope, Mr Jon, Chief Minister, Minister for Transport, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Land and Property Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for the Arts and Heritage

Department of Land and Property Services  
Dawes, Mr David, Acting Chief Executive  
Thomson, Mr Ian, Acting Chief Finance Officer  
Tomlins, Mr George, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Facilitation Division  
Ryan, Mr Stephen, Director, ACT Property Group  
Franklin, Mr Alan, Senior Manager, Strategy and Facilitation Division

Land Development Agency  
Robertson, Mr John, Chief Executive Officer  
Kelly, Mr Matthew, Chief Finance Officer

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services  
Lambert, Ms Sandra, Chief Executive  
Hehir, Mr Martin, Deputy Chief Executive  
Manikis, Mr Nic, Director, Office of Multicultural Affairs

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome to this public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates. The Legislative Assembly has referred to the committee for examination the expenditure proposals in the 2010-11 appropriation bill and the revenue estimates in the 2010-11 budget. The committee is due to report to the Assembly on 22 June 2010 and has fixed a time frame of five working days for the return of answers to questions taken on notice.

The proceedings today will commence with an examination of the Department of Land and Property Services output class 1, the Land Development Agency, and the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services output class 3.2, community affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the yellow-coloured privilege statement before you on the table. Could you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of that statement?

**Mr Dawes:** I certainly do, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I also remind witnesses to keep their responses to questions concise and directly relevant to the subject matter of the question. We have a great deal of ground to cover during the hearing and I would like to maximise the opportunity for members in attendance to put their questions directly today rather than on notice.

Before we proceed to questions from the committee, minister, would you like to start with a brief opening statement of no more than five minutes?

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do not have a prepared statement, but I thank the committee for inviting me and officials of LAPS to attend today. I and the officials will be pleased to provide whatever assistance we can.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. I want to start with the private sector developments on page 147, about building strong relationships with industry. What is LAPS's role in facilitating delivery in private sector developments and how does this work relate to companies which are, say, working with business in industry development?

**Mr Dawes:** One of the key things there is that, as we move through the land supply strategy, it is very important that we liaise with the private sector—that is, the industry associations—to ensure that we get the appropriate advice from them. It just adds to some of the intelligence that we are gathering when we take land release, in particular, into account to ensure that we have got the right mix.

One of the things that we have a look at is this. If you look at the demand that there has been in housing, you will see that it has been at record levels. We have seen a population growth of around 1.9 per cent. We have seen migration as well: we have seen the migration of 2,580 additional people. We like to ensure that we are matching the information that we are gathering and learning with industry expectations and ensuring that we have got the right mix of dwellings.

This also applies to the commercial sector, specifically with what we have seen with the GFC. What we actually did as far as commercial land release was concerned was work with the Property Council. We took advice from them to look at how we might be able to still stimulate that part of the economy but break it up into chunks that were affordable also to the sector, to ensure that we were able to maintain that momentum. Also, from time to time we might be going to sell a very large parcel of land. It does make sense to break that up into other bite-sized pieces. So we actually liaise at length. We have quite a lot of dialogue with the private sector to make sure that our targets can be met and, more importantly, that they are packaged in appropriate sizes that industry can accommodate.

**THE CHAIR:** How do you interact with business and industry development?

**Mr Dawes:** We have a number of roundtables as well. We meet quite regularly with the industry associations in roundtables. We meet with a number of valuation firms as well. We do not just talk to one valuation organisation; I make sure that we gather information from a number of valuation firms because we have to balance this up. Quite often, organisations or firms are working for particular developers and other private sector clients. So that we get a very balanced view, we meet with a broad cross-section of the various organisations and consulting firms.

**THE CHAIR:** What energy efficiency targets has property services set given the whole-of-government commitment to reduce greenhouse emissions by 2060?

**Mr Dawes:** I might ask Stephen Ryan to talk to you about our property portfolio.

**Mr Ryan:** Can I get you to clarify what you mean, Madam Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** As a department, what energy efficiency targets have been set?

**Mr Ryan:** Essentially, we are working on a number of factors. In terms of buying energy for the ACT government, the budget this year makes provision for us to purchase 32½ per cent renewable energy. We are also, though, in the process of renewing subleases for nine properties across Canberra. As part of that, we are working on achieving accommodation with a minimum NABERS energy rating of 4½ stars. That will mean, ultimately, an actual reduction in the amount of energy that we have to purchase. But we are buying the 32.5 per cent as a fixed amount from ActewAGL, so if we can reduce the amount of energy that we consume across the sector the percentage of renewable energy will rise. So we buy it but we are also trying to achieve it simply by reducing the amount of energy we use.

The other thing we are doing is slowly but surely retrofitting our own stock so that again we are in a better position to reduce energy. Over the last year, we have been working on installing smart meters in our buildings. We have already got them in places like Dame Pattie Menzies House and Macarthur House, and over the next 12 months we are rolling that out in a number of other buildings. That enables the agencies themselves to get a better handle on where they are using energy and, hopefully, will again result in them wanting to get that energy use down, partly because that will give them current savings in terms of their energy bills. We split the—

**THE CHAIR:** What is the feedback on installing those smart meters?

**Mr Ryan:** It has been positive. We have got an arrangement with DECCEW where DECCEW has provided us with additional funding for 2010-11 so that we can put in more smart meters. They are very pleased with the work that we have done so far. We both recognise that it is well and good to talk about putting in place targets and to want to be smarter about the way you use energy, but without being able to actually see how you are using energy on a floor-by-floor basis—it makes it very difficult when all you have been getting until now is a bill from Actew which just covers a whole department or a whole building. We have not been able to go in. Most buildings in our stock were built so long ago that basically they had a meter at the front door and that was it. The smart meters are very much something that we are working with, and you can utilise them with your building management system to see if you are reducing energy.

**THE CHAIR:** And you are saying that more are going in in the 2010-11 year?

**Mr Ryan:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Which buildings?

**Mr Ryan:** Can I come back to you on that one?

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. I was also wondering how this work is fitting in with the

national framework for sustainable government office buildings.

**Mr Dawes:** Stephen might like to elaborate on the fact that we sit on that national body.

**Mr Ryan:** The national framework for sustainable government office buildings is a piece of work that is being done by the Government Property Group. The Government Property Group, in terms of its active membership, is all the mainland states and territories. COAG, mid last year, set the Government Property Group two pieces of work, one on its own and one in conjunction with the energy committee which is called NFEE. The two pieces were the national framework and a national green leasing policy.

The national framework was, in terms of the work itself, completed late last year. It basically sets a program of activities across the country to improve both owned and leased government accommodation. It includes an energy target matrix which essentially looks at design, energy use, water use and waste, so it basically sets the minimum standard for design at five-star green for brand-new owned and leased properties and 4½ stars for existing; also with the NABERS rating, it sets a minimum of 4½ stars NABERS.

The national green leasing policy, as I say, has been a joint exercise between the Government Property Group and NFEE. That document is the subject of another national telephone hook-up this week. We are hoping that that documentation will be complete in June. The intention is that both documents will go back to COAG, subject to all governments agreeing to them, in the next two to three months.

The national green leasing policy is much more focused just on buildings in Canberra we sublease—in other jurisdictions they call it “lease”—from the private sector, but again it is based on a series of energy targets. So it is not worried about design so much; it is about targets.

The big difference it has made—it is impacting on the work we are doing with our subleasing—is that we have now got a green leasing schedule, and the schedule basically sets out the rights and obligations of the landlord and of the tenants. It sets up building management committees. It sets up environment management plans. It deals with both energy targets for the building and tenancy target ratings as well.

In the work we are doing at the moment, we have been renewing subleases. We have done Nature Conservation House at Belconnen. We are just about to sign off on renewing the sublease at 220 Northbourne. We have done the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Reserve Bank and we are in negotiations for Nara; and in all cases we are seeing improvements in terms of energy.

I should say that the national green leasing policy only applies to leased space over 2,000 square metres, so the Director of Public Prosecutions, which is about 1,700 square meters, is not covered by the policy, but we are trying to apply the policy to that space as well. So, from the ACT’s perspective, we are trying to utilise the policy and the national green lease schedule.

**THE CHAIR:** You said you have been undertaking work with the green lease schedules. When will that be complete or is that just an ongoing process?

**Mr Ryan:** No. The schedules are close to finalisation. We have received a so-called final set of drafts from the Australian Government Solicitor's office and we have been reviewing that with the ACT Government Solicitor's office just to make sure that there are no items in there that could come back to haunt us. But, at this stage, we are feeling fairly comfortable with it.

The big issue we have been dealing with nationally is the issue of tenancy ratings and how you apply those. There will be tenancy ratings; it is just the mechanisms for how you will have annual tenancy ratings undertaken.

**THE CHAIR:** What do you mean by "tenancy ratings"?

**Mr Ryan:** They not only rate the building itself—so they can say that the building is 4½-star NABERS, and that is about how much energy the building utilises as it operates—the tenants as well can be rated. So they can rate the fit-out, the way you use your computers, whether you turn them off or not every night, how your lights work. We have had complaints in the past from people who have driven past government office buildings lit up like Christmas trees. So it is about the actual energy use on the tenant's side as well. So it is about a quid pro quo. The landlords are saying, "We will sign off on the building, but you also have got to have tenant ratings," which is a fair comment.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, chair. Minister, in answer to a question on notice, question on notice 687, on the whole-of-government office building, you said:

A comprehensive economic and financial analysis was undertaken ... This took place in 2008-09 and 2009-10. The analysis compared five scenarios ranging from the new building, leasing comparable space from the market, and three business as usual cases. In addition, analysis of available funding options was undertaken.

What is the current cost estimate for the construction of a whole-of-government office building?

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you, Mr Seselja. I will ask Mr Dawes to identify which of his officers is most familiar with that particular issue.

**Mr Dawes:** That falls into the priority of George Tomlins, so I will ask George to walk you through that.

**Mr Tomlins:** The government office building, as you rightly say, Mr Seselja, looked at a number of different options, and at this stage, because the actual size of the peripherals is moving around, such as the car parking and some of the shopfronts and those sorts of things, it has been nominated as a 53,000-square-metre government office, but the comparisons have been based on industry cost comparisons and we essentially have not reached the stage where we have settled on a fixed cost estimate

for the government office. But it is around the \$300 million to \$400 million level.

**MR SESELJA:** Okay. What is the estimated financing cost of the development?

**Mr Tomlins:** Again, that depends on how the government office is financed. It would vary, depending on the different risk parameters. So, in other words, if it was taken on by the government at government rates, there would be lower financing costs but the government would be taking a higher proportion of the risks. If it is done wholly in the private market, it would be at a higher interest rate with lower risk to government and higher financing costs. I do not have the financing costs. I could provide a range of different figures. But, since we are going to the market, we are going to market test, and that is where we are hoping to get those figures from with a greater degree of certainty.

**MR SESELJA:** Okay, but—

**Mr Stanhope:** But we can provide some estimates.

**Mr Tomlins:** Yes, which vary with the interest rates.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that that is taken on notice.

**MR SESELJA:** What are the current rent payments for office space by the ACT government, and how much will be projected to be saved by moving all office space for ACT public servants into the building?

**Mr Tomlins:** That is in the economic analysis, which again at this stage we have not released. I might ask Mr Franklin if he is able to provide some more information on that. My memory, which we can clarify, is that it is about \$20 million?

**MR SESELJA:** Yes, so we will get some more details from Mr Franklin.

**Mr Dawes:** While Mr Franklin is actually getting seated, people would be aware that we have recently advertised—last weekend we have gone out to the market—to test the market, as Mr Tomlins said. What we are looking for is to explore what the private sector's appetite for this type of product is. We are looking for the various forms of private-public partnerships which the private sector can finance in finalising design of construct and operate. We are hoping to seek, as well, some interest from the private sector to see whether it will be a partial equity model.

So there are a number of things that we have gone out to the private sector in the last week on. Our responses to date have been quite good as well, from the private sector as well. Some of those questions that you are asking will be further refined as we move through the next phase.

**MR SESELJA:** I might come back to the next phase in a moment.

**Mr Tomlins:** Yes. Just before we go to Mr Franklin, the benefits of the government office stem partly from co-location. We will be able to move people from inefficient offices to efficient offices, from where they are above the space utilisation because of

the inefficiency of the building down to 15 square meters. There will be lower energy costs due to the passive design, lower fleet costs due to the fact that we will have economies from having a larger consolidated fleet and we will not need to use the fleet for people to travel from different parts of Canberra to meet other colleagues because they will be able to move from floor to floor. We will be saving churn costs. We will be saving security costs. There are a range of operational costs et cetera.

There are also a range of workforce costs that go in. And there are a wide range of estimates of what those costs are. We have talked to a number of people, a number of the banks. The ANZ Bank, the National Australia Bank, CBA have all consolidated and the estimates that they have made are generally larger than the estimates that we have relied on in our numbers.

**MR SESELJA:** The estimates they have made of savings?

**Mr Tomlins:** Of savings, yes. For example, the ANZ—we have been following them—have not come back to us and said, “We haven’t achieved our estimates. We’re a bit disappointed that when we actually moved into the facility at Docklands, it wasn’t as we thought, as our consultants have told us.” It has been exactly the opposite. They have said to us things like, “It’s just a pity we hadn’t done this years earlier.”

**MR SESELJA:** Mr Franklin.

**Mr Stanhope:** Sorry to interrupt. Just to provide some other context in relation to decision making around a project as significant as this, I would like to say that I think we do need to understand, in relation to the number of buildings that basically government administrative staff are currently located in across the sites that they are located—the geographic spread and the nature of the buildings—90 per cent of the buildings in which ACT government staff are housed are B grade or lower, with a significant number being C grade.

There are a whole range of issues for us, in terms of our responsibilities as an employer, not go to some of the other issues around environment and efficiencies, costs. There is also a social obligation and, in addition, just the need to constantly upgrade B and C-grade buildings and the cost going forward that we have to meet in relation to upgrades and fitting out buildings. So there are a whole range of factors that constitute a decision of this particular order. But I interrupted Mr Seselja’s line in relation to this.

**Mr Franklin:** I will have to get back to you with specific figures, because we undertook analysis over the whole life of the project, looking at a number of scenarios. It is on a 25-year basis and brought back to net present value. It also depends on environmental rating of the building that you are trying to achieve. We have done a number of scenarios based on whether you are trying to achieve a basic 4.5 NABER right up to carbon neutrality.

The specific rent savings in any particular year will depend also on which buildings, when we trade in or sell current assets, move to new assets and then, over the life of the assets, the ongoing savings each year. I can get those figures for you.

**MR SESELJA:** That would be great.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that has been taken on notice.

**MR SESELJA:** Given the report today in the *Canberra Times* about the fact that this will obviously contribute to a high amount of supply coming on line—it is talking about a 14 per cent vacancy rate, I think—what assessment has been done of the impact of this project on the office market in the ACT?

**Mr Tomlins:** As Mr Dawes indicated, we continue to monitor the development of all the industry—commercial, office and residential. The government at this stage has not taken a decision as to whether to build or to lease in a centralised location on the site. In other words, it might be a build and lease from the private sector. That is one option. It might be a mix. It could be PPP. It could be any number of options. They could have some different impact on the office market.

What tends to happen is that, as these developments go ahead—vacancy rates change, absorption rates change—the market tells us that, if the vacancy rate is below about eight per cent, office rents increase. If they are above eight per cent, they tend to tighten. I guess the indication is that there will be a tightening. You could expect that some other projects, as is normal, would be delayed if this project comes on. If this project is delayed, other projects will come on.

There will also be, as governments move to green leasing policies to reduce their energy costs, some degree, as some of the proponents are saying, of segmentation in the market. In other words, there will be a market for the newer, A-grade green leases and a separate market for the lower performing offices.

Again, we have been advised that, if anything, the government is paying slightly higher than it should for B and C-grade accommodation because of compression in the market. In other words, it is paying a proportion of A-grade rent for B and C-grade accommodation. If these projects go ahead, you will see that spread come back to where it should be.

**MR SESELJA:** Given the fact that there is likely to be some downward pressure on market rents in the next few years, is the government then actively looking at those kinds of alternatives of leasing existing space in some consolidated location and taking advantage of, I suppose, the government's market power and the downward pressure on prices that there is at the moment?

**Mr Tomlins:** The decision on the government office has not been made; so all of those issues will be in the mix. Of course, to some extent, while 50,000 square meters is a fairly big amount, it is essentially about one year's absorption, one year's demand, of the market. So a few decisions by people to bring forward or delay projects will have the same impact as the government office. Essentially what I am saying is that, while it is a factor, it is not a big factor in the overall office market.

**MR SESELJA:** What analysis has been done on the impact on town centres, particularly Gungahlin, by drawing office workers into the city and the associated

issues with traffic as a result of more people having to commute from places like Gungahlin—rather than the opportunities that could arise with locating some ACT government offices in town centres like Gungahlin?

**Mr Tomlins:** The traffic issues of the general employment distribution have been looked at. A detailed analysis of moves in the town centres has not been looked at as part of this project, but the general assumptions are that the town centres will continue to grow, albeit slowly, in terms of their employment.

**MR SESELJA:** Why has that analysis not been done?

**Mr Tomlins:** The government office project has looked at aspects from the perspective of the government office. The growth and change of the town centres have been looked at as part of the responsibilities of a range of agencies, be they LAPS or ACTPLA. It has not been looked at under the aegis of this project because it is the responsibility of other areas.

**MR SESELJA:** Mr Dawes, has LAPS done the work that Mr Tomlins refers to?

**Mr Dawes:** No, not at all. Obviously, one of the things that we have got to remember with this particular project is that there are going to be quite a lot of other opportunities created from the private sector. As Mr Tomlins has pointed out, there has been little differential in rents at all from A, B and C-grade stock. I believe that we are going to see an appropriate level of rents, and the private sector is going to be the beneficiary of that as well.

When you look at the overall office market right across the ACT, whether it is the private sector or government, paying similar rates for C-grade stock because of the severe shortage that has been there is inappropriate. It will also give the private sector an opportunity to reinvest in their buildings. We also have to remember that some private sector individuals invest in their buildings constantly—others have not—over the years. I really believe it will create other opportunities within the private sector. I think it very important to have that choice and competition in the marketplace.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can I just bring us back to the location rather than the type of accommodation question. Looking at it from an ACT government point of view, which presumably is what the ACT government is doing, have you looked at the impact on Gungahlin of having some office accommodation there? I can see there are advantages to co-location, but there are also big advantages in the ACT if every town centre has an employment base. Gungahlin does not as yet. Have you gone through that analysis for at least part of the ACT government offices?

**Mr Stanhope:** The government office project is premised on centralisation. It goes to the heart of the decision that the government has made, which is to centralise administrative staff in a single building for a range of reasons. It was never envisaged as a proposal that would deal with issues of decentralisation. We all understand the issue in relation to an emerging town centre at Gungahlin and the lack, most particularly, of a commonwealth or a significant commonwealth office at Gungahlin. Gungahlin town centre is growing, as Mr Dawes has just indicated, slowly but steadily, as the population grows. It is identifying, for the private sector most

particularly at this stage, opportunities there.

If you start from the premise that the government office project is about the efficiencies to be gained across the board through centralisation, it would not be part of that process to say, “Oh, we’ll centralise two-thirds and decentralise the third of the ACT government. We’ll achieve two-thirds of the outcomes that we seek to achieve by the construction. We’ll only build a 40,000 square metre government office block, or one here. We will build two—one here and one in Gungahlin.”

You begin the process by saying, “What is it that we are seeking to achieve? What are the parameters? What are the basic premises? Where do we start?” We start from a position where we have staff in 34 buildings on 17 sites, a significant number in C-grade buildings. What do we do about that? Do we refurbish those 34 buildings on 17 sites at a cost greater than the long-term cost of a single, centralised government building in the context of savings and efficiencies and responsibility as an employer?

That is where we started. We started with a very broad portfolio of sites, some owned, the majority leased, and not leased to us at particularly attractive rates, irrespective of our apparent power as a purchaser. I am not quite sure that we have managed, as a result of a stretching market, to beat good prices out of the private sector in relation to those buildings that we lease. That is where we started from.

Having started from there, whilst of course in an ideal world we would love as an employer—there are a whole range of issues in locating a central office for administrative staff in Gungahlin as opposed to the heart of the city in the context of other policy positions that we are pursuing in relation to the role that Civic should play in the city. We have another policy in relation to that. A project such as this is entirely consistent with our vision for Civic as a major centre of employment and as a place in which we would like to see population growth. All of those issues around densification, sustainability and urban efficiency require a consolidation of employment and of living in the heart of the city. We can play a role in that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So the policy of town centres having employment is no longer government policy?

**Mr Stanhope:** I would not say that. Town centres are—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is that not what you are saying?

**Mr Stanhope:** No, I am not saying that at all. Enhancing employment in this particular town centre, the major town centre, the heart of the city, is also a policy which should be significantly enhanced by this proposal. We are a small jurisdiction. If we could have an office block in every town centre that could be justified on grounds of efficiency and administration, it would be very nice, but we do not.

I am aware of your views around urban consolidation and densification and the great advantages that come from that. We can play a significant role. Perhaps the most significant role we can play is by co-locating here in the heart of the city. There are costs and benefits. On the one hand, yes, we could put this building in Gungahlin, but then we would weigh up the consequences of that. If you worked through the role of

the government of the Australian Capital Territory, where—sensibly, logically—would you locate that administrative nerve centre for the administration of city? Instinctively, you would locate it in the heart of the city. It is not just an instinct; it is logical as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Mr Stanhope, no-one is suggesting that the whole building would go to Gungahlin.

**Mr Stanhope:** I guess that is part of the equation, Ms Le Couteur. Once fragmented, you move away from the essential premise that we co-locate for a whole range of efficiencies. I understand the point, Ms Le Couteur. At one point there is logic, but it defies the essential premise, which is that we co-locate all administrative staff. If you are going to do that, do it in the city. If you are not going to do that then, yes, you would probably upgrade. If you did your cost-benefit, rather than building two buildings you would upgrade Macarthur House on Northbourne Avenue. That is probably what you would do. Or you would upgrade one of the other buildings you owned and say goodbye to the buildings you leased. The buildings that we would vacate, we own some of them. It goes to, I think, the point that Mr Dawes alluded to—that there are buildings which we own.

**Mr Dawes:** We own Callum, Dame Pattie's.

**Mr Stanhope:** Dame Pattie's at Dickson, Macarthur on Northbourne Avenue, Callum—

**Mr Dawes:** The motor registry at Dickson.

**Mr Stanhope:** We own those buildings. Logically, as you work through it, what would you do? You do your cost-benefits. We have done it on this premise, which makes sense to us, but we are still testing it. Ms Le Couteur, what I would say to you is: okay, we will not house everybody here. We will actually have a second building. How would you then justify building a brand new second building in Gungahlin rather than, say, upgrading Macarthur House? When you start to look at the numbers and work through the rationale—I just raise that rhetorically, but it is in the nature of decision making—those are the issues. If you are not going to co-locate and you are going to have a second building, why Gungahlin—accepting that we want to strengthen employment in Gungahlin?

**Mr Dawes:** Can I add to that as well? One of the objectives, if the government office does proceed, is potentially the cultural change that will bring about as well in the ACT public service. I think that needs to be highlighted. I can give an example, one coming from the private sector as well. The restaurant owner or the person who wants to open a restaurant first of all has to go to ACTPLA at Dickson to get approvals for signage and other things. He then has to go to Mitchell and do his drainage and lodge his plans there for that. Then he goes out to Fyshwick to the regulatory services office to organise licences so that he can operate that particular business. Then he goes to Holder to Health to get his health clearances.

If, for example, there is just a bit of a slip-up somewhere between those and he has not got the appropriate paperwork, he then goes back to Fyshwick, back to Holder or

whatever the case may be. One of the real benefits—I think we have got to say that this is distinct from any of the shopfronts—of having those sorts of facilities in one location is that it is going to make it far more conducive to doing business in the territory. That is one of the other goals and objectives that we are trying to achieve. That is just a very simple example of the poor person wanting to start up a restaurant in the territory. There are many other examples.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan, and then Mr Smyth.

**MS BRESNAN:** I have a supplementary. Minister, you mentioned earlier the fact that Gungahlin also does not have a major commonwealth department there, whereas some of the other town centres like Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Woden do. Does that also figure into the consideration? Given that we have the ACT public service but we have a major employer in the commonwealth service as well, does that also feed into considering the location of where, if there was going to be one ACT government building, that would be or how that would actually work?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am not sure if I understand. Do you mean assumptions made around—

**MS BRESNAN:** I am just saying that we have got major commonwealth departments as well; so even though you are looking at the ACT government as a single entity, we also have these other major departments and employers here. As you mentioned, Gungahlin is probably one of the few centres that does not. Does that also figure into the considerations and the overall analysis, I guess?

**Mr Stanhope:** Certainly, I can say that the issue of Gungahlin and of government offices is one that I grappled with and one, indeed, which the cabinet grappled with in our discussions around this particular project. This project has been proceeding now, I think, for four years. This is a project that—I do not know what description to use—has been proceeding, shall we say, for four years. Certainly, at the outset, cabinet gave deep consideration to the capacity through a project such as this to invigorate employment or establish or support employment in Gungahlin. It was given deep and detailed consideration. It would have taken into account that very issue. The commonwealth had not at that stage decided, and still has not decided or chosen, to locate a commonwealth department at Gungahlin.

We did but for the reasons that I have outlined, whilst the case is persuasive and we would in an ideal world have liked to be able to, the essential premise or rationale for initiating or proceeding on this investigation was about centralising, was about bringing together in a single place. I think I can say that the decision that I took, which I am comfortable with and which each of my colleagues has accepted, is that this project, if it is to proceed, should proceed in Civic, in the heart of our city, in the administrative centre of our city, in the place most convenient to most Canberrans in terms of location and access. We took that decision, but we took it mindful of the need to encourage employment in Gungahlin and a base of employment in Gungahlin.

**Mr Dawes:** There are a couple of points I would like to make as well. When you look at the ACT government, we do have a very large presence here in the city anyway. I think that needs to be noted. We can give you a break-up of some of those figures if

you desire. But I think more importantly, one of the things—

**THE CHAIR:** Actually, Mr Dawes, it would be useful to have some idea of where the workforce is, not just in the city but across the territory. Can you take that on notice?

**Mr Dawes:** I think the other important thing as well, one of the things that we have done—as you know, we have been lobbied for some time by the Gungahlin Community Council. We have not been able to take to the market a large site for the purposes of a large commercial space. Just recently, as part and parcel of a process that the LDA went through, we took a couple of blocks to the market—a small site and a larger site. The larger site will be able to accommodate somewhere between 20,000 and possibly 30,000, 40,000 square metres. So that is going to be in the hands of the private sector. That is a process that is being concluded hopefully over the course of the next couple of weeks. But if that is the case, the great advantage there is that some land will be in the hands of the private sector who will then be able to respond to the market as and when required. I think that is a great step forward.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Dawes, how many staff is it intended would move into this building?

**Mr Dawes:** In the order of 3½ thousand.

**MR SMYTH:** And the time frame for the completion of the study and commencement of the construction of the building?

**Mr Dawes:** Obviously there are a number of processes that we need to go through, Mr Smyth, in regard to government sign-off. The first process is to go out and test the market, as I said earlier. We have called for an industry briefing, I think on 7 June. It is for industry participants to learn a little bit more about the project. That is a short time frame, a process of around six weeks. After that, we will be actually putting all that data together and going back to government.

But if, for example, all the stars were to align and we were to proceed, we did get sign-off and we had the right and appropriate financial models, we would start to see the building potentially come out of the ground in 2010. You would be looking at—

**MR SMYTH:** So this year?

**Mr Dawes:** Sorry, 2011, I should say.

**MR SMYTH:** I was going to say, you are bloody good!

**Mr Dawes:** That is right. Yes, I carry a digger around in my back pocket!

**MR SMYTH:** I have got a four-year-old like that. Always got a digger in his back pocket.

**Mr Dawes:** No, 2011, we would be able to proceed with that, but obviously—

**MR SMYTH:** And potential completion?

**Mr Dawes:** Potential completion would be somewhere between 30 and 36 months.

**MR SMYTH:** So 2013?

**Mr Dawes:** I would say the back end of 2013, that first quarter of 2014. Potentially the model can be phased as well, because obviously it is not going to be just a mass building; it is obviously going to be linked as well. So it could be staged.

**MR SMYTH:** Who will move? You are talking about Mac House, you are talking about Planning, you are talking about Fyshwick, you are talking about Holder. What units is it envisaged will move into this office?

**Mr Dawes:** I think we have looked at potentially TAMS and DECCEW, that are co-located at Mac House. We have also got Planning, Treasury, CMD and potentially some of the other people that are already here in Civic—such as some of Health and some of DHCS. Those sorts of things have not been fine tuned, but that is the sort of target. Some of those—

**Mr Stanhope:** And the eight additional non-executive members of the Assembly from the 25-member Assembly.

**MR SMYTH:** So you are going to put them out there as well, are you?

**Mr Stanhope:** That was a joke.

**MR SMYTH:** That is okay. It is really bad when you have to explain your jokes. There is an issue here for the circus. Perhaps you should go for some training.

**Mr Stanhope:** Having said that, Mr Smyth, consideration has been given that if there needs—this is not a joke; consideration has been given to that.

**MR SMYTH:** But is it the truth? You will put it in writing?

**Mr Stanhope:** Consideration has, of course, been given to whether consideration needs to be given to the future growth of the Legislative Assembly of the ACT and the capacity that a co-located government office block would provide to allow any expansion, should it be required at any time in the future.

**Mr Dawes:** With respect to one of the other objectives that we are looking at, as I said, the territory owns some of the sites that we would be moving from. We are in the process of doing a complete audit—and getting advice from the private sector and consultants as well. We would potentially take those sites to the market with tenancies in place until the new office block is completed.

But some of these buildings are getting to the end of their useful life. We have had some cost analysis done on just doing the retrofit and upgrading, and it is quite scary when you look at some of those numbers to bring them up to even A-grade standard or in line with a 4½ or five-star rating. We are looking at taking those to the market

with all the potential development opportunities that will be able to exist there. Some of those sites will lend themselves to high-density residential as well. There could be a mix of residential and commercial on those sites. If you look at the motor registry site, for example, it is a very large site with a very small footprint—

**MR SMYTH:** So the motor registry would move as well?

**Mr Dawes:** The shopfront, no, but parts of that site may be redeveloped. It is quite a large site. And, as you know, Macarthur House is also identified in the territory plan as a key site for a tower and residential as well.

**MR SMYTH:** If you are talking of moving ACTPLA out of Dickson, moving parts of the motor registry function and moving TAMS and DECCEW out of Mac House, they are all workforces that, for instance, support the Dickson shops. The traders at Dickson rely a lot on their lunchtime trade plus the passing trade that the registry and ACTPLA bring to them. What analysis has been done on the effect, for instance, on the Dickson shops of that movement of staff? ACTPLA is almost 300 staff; in the registry there would be 100 or more. Mac House has an enormous number of staff. And they primarily use Dickson. What impact is there on the other shops?

**Mr Tomlins:** Essentially, the story with office space, albeit with some vacancies, is that they are backfilled. There might be a short hiccup, as there always is with churn, but essentially, because of backfilling, where that is the case, it is not seen that there would be an issue. Where the motor vehicle registry and Mac House are involved, it is also considered that there is potential for a substantial increase in the residential catchment, and the residential catchment generally contributes quite a bit more expenditure than the office catchment.

**Mr Stanhope:** A good example of that is the TAB headquarters, which we took a deliberate decision to move to Gungahlin from Dickson. We moved the TAB headquarters out of Dickson to Gungahlin in pursuit of a desire to do something for employment within Gungahlin. We then sold that site. The site has been purchased by, I think, Graham Potts, and he is putting a residential tower on it. That supports what Mr Tomlins has said—that the process of renewal generates significant change. In the context of that particular decision to move the TAB, to sell the site, it has generated extra activity for Dickson.

**Mr Dawes:** Also, if you look at Dickson, the City Gateway Motel has already gone to the market. Some of these developments have been delayed because of the GFC and the availability of finance in the territory, because there has been predominantly one supplier of funding to the development industry. We do know that there has been in the order of 300 units sold on the City Gateway Motel site, so that will start to come out. Over the next three to four years, you will start to see that whole precinct start to transform. The people that will be living at the City Gateway Motel site, with Dickson just across the road—

**Mr Stanhope:** With the Amalgamated—

**Mr Dawes:** With the Amalgamated; that is also a Potts development. And then, with the building of the residential there on that particular site that has been vacant for a

while, it is going to revitalise that. So I think Dickson has little to fear, even in the shorter term.

**MR SESELJA:** How much change of use was paid on that TAB site?

**THE CHAIR:** In a moment we will move on to some new questions.

**Mr Dawes:** That is an area I do not have any control over—

**MR SESELJA:** Would the increase in change of use change the viability of some of those developments and renewals?

**Mr Dawes:** I have not been directly involved in the change of use. I think that is a matter that you have discussed extensively with both ACTPLA and Treasury.

**MR SESELJA:** We will come back to it.

**MR SMYTH:** Just a final one. According to the budget documents, ACTPLA has got about 287 staff, TAMS 1,088 and DECCEW about 109. I am not sure how many there are in the registry building. It is about 1,500 people. What analysis has been done on their movements from where they currently are down Northbourne Avenue to Civic every morning and what that will do to the traffic on Northbourne Avenue? And what arrangements will be put in place for parking the vehicles that they bring to Civic

**Mr Tomlins:** Most of the TAMS staff are not at Macarthur House, but the transport modelling has looked at the different employment distributions. It has also assumed the changes that we have just been talking about. It has been looked at, and the transport system, the modal split system, that has been talked about essentially has factored those sorts of things into account.

**Mr Stanhope:** Just in the context of Northbourne, too, it does need to be recognised that the government has, in this budget, funded a feasibility study for an enhancement of Northbourne Avenue. That study, I am hoping, will start reasonably soon in the new financial year. That study will look, at a minimum, at a transit way and additional capacity on Northbourne Avenue just to respond to major issues that we already face on Northbourne Avenue. Northbourne Avenue is currently taking between 50,000 and 60,000 cars a day. It is the most heavily used road, it is the main north-south access and we are in the process, or at the start of the process, of seeing how we deal with those issues on Northbourne Avenue.

**MR SMYTH:** A new issue: on page 143 of budget paper 4, the third dot point refers to the Department of Land and Property Services building an inventory of urban renewal opportunities. What is that, Chief Minister? And when will it be done, and what will it cost to do it?

**Mr Tomlins:** That work is currently being done jointly with a number of agencies, most particularly the planning authority. It is looking at the range of vacant sites, brownfield sites—the sorts of sites that we have been talking about in relation to the government office—and has been augmented by discussion with agencies. There is an item in the Land and Property Services budget to look at the range of property that

this department has to see what that can also contribute to this inventory. So there is some money for us to do that. I am not aware of precisely how ACTPLA or the other agencies are funding their projects. I would think that the results of that will emerge in the next financial year.

**Mr Dawes:** One of the important things that we are looking at as well is that, as we have recognised in the Forde land release program, we are also looking at doing further investigative work about other potential development opportunities for infill. I think it is a recognised fact that you need to consolidate, drive up, densities in some of these areas such as Dickson and the city and right around the city, around Woden even. Part and parcel of that \$150,000 that we received is to undertake that further audit to the work that has already been done.

We have worked collaboratively with the National Capital Authority as well, and we are looking at what opportunities may present there in land that they have and are interested in and how some development opportunities might come there. That is part and parcel of our community engagement as well. Obviously, when you look, there are sites that you can quite easily identify as infill opportunities.

There are other sites that are going to obviously need to be worked through with the various communities. Part and parcel of that is to identify them and start ensuring that we do that community engagement much earlier in the process, to inform the community of the opportunities but also to work with them to see how they might like to see some of that potentially developed in the ensuing years.

I think it has been recognised in a number of different forums that we cannot keep pushing to the greenfields all of the time; we need to look at the city and try to attract people to live and work closer together. Part and parcel of that is to undertake a further audit of any additional work that has already been done.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We are talking about community consultation. Does this imply it is going to be a public list of some sort that you will end up producing?

**Mr Dawes:** Certainly it will be. It will obviously have to go back to government for government endorsement as well. But one of the key things that I am very keen to promote is that we actually get out and go to the community a year in advance of us putting up the for sale sign, if I can put it that way, on a block of land. So we have that community consultation well in advance and, when the for sale sign goes on the site, people are aware of what is going to be there, because we have actually gone through that community consultation.

We will actually start consulting in the 2010-11 financial year for the land releases that are going to ensue in the following year. I think that is an important thing, and I think something that I have learned since I have been in government over the last couple of years is that we need to consult much earlier.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, just to finish on this issue, I think we all appreciate the work to achieve greater density, particularly around the town centres. What work has Land

and Property Services done on the impact of the change of use charge on the ability to increase density in the city?

**Mr Dawes:** We have not been directly involved in that. It has really been run out of Treasury. We have participated in roundtable discussions. Obviously Treasury extended the discussion period with the private sector. I think that closed last Friday. I understand there will be further consultation and discussion.

**MR SESELJA:** Are you aware of this deal or arrangement—

**THE CHAIR:** We are going to Ms Bresnan in a moment.

**MR SESELJA:** Are you aware of this deal or arrangement that has been referred to by the Treasurer in relation to the charging of change of use over the past seven years?

**Mr Dawes:** I actually only learned of that cost over the last little while.

**MR SESELJA:** Was your department consulted by Treasury on the levying and the changes in approach to change of use, aside from codification?

**Mr Dawes:** I have been aware of it but I have not been actively involved. Whatever occurs, I think the industry, from my understanding, does support codification. It will provide some clarity. As I said, that will be for the private sector and Treasury and ACTPLA, who have carriage of that, to work through.

**MR SMYTH:** You have been in this industry—

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan.

**MR SMYTH:** You have been in this industry for many years. In your professional experience, what is the effect of change of use charge on the market? Does it have a dampening effect?

**Mr Dawes:** I think it all comes back to a fair and equitable basis. In my professional opinion—this is not an opinion that I have shared generally but I actually shared it with the Property Council this week—when we see developments being doubled in size and we are then being told that there should not be any change of use, I question that. I think the Property Council quite often reminds us that we are the custodians of the land. We are acting on behalf of the community.

We need to be making sure that we are getting adequately compensated for it. If, for example, you are looking at a site that currently has 30,000 square metres and it then goes to 60,000 square metres, if they can look me in the eye and tell me that the change of use is zip, I question that.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you. I want to move to affordable housing. One of the key accountability indicators is on page 148. I note, minister, that you have stated in the Assembly previously that the Real Estate Institute measurements of affordable housing are one of the best measures to use. In the last couple of days, we have had

the affordable housing price rise. That was in discussion with the construction industry and some of the housing industry associations.

I am wondering whether the government has looked at what is actually happening in Canberra. While the median or the average might be doing fairly well in Canberra, there is quite a large disparity when we look at people who can actually afford a house in the average to the lower group. So I am wondering what other accountability measures have been taken into account when you are looking at what is actually affordable housing.

I think groups like ACTCOSS and quite a few others in the last couple of days have said, “\$320,000 is just not going to be affordable for a lot of people in Canberra.” So I am wondering what other work has been done around actually assessing what is affordable in that affordable action plan.

**Mr Stanhope:** I will defer to Mr Dawes and others. I am aware of the commentary that you refer to in response to a release of mine in relation to the affordable housing threshold and our requirement on greenfields estates that what was 15 per cent will, in the future, be 20 per cent of all housing must accord with an affordability definition, which is a house and land package or a total package, if it involves a unit, of now \$322,000.

The \$322,000, an increase of \$22,000, reflects that the \$300,000 mark was set three years ago and, on the ABS construction index, it is reasonable that the extra costs of construction and the extra costs involved in servicing land be incorporated. Otherwise, the houses will get smaller and smaller and the blocks of land will get smaller and smaller, to a point where it becomes almost impossible for a house to be delivered for that amount on a block—

**MS BRESNAN:** Some of the \$320,000 houses probably will be small.

**Mr Stanhope:** They will still be small.

**MS BRESNAN:** They will be small blocks and houses as well.

**Mr Stanhope:** They will still be small. The \$322,000, in the context of CPI and the ABS construction index, is essentially standing still on a \$300,000 house and land package in 2007 values. That is all we have done. We have indexed it consistent with the ABS construction index as it would have applied had we indexed annually, which is what we will now do. So this number will move every year, consistent with the ABS construction index.

The comment on that, and the commentary, essentially was around the intractable and difficult and very important issues around homelessness or people that leave home for one reason or another. At one level, it is a different issue than an issue about maintaining or providing an affordable housing stock and allowing first homebuyers the capacity to enter the housing market at an affordable level.

**MS BRESNAN:** It is not, in fact. I understand—

**Mr Stanhope:** There is cause and effect.

**MS BRESNAN:** I think the focus is on affordable housing.

**Mr Stanhope:** But to criticise an affordable housing initiative which is unique in Australia on the basis that a person who has left home as a result of domestic violence cannot be rehoused immediately, I think, confuses two issues. The criticism that a person escaping domestic violence or violence should be housed or rehoused immediately and that an affordable housing strategy, which is multifaceted, is to be criticised and condemned for not meeting that particular need, I think, confuses a range of responses that government makes to a number of issues.

**MS BRESNAN:** From my reading and knowing those groups, I do not think that is what they are doing. To be fair to them, I do not think that is what they are doing.

**Mr Stanhope:** That is how they reported it.

**MS BRESNAN:** I think everyone recognises—we do—that affordable housing is extremely important, particularly to allow people to be able to purchase their own home. But I think what they are saying is there has been very much a focus on affordable housing and there is concern about a gap occurring for people in those lower areas who are becoming homeless.

**Mr Stanhope:** Sure.

**MS BRESNAN:** And those groups are seeing a big increase in the number of people who are becoming homeless. I think that is where their concern is coming from. I do not think there is any criticism—

**Mr Stanhope:** It may be that DHCS have some statistics in relation to the interceding or the reasons for the increase in that cohort of people, as you describe them, who do not have their own home. What has achieved that? Whether they have actually left a home that they did have, which they owned or which they were renting, I do not know, and I would need to do some research on that.

**THE CHAIR:** I would like to focus on another group, which is that group that are not eligible for public housing—

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** but their income is not going to allow them to be able to even purchase a home that is in the affordable stock, if you like. Many of them are out there in the private rental market. Some of them may be housed through community housing, so there is a strategy going on there, but there is still a big group that—

**Mr Stanhope:** I do not disagree. In response to Ms Bresnan's question, I can go through all of the issues that the government has in place in relation to indicators and a response by this government and successive governments to issues around housing. An indicator that any government, this government and all previous governments, will go to is the level and quality of public housing. We would start there at 11,000 houses,

over nine per cent of the current housing stock—twice the percentage on a pro rata basis of public housing in New South Wales.

So that is where we need to start, Ms Bresnan. We need to start with the enormous effort by this community through successive governments to provide the highest level pro rata of public housing in the nation, by a country mile—twice as much public housing in the ACT, and it has always been thus. Successive governments in this community have provided twice as much public housing as New South Wales provides.

In the context of indicators, that is where we start. It is never enough. There are always issues. There is always unmet need. But we start from that basic position that the proportion of public housing here is currently in excess of nine per cent. I understand in New South Wales that it sits at around 4½ per cent.

In the context of how we then deal with this range of other issues, I can go to all of the initiatives which we are currently pursuing. They include the now 20 per cent of all greenfields housing being delivered at under \$322,000. I can go to land rent in relation to that cohort that cannot access public housing—that same cohort, Ms Hunter. We can go through those measures. In relation to that particular cohort, the ones just above the public housing threshold, we believe that land rent, community housing and a 20 per cent commitment to a house and land package under \$322,000 are very significant achievements and initiatives.

Going to community housing, they currently have, on Flemington Road—I opened it just two weeks ago—20 additional apartments in Forde. Three months ago I opened 14 apartments in Holt, all under NRAS and all essentially being let at 75 per cent of market rate through a combination of community housing and NRAS in that particular instance. But even where NRAS is not available, Community Housing Canberra is now rolling out, at a significant level, affordable rental properties and affordable properties for sale.

I have just opened those two—one of 20 one and two-bedroom units in Forde and one of 14 units in Holt—and look forward in the very near future to opening 104 units being delivered by Community Housing Canberra on Flemington Road. I am advised by Ross Barrett that that 104-unit development by Community Housing Canberra on Flemington Road is the single biggest community housing project in Australia.

**MS BRESNAN:** Just on community housing—

**Mr Stanhope:** In the context of indicators—

**MS BRESNAN:** If I could just make a point about the community housing, minister.

**Mr Stanhope:** we are delivering the single biggest community housing initiative in Australia at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** Could I just break in here too. We have been focusing on output class 1.1. We also have 1.2 to cover, and we are breaking in approximately 15 minutes. So could we finish up on this one. There may be some who still have questions under 1.1,

but we will need to move to 1.2. Ms Le Couteur, did you have a question under 1.1, because you have not been given an opportunity yet.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you. I have a number of questions. One of them is on budget paper 3, page 155, fuel storage facilities. You have got \$1 million to remediate non-operational fuel storage tanks at ACT Property Group sites. Could you tell us more about this?

**Mr Dawes:** Certainly. I will ask Stephen Ryan to go through that for you, Ms Le Couteur.

**Mr Ryan:** Could you repeat the question, please?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You have got \$1 million for remediation of non-operational fuel storage tanks at ACT Property Group sites. What are you doing? Where are they?

**Mr Ryan:** The \$1 million is being provided over two years, so it is \$500,000 a year. The initial \$500,000 for 2010-11 essentially will be used for fuel storage tanks at depots within the Namadgi national park. Over the last couple of years we have inherited a number of properties from what used to be called Environment ACT when it moved back into TAMS when we were there. A lot of those properties are out in the national parks, and they have fuel tanks of varying types associated with those properties.

It will be an ongoing program and it was not therefore on the basis of us costing four particular fuel tanks or 10 particular fuel tanks. With that money, we will basically do those tanks in the park. If there is sufficient money within the \$500,000 for those for next year and there is money left over from that program, we will then move on.

We have probably in the order of 25 to 30 properties across Canberra that have varying types of tanks. In some places, if you look at the old Fyshwick depot, the old Totalcare depot in Canberra Avenue at Fyshwick, for many years it was where you used to take your government cars to get the cars refuelled. It has bowsers and tanks under the ground there. We have decommissioned them but they are still there. For OH&S purposes, we are basically going through a process where we are trying to prioritise them, and at present it is the national park ones.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Seselja, then I will take a question and then on to Mr Smyth.

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you. Mr Dawes, I wanted to go back to an earlier answer that you gave. I do not think you quite answered Mr Smyth's question around change of use. In your opinion, and given your position in the department and your previous roles, does a significant increase in change of use have a potential dampening impact on the market?

**Mr Dawes:** I have not done a rigorous analysis on that.

**MR SESELJA:** You would have a view. You have been around for a long time. You are hearing from industry.

**Mr Dawes:** I think I gave you my answer.

**MR SESELJA:** You talked about equity issues but you did not answer whether or not it does have a distorting or a dampening effect on the market. I am interested in your views on that.

**Mr Stanhope:** Mr Dawes is not responsible for the change of use policy, Madam Chair. This is not a question that is within Mr Dawes's purview.

**MR SESELJA:** Hang on, it is.

**MR SMYTH:** There is a dot point on densification.

**MR SESELJA:** The dot point talks about urban renewal. Surely, the department that is going to set up an urban renewal strategy would have a view as to the factors which go to assisting urban renewal or hindering urban renewal.

**Mr Stanhope:** He would have a view but it is not within his policy or his remit to answer the question.

**MR SESELJA:** It is in his policy as to whether or not it affects the work that is being done by his department.

**Mr Stanhope:** Madam Chair, change of use charge is administered—

**MR SESELJA:** I know you do not want him to answer the question.

**Mr Stanhope:** I beg your pardon—well, he is not going to answer the question. I will direct him—

**MR SESELJA:** It is well within order.

**MR SMYTH:** So you are going to gag the public servants?

**MR SESELJA:** You are going to gag Mr Dawes from giving his opinion on change of use? Are you afraid of what the answer might be?

**Mr Stanhope:** Change of use charge administratively is the responsibility of—

**MR SESELJA:** Are you afraid of what his answer might be?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am not a bit afraid of what his answer might be.

**MR SESELJA:** Well, why are you gagging him? Why don't you—

**Mr Stanhope:** Because it is not his responsibility. He has not been involved in discussions. He is not across the issue. He does not have a detailed understanding of the issue as it is being pursued by the relevant officers—

**MR SMYTH:** So why has the agency that manages the land not been involved in the

discussions?

**Mr Stanhope:** who are the—

**MR SESELJA:** That is an issue in itself if he has not been involved in discussions.

**THE CHAIR:** One at a time.

**Mr Stanhope:** Madam Chair, this is not a policy responsibility of this department, and it is not appropriate or fair to ask Mr Dawes to answer questions that are in the purview of his chief executive colleagues in ACTPLA and Treasury. It is simply not appropriate—

**MR SESELJA:** So you are gagging Mr Dawes on this issue.

**Mr Stanhope:** for him to be cross-examined on a policy issue for which he is not administratively responsible. He really requires your protection.

**THE CHAIR:** I will move on to an issue around the Property Group.

**MR SESELJA:** Hang on, chair.

**MR SMYTH:** The primary objective of the department is to address the demand for land, for affordable and sustainable development.

**MR SESELJA:** Hang on, chair. We are very entitled to ask this question.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, and you—

**MR SESELJA:** If the answer from the Chief Minister is that he will gag Mr Dawes—

**THE CHAIR:** The response is that there will not be a response, so can we move on.

**MR SESELJA:** I would like to know why we cannot ask Mr Dawes for—

**THE CHAIR:** I think Mr Stanhope did give an explanation there. I do not know if it could be any clearer.

**MR SMYTH:** But, Madam Chair, one of the objectives of the department is to address the demand for land for affordable and sustainable development. Change of use charge affects the sustainability of development. I am surprised we cannot have an answer.

**Mr Dawes:** My portfolio responsibility as far as that is concerned is that I am responsible for the land supply strategy. The land supply strategy includes sites that we will take to the market for sale with development rights on those blocks. So it has got nothing to do with change of use, as the Chief Minister has mentioned.

**MR SMYTH:** But you spoke about brownfield sites and redevelopment. That is all about change of use charge.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, I think Mr Dawes has now given you an explanation.

**MR SESELJA:** He has officially been gagged.

**THE CHAIR:** What does improving use—

**Mr Stanhope:** Let me just put it this way: Mr Dawes does have a personal view—

**THE CHAIR:** Could I move on to my question. Chief Minister, could I move on to my question?

**Mr Stanhope:** about public art, but if you asked him a question about public art I would direct that he not answer it.

**MR SESELJA:** It impacts directly on the portfolio.

**MR SMYTH:** Public art is not in the objectives of the department, so it is a spurious—

**THE CHAIR:** Order, members! I am going to be asking a question.

**Mr Stanhope:** Neither is administration of change of use charge.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister!

**MR SMYTH:** So change of use charge has no effect on the demand for land for affordable and sustainable development—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, we are—

**Mr Stanhope:** Of course it does.

**THE CHAIR:** moving on and I am taking a—

**MR SESELJA:** And we cannot have a view?

**Mr Stanhope:** You can have an opinion from the officers that have responsibility for that particular issue, namely, the head of ACTPLA and the head of Treasury.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, it would help if you stopped talking so that I could ask a question. Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** They are the officers responsible—

**MR SESELJA:** It does not stand up to scrutiny. That is why you gag it.

**THE CHAIR:** What does improving use and returns from the Property Group's property portfolio involve? Is the result of this largely developing a single ACT government office building, or are there other activities which are being undertaken?

**Mr Dawes:** There are a number of other activities, and broadly I will ask Steve to respond to some of those. Back in 2005, I think, Property Group were given charge of looking at accommodation strategies et cetera across the government. When they embarked on that particular project, we had an average space per public servant of very close to 20 square metres. As things have evolved and we have refined and adopted different policies, we have been able to bring that back to around 16½ square metres per person and I think that is a significant saving. That is around 12,000 square metres of office space that was surplus to our requirements, a saving of around \$4½ million in all of that.

One of the key objectives with the government office, for example, is to bring that back to 15 square metres per person. If you look at where we are housed in the Telstra building, we are actually currently working in 13.5 square metres per space, so these are things that we are looking at—efficiencies as well. Steve can talk a little bit more about the whole-of-office strategy there.

**Mr Ryan:** You have done a brilliant job, Mr Dawes.

**THE CHAIR:** Could I add in there: does it include the survey of ACT government properties available for community use and the energy assessments of those buildings?

**Mr Ryan:** It will. It is a process that we have been going through in terms of rating our buildings. Essentially, if you had asked me this question two years ago, I would not have been able to give you the ratings. We have been going through the process, so it is an ongoing process. We started with our biggest buildings and we will work down until we get to our smallest. You have to appreciate that a number of the buildings that we have got are going to present some difficulties because of the nature of the buildings. The rating schemes tend to focus on office buildings, shopping centres, hotels or hospitals. So, once we start getting down to smaller buildings that are spread throughout the suburbs and which used to be city parks depots, small health centres or whatever, it will become a challenge. It is one of the things we are working on.

**THE CHAIR:** What work is currently involved in providing policy development for the sustainable management of government properties? We touched on it a little bit earlier. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Mr Ryan:** The national framework for sustainable government office buildings is the major piece of work that we are doing. It is a quite comprehensive document. It has come out of an office environment, because most of our government property groups around the country concentrate purely on office. We are sort of unique in the sense that we have gone beyond office into surplus property.

**THE CHAIR:** Municipal plus the state?

**Mr Ryan:** Yes. The ACT, I think, is the only jurisdiction where we have got a centralised surplus property process so that when an agency no longer requires a property it comes back to us to do an evaluation on how government can best utilise

that property or whether it needs to be disposed of. Over the last 20 years since self-government, there have been a number of different types of properties that have come back and that we have looked at. We will, as far as possible, apply the same sorts of policies that we are putting together for sustainable government office buildings to basically our portfolio of buildings.

**THE CHAIR:** That survey of, particularly, those properties where there is a community use, what is your timetable for that? I know you said you started with the biggest buildings and you are working your way down.

**Mr Ryan:** I would think it is probably going to take us two to three years to get through the stock, and that is our existing stock. We have currently got on our books 159 properties, so there are quite a lot of them. Across the territory, the government owns in the vicinity of 690 properties. Those properties can range from a sports pavilion sitting on the edge of an oval right through to something in the order of a Macarthur House or a health building in Civic. So, yes, there are lots and lots of little properties all over the place.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, thank you. Mr Smyth, a new question.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, thank you, chair. Chief Minister, on page 77 of budget paper 3 there is a feasibility assessment for a general aviation airport to the value of \$50,000. Have we not done a number of reports on general aviation and their needs, and how will this report be different?

**Mr Stanhope:** There has been some scoping work done in relation to this particular site. I have to say that this is the only site that has been able to be identified in the ACT. There is potentially a second site that people have raised with me in discussions, but Williamsdale has been suggested to me as the most feasible site for a general aviation airfield in the ACT.

The previous study in relation to Williamsdale went to the issue of whether or not it would technically be a feasible site; in other words, whether the aviation requirements would be met in terms of hills or location or some of the other physical attributes of the site. The result of that particular study, which was conducted some years ago, was that, yes, the proposed Williamsdale site is technically feasible as a general aviation airfield. The government has now decided to take the next step, which is essentially to do a financial assessment of the cost or likely costs, most significantly the up-front capital cost and the ongoing operating cost. A financial assessment has not previously been done, as I understand it, on this site. Is that a fair summary?

**Mr Dawes:** Yes, I think the previous one was physical. This is now moving to some of the financial.

**MR SMYTH:** When is the report due?

**Mr Stanhope:** I would imagine it is a report that would be done reasonably quickly. I would like to think that the report would be done in the next few months. I do not have a date. But I have no reason to believe that it is work that could not be done over the course of a couple of months.

**MR SMYTH:** So it is approximately by the end of this year?

**Mr Stanhope:** I have not had that discussion, but I can see absolutely no reason why this work would not be concluded by Christmas.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. And you mentioned there was a discussion of a second site. Where was that?

**Mr Stanhope:** It has been mentioned to me anecdotally. I was just being super careful. Just to provide the context, it has been suggested to me that Williamsdale is probably the only genuine, feasible site—flat, capacity. As you look around the ACT for flat land that is capable, there is not much. It has been suggested to me a site that I do not believe has been seriously investigated—that there would be potentially a site somewhere just to the north of the Uriarra settlement—but it is not a site that has attracted anybody’s imagination.

**MR SMYTH...** the increase of \$5.223 million in the 2010-11 Budget from the 2009-10 estimated outcome is due mainly to reduced payments of loans and the expected increase in rent collections.

What is the expected increase in rent collections?

**Mr Dawes:** I will defer to Ian Thomson, who is our Acting Chief Finance Officer.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, on that—did you announce at the beginning you were the acting—

**Mr Dawes:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** After six or seven months, Chief Minister, why don’t we have a permanent head of the department?

**Mr Stanhope:** I must say I am not across the administrative issues in relation to that.

**Mr Dawes:** We have been too busy to worry about those issues, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** So everybody is acting at this stage.

**Mr Thomson:** Which point? You were talking about—

**MR SMYTH:** The first dot point under the balance sheet on page 156, budget paper 4. It talks about “expected increase in rent collections”. How much is the expected increase and where are they coming from?

**Mr Thomson:** It is basically a CPI increase over the forward years and we have got reductions in loan repayments. We are actually paying off—

**MR SMYTH:** Yes. It was just the rents I was interested in. Mr Dawes, again, we cannot do a comparison of the staff. The budget for this year is 141 and the budget for

next year is the same, 141. Can we have a reconciliation of what staff moved into the department and whether or not there are any additional staff employed over and above those that were transferred?

**Mr Dawes:** I could get that and take that on notice—

**Mr Thomson:** Or do you want an answer now?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, if you can give an answer, but a written reconciliation would be nice as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I just note that that has been taken on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** And, earlier, the potential units that might move into the government office block: can we have a written list of those and what numbers of staff are expected to move in?

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. I note that has been taken on notice.

**Mr Tomlins:** We can give, if you like, the current basis for assessment, but it may—

**MR SMYTH:** I understand.

**Mr Tomlins:** Ultimately, it may be quite different, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. We might now have to wrap up. We will stop for morning tea and recommence with the Land Development Agency.

### **Meeting adjourned from 10.31 to 10.46 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will recommence this public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates and turn to the Land Development Agency. My first question is around solar hot-water rebates in Bonner. I hope we have finally found a place where we can ask this question. I tried DECCEW, I then tried ACTPLA but now I understand it is the Land Development Agency. I note that the government will be offering eligible purchasers of land in Bonner a rebate for a solar or heat pump hot-water system. Who will be eligible for that rebate? Why is that rebate only being offered to residents of Bonner?

**Mr Robertson:** Bonner is the most recent, up until now, of the LDA estates. As part of the sustainable issues we were putting into Bonner, we put that as part of our way of addressing sustainability issues. As you would be aware from previous discussions, we do some things within the precinct and we do some things en bloc.

In that particular case we decided to offer and trial that as part of demonstration projects so that people could take advantage of the scheme. It is structured so that effectively there is no net cost to purchasers. It depends on exact prices, but that is the general intent: no cost above a gas-boosted hot-water system.

As you would be aware, the Assembly changed the legislation. It made some changes there. There has been no real need to change the rebate scheme that the LDA has because the legislation is really about minimum standards and trying to do away with some of the very old inefficient systems.

What the LDA scheme aims at is to actually really demonstrate best practice. It goes for a high level. Depending on the size of the system, it is up to 30 RECs which the system has to be worth to be eligible for the scheme. There are no restrictions in relation to individual purchases. The eligibility really relates to the nature of the system that has been put in. So the maximum rebate is for a 30 REC system.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned this was a demonstration project in a sense.

**Mr Robertson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you looking at rolling it out to other suburbs in the future?

**Mr Robertson:** We certainly will consider that as we go with different suburbs, but we are also, as part of the LDA's charter, exploring a range of initiatives around sustainability, affordability as well as just the raw land release numbers. We will consider that as we go. We are hoping that the demonstration effect over time would be such that people would start to do it automatically when they come to appreciate some of those whole-of-life issues as well as the broad sustainability benefits.

**THE CHAIR:** What are the other strategies that are a part of this?

**Mr Robertson:** Specifically in Bonner or more generally? I think more generally we have been working with ACTPLA and others around solar orientation. I know that some members of the Assembly have been to some of the public forums we had in Molonglo where there were demonstrations of a lot of the things that we were doing there. Obviously water sensitive urban design has been something that we have been doing for a long time and it is reflected in the LDA's estates and also our joint venture estates with our joint venture partners.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Given, as you say, that energy efficient and solar hot-water services are now mandatory, do you think this is the best use of your money in terms of improving sustainability? Would it make more sense to work on an area which was not mandated?

**Mr Robertson:** The mandating is only quite recent—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, but it is—

**Mr Robertson:** We have been releasing blocks in Bonner for the best part of two—well in fact it is probably almost two years to the day.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That mandating is—

**Mr Robertson:** That is part of what people are getting. It is a core part of Bonner. We

are aiming to maximise the penetration of these high quality systems making Bonner, subject to the uptake by individuals and decisions by individual builders and owners—certainly if they take advantage of the scheme, Bonner would be headed towards being one of the most sustainable suburbs in Canberra.

As I mentioned at the outset, it does not clash with the legislation. The legislation is about the minimum standards. This is actually about driving towards best practice to really demonstrate what else can be achieved.

**THE CHAIR:** How does it link in with DECCEW? You have liaison with DECCEW. Does it fit in with some of their strategic objectives?

**Mr Robertson:** We certainly have at different levels with some officers more than most. We have a lot of discussions with DECCEW on a range of issues. We were certainly aware of the legislation that we were doing. We gave consideration internally to the very question that Ms Le Couteur asked as to whether we continue with this. We had already made the commitment because we had a whole lot of land that we had released. Rather than chopping it off midway with the issues that might entail, we actually thought it was very important to continue to push that out.

Often with a lot of products that are put into homes it becomes a bit of a volume game. It is easier for them to turn up to their suppliers and get block cheap gas systems or whatever might be available. This is partly about not just educating individual buyers but also the builders as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** In the earlier period before energy efficiency hot-water services were mandated, what take-up rate were you getting? Was it greater than other developments? Did it make a difference to you?

**Mr Robertson:** We have no data on what the take-up rates might be at other places. I think we are looking at how it is going. We actually provide information in all of our ballot packs. It is on our website. Information leaflets are provided to all purchasers in Bonner. I think that we will be continuing to work to make sure that we get a high penetration. I do not have figures at the moment for what the exact take-up is. Some of that we will only know once the units are installed and people then come in to make their claim. As you would be aware, there are still a lot of houses under construction in Bonner and other land still being released.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Will you be able to take it on notice, the take-up rate prior to solar hot-water et cetera being mandated, because that is the interesting question?

**Mr Robertson:** We can certainly do that.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that that is taken on notice. Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** How was the decision made to develop Wright and Coombs—whether or not to go joint venture, englobo or stand-alone LDA development? How was that decision taken? What was the process?

**Mr Dawes:** I think what we had a look at there when we looked at the land supply

strategy—this comes under my responsibility—is that over the last few years, as you know, traditionally we have had a third, a third, a third policy. With what has happened in the last couple of years, it has been skewed more to the private sector—two-thirds for englobos.

One of the things that we looked at doing with the suburbs of Coombs and Wright, for probably the largest EDP that has been approved—it is to a firm called Cardno Young for 4,400 dwellings—one of the things that we wanted to be able to do was to try and get ahead of the program in a sense. So we thought that by letting a whole EDP to Cardno Young it would mean there is some consistency about the street layouts—all of that sort of thing.

I think that also gives us the flexibility down the track to even look at one of the things that the industry is looking at. As we further finetune land release programs, the LDA was the best placed to start bringing the land in Molonglo to the market much earlier than if, for example, we sold it englobo, where they would be starting completely from scratch.

As you are aware, the LDA is taking just under 400 blocks to the market in a few weeks by ballot and auction. Then we will reassess how we move forward. If you look at the outyears we do return—we have englobo sales. We will get back to that a third, a third, a third policy moving forward. In respect of the current joint ventures—Mr Robertson can answer in more detail on the joint ventures—there are the joint ventures at Crace and Forde. They have been certainly accelerated because of the market conditions; so we will be getting more land out through the joint ventures in the ensuing 12 months.

**MR SESELJA:** Before Mr Robertson answers, wasn't one of the rationales for going more englobo the speed and the urgency of getting land to market? We are proposing now to continue to accelerate the amount of land over the next few years. How does this strategy of going back to the LDA make it more likely that the land will be delivered to the market quickly?

**Mr Dawes:** It was just in this first instance with the suburb of Wright. We thought that there were efficiencies of scale in getting one EDP done. Obviously things have changed a little over the last couple of years. You had commonwealth constraints with EPBC as well. One of the things that we have looked at doing, and one of the great advantages of us doing the EDP under one single contract, is that we do the risk for the private sector as well, so there are all those sorts of clearances. We will be in a position to review that over time and there will be some decisions the government will review and take. But we would be able to take some of that land to the market with an approved EDP and break it up into smaller packages to allow a number of different players there. So there are a number of strategies that we will be reviewing over the course of the next 12 months.

**MR SESELJA:** Does the LDA, in your opinion, have the capacity and the experience to deliver these suburbs without going into joint venture?

**Mr Dawes:** I will allow Mr Robertson to answer some of that. One of the key things that the LDA were doing while the joint ventures were established was to encourage

and ensure that there was transference of skills from the private sector across to government. That has been very successful in the suburb of Forde—in that joint venture with Delfin Lend Lease and CIC, and then the ensuing one at Forde. And Crace, which is the other one.

You are also trying to balance industry for skill shortages. One of the key things that we are looking at doing there is allowing a firm like Cardno Young to invest in the resources. There have been some very good outcomes. They have transferred people here into the ACT office from some of their offices as we are reviewing how we will let some of the other contracts as well, to try and give some certainty to industry by allowing some of these packages. People will then have the opportunity to gear up and prepare—make that investment in people, resources and equipment. That is certainly something that we have been hearing from industry, and that is what they desire.

**MR SESELJA:** Chief Minister, are you satisfied that the LDA does have that experience and capacity?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, I am. Quite. Otherwise, we would not have proceeded on it. I have every faith in the board and in the LDA. I think it would be appropriate for Mr Robertson to give some explanation of the capacity of the organisation, the runs that it has on the board and its capacity to deliver Wright.

**Mr Robertson:** Thank you, Chief Minister. In relation to capacity, and each of the three of you have touched on it, the LDA is a very different organisation from what it was three years ago. You may recall that about three years ago the land release program was in the order of 2,200 dwellings per annum—or sites without any dwellings. Over the last couple of years, the amounts progressively that have been released are about 3,490—4,339 last year. This year we are on target to achieve a very similar number. A lot of that has been done through LDA estates at Franklin and at Bonner; but also, as has been pointed out, there has been quite a bit through the englobo releases. The LDA has learned a lot from joint venture partners. We have also attracted some very good people from the private sector, both in Canberra and interstate. I am confident that we have got the capacity to continue to meet the challenges that have been given to us.

Mr Dawes also talked about some of those issues in relation to Molonglo. It is worth noting that we have got to a situation where we are in the middle of a process to sell a very large number of single residential sites in Molonglo over the next couple of weeks—the actual ballot and auction processes. On the program 12 months ago, as you pointed out, there was an indication that some of those sites in Wright would be englobo releases. Notwithstanding the fact that the market is racing ahead and there is a need to get things quickly to the market, as we did the detailed work, because of the topography out there at Wright, there was also this issue of the dependencies there would have been between the different englobos. If we had continued to do the level of work that was needed to protect the territory's position in any englobo deeds, we would have almost had to specify exactly where the pipes and each of the individual roads came as they connected between the englobos and the LDA development.

Mr Dawes has referred to the EDP. It was because of that work that we have done that we ended up being able to get these Molonglo blocks out there and into the market so

that people know that they have got a block of land that they can then start their building processes on. So by the time we have completed the construction, there will be opportunity—people will have picked their builder; they will have picked their house plans; they will have got their approvals.

**MR SESELJA:** Chief Minister, you seem to be expressing some concerns in a letter to Mr Dawes about the capacity. You express some frustration. You ask for urgent advice. You wish to at all costs avoid being forced to again contemplate a direct grant of residential land. And you finish the letter by saying that surely the LDA now has sufficient experience and capacity to develop areas such as Wright and Coombs without going into joint venture. When did you form the view that they did have that capacity?

**Mr Stanhope:** I certainly had that opinion at the time I wrote that letter, and I have retained that opinion.

**MR SESELJA:** You seem to be asking it as a question in the letter.

**Mr Stanhope:** It was posed as a matter of “surely”—in other words, they do, do they not? It was not a question: do they? It was: they do. It is a form of expression.

**MR SESELJA:** It does not read like that.

**Mr Stanhope:** Surely they have. It does. That is a common form of expression.

**MR SMYTH:** It is when you ask a question.

**Mr Stanhope:** Mr Robertson has explained the position perfectly. Over the last three years—indeed, if one looks at the record of the LDA or the record in relation to land release prior to 2006—we have ramped up dramatically. We now have in the Land Development Agency—supported administratively by the Department of Land and Property Services, and this is the other significant administrative shift that has occurred: that we have created a separate Department of Land and Property Services, reporting directly to me, in relation to issues around land supply and land development—a board that I trust implicitly, headed up by Mr John Haskins, one of the ACT’s most respected builders and developers over decades, ex-president and national president of the Master Builders Association of the ACT and Australia; Mr Ray Young, ex-head of Defence Housing Australia; and a number of other very impressive and competent people. We have a very strong board, headed up by John Haskins.

And we have the LDA, headed up by Mr Robertson, with a significant record of achievement in recent years, in the process, just in the last two years, of rolling out a range of combinations—in fact, almost 4,000 each year, a total of about 8,500 in two years. They are blocks in a number of combinations. I believe that it has the competency and the capacity to proceed. And, of course, I have no doubt that they will be successful with the work and the structural changes to be made in relation to planning, particularly in relation to the estate development plan. I see absolutely no reason for them not now to adopt that portion of the role which we anticipated that they would have in the proposal to have a third englobo, a third joint venture and a

third LDA. Indeed, I would hope that over time we will see the need for the engagement in joint ventures to continue to diminish.

**MR SESELJA:** You did in that letter in October—

**THE CHAIR:** Then we are going to Ms Le Couteur for a supplementary.

**MR SESELJA:** In that letter in October, you did ask for formal advice on the LDA's capacity to accept a greater role in land development. When did you receive that?

**Mr Stanhope:** I have no idea. I will have to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that that is taken on notice.

**MR SESELJA:** You once again seem to be seeking some assurance. You said before that you absolutely had that view in October when you wrote this letter, but you were seeking some advice about their capacity to do that and expressing it in terms of some frustration. When did you get sufficient assurance from the LDA that they had such a capacity?

**Mr Stanhope:** I had it at the time I wrote the letter.

**MR SESELJA:** Why did you ask for it in writing then?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am a careful minister and I rely on my officials. I have a view, sometimes not shared by my officials, in relation to a whole range of things. I rely on advice and on officials acknowledging the gaps in my experience and understanding. But, as the minister, I had a view that the LDA should be granted greater autonomy and freedom in relation to development for a whole range of reasons, including speed but also the dividend. I tested that view of mine with officials and, as a result of that, at whatever time and through whatever process—I cannot recall—we decided to proceed. That is why we have experts. That is why we hire people of Mr Dawes's and Mr Robertson's experience. That is why we put people like John Haskins, the ex-national president of the Master Builders Association of Australia, on boards such as the Land Development Agency. That is why I rely on their advice. That is why they are appointed.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Looking at the three methods of development, can you give me some idea of the differences in terms of environmental quality and return to the government as well? We have mainly talked about timeliness so far, which is not the only criterion. Could you talk about those other two criteria and anything else you might want to say about timeliness?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will probably defer to Mr Robertson and Mr Dawes—and it may be that they have the numbers with them—but I do not blanch from acknowledging that my interest in the LDA assuming a more autonomous and direct role was a reflection of the capacity for an enhanced dividend, more money for public housing—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Well, that would be good.

**Mr Stanhope:** driven by our capacity to leverage a greater return for the government. That was very much part and parcel of my motivation in relation to the Land Development Agency fulfilling its original mission to a greater extent. I do not know the numbers, but it may be that Mr Robertson or Mr Dawes do, Ms Le Couteur. In relation to issues around sustainability and environmental demands, perhaps Mr Robertson can assist.

**Mr Robertson:** We do not go around and measure the sustainability achievements of some of those private sector developers. We do notice, though—and we certainly do comment on it—whether there is anything that others do that we should emulate. When I first joined the LDA there was quite a bit of discussion within the LDA about the good things that were being done in our joint venture at Forde. That is part of that learning that we talked about. In particular, they have done some good things around more sensitive urban design.

As we have rolled through Franklin and Bonner, we have been seeking to emulate that. We try not to judge ourselves against what others do, but on what we can actually achieve. We have already had the discussion about the hot-water rebate. When you look at the motivations of the private sector people compared to the motivations perhaps of the LDA and its staff, in our case we have a legislative charter, effectively, and our statement of intent. The government and the Assembly, when budgets get passed, basically tell us that we will go out there and do better things in terms of sustainability and affordability, as well as delivering on the financial elements and the land release volume. We also discuss and consult with our interstate colleagues because we are not the only government land organisation in the country. We learn from what, effectively, our peers in other jurisdictions do as well.

We have talked in previous meetings of select committees and annual reports committees about a lot of the detail. We do not go around and compare what we are doing in west Macgregor—not in a formal sense where you can measure that they have done 10 per cent and we have done 15 per cent. We just seek to do what we can without leaning too far on things like dividends. Everything we do, like the rebate, impacts on the dividends and the amount of money the government has to use for other purposes. We have our business planning process and we have our statement of intent. We do things in consultation with the other departments, whether it is DECCEW or LAPS, and certainly with the Chief Minister as our minister.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But surely from an environmental point of view, it is not really just a matter of the motivation of a private sector partner. You, as LDA, can say, “This is what we want.” Surely, it is not just a question of spending money for the environment; it is also a question of innovation. That might be an area where the private sector could contribute.

**Mr Robertson:** I am sure they do in some of the things that they have pioneered and that we have learnt from. That is, as I have mentioned, our peers interstate. It is certainly not a matter of money; it is a matter of the outcomes and those broader sustainability achievements. Under a number of government initiatives and policy statements we have objectives that we have to do in terms of more sustainable land

development, for example.

Where we can learn from the private sector and what people should not lose sight of is that most of the actual physical and consulting work that is done on behalf of the LDA is done by private sector firms. We have environmental consultants working with us. We have got a wide range of private sector expertise and we try and make sure that we are working with the best people to get the best results. If I have given the impression that we sit back and just make things up ourselves and do not go out more broadly and find out what is going on, that certainly was not what I thought I said and certainly not what I intended to say.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you. I have a further question on Molonglo. Budget paper 3, at page 120, lists \$34.5 million for the north-south arterial road for Molonglo, which is John Gorton Drive. I am just wondering how much that \$34.5 million covers—what portion of the road.

**Mr Robertson:** That is a capital works project which would be appropriated to TAMS. That is probably in the detail of the budget papers. With the LDA, when we are doing our estates we do the suburban roads and the links to the road. What would be covered by that capital works bit would be the main road and the cycle elements.

**MS BRESNAN:** So you do not know how much portion of the road it covers or if it is just the northern end of Wright and Coombs?

**Mr Stanhope:** It is not very far, Ms Bresnan. It is from—

**MS BRESNAN:** So it is the northern end of Wright and Coombs?

**Mr Stanhope:** It is from Streeton Drive through to Holdens Creek, I believe, which would be just over two kilometres, perhaps. It is a big road.

**MS BRESNAN:** It is a big road, yes. We are very aware of that.

**Mr Stanhope:** And a very expensive road. I have asked Tony Gill whether he was proposing to scatter gold dust across the tarmac.

**MS BRESNAN:** And he was not?

**Mr Stanhope:** He insists he is not.

**MS BRESNAN:** He insists he is not. That is good.

**Mr Stanhope:** Though he insists there is a lot of cut and fill.

**MS BRESNAN:** Right. In terms of the commonwealth strategic environmental assessment impact, how does that impact on the current and future alignment of any roads for Molonglo?

**Mr Robertson:** The commonwealth strategic assessment was under the EPBC legislation. In relation to Molonglo, there have been a couple of different commonwealth processes. We had a process that covered Coombs and Wright. Clearly, that part of John Gorton Drive that you are describing is within that work that has previously been done. As to the other strategic assessment, was that in the act or the papers that you are referring to?

**MS BRESNAN:** I do not think it is, actually. It is supporting land supply and land release.

**Mr Robertson:** That is probably one of the ACTPLA deliverables rather than in relation to the LDA—

**MS BRESNAN:** It relates to all agencies, I think.

**Mr Robertson:** Beyond Holdens Creek, the road there would be within that broad precinct that is covered by the strategic assessment. In terms of the detail, you would need to ask ACTPLA about that.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Le Couteur, another question on Molonglo and then we will move to Mr Seselja and then Mr Smyth.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I note there is a sustainability strategy for Wright and Coombs being created. When is that going to be developed? Well, I assume it has been developed. When will it be finalised? I assume it is the LDA doing it, given you are doing the development.

**Mr Robertson:** I understand, Ms Le Couteur, that you went to one of the public forums that we had.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I did, yes. It was very interesting, actually.

**Mr Robertson:** It has certainly been very well received by all members of the community that went to that. You would have seen from that that there has been an extremely large amount of work done on a lot of the technical aspects—orientation, the work we are doing, in conjunction with others, on the riparian strategy for where the Molonglo River basically bounds one edge of Coombs.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** When will that be finalised—the riparian strategy, because that is of great interest?

**Mr Robertson:** I do not have that date in my head but we are working with ACTPLA on that. But in relation to the other elements, you would have seen the draft EDPs and things which were consulted on publicly. So a lot of the elements of our sustainability strategy are reflected there.

There are also a range of on-block initiatives that we have been working our way through, like a building development guide. That is probably not its exact title but it will talk about some of the things that, once people purchase the land and the LDA has done the physical servicing of the land, will make the developments more

sustainable.

Because of the work that we are doing, we do not then think it is, from a sustainability perspective, very sensible for people to come and dig enormous holes. I am exaggerating for the point of illustration but, if someone wanted to come in and put in a five or six-level basement, that is not something that would be allowed in terms of the requirements we are putting out because we are trying to minimise some of that site disturbance and extensive cut and fills that would happen afterwards. It is also not very efficient from an individual purchaser or public perspective if we do a lot of suburb set-out and then things are changed dramatically and you end up with a lot more reinforcing walls and other things consuming more resources.

So there are a number of different categories where we are doing particular elements. I think, when we complete that building guide, we are quite happy to provide the committee with a copy of that. It will also be provided to all potential purchasers and people will be reminded of it as part of their sales contract supplied.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is that going to have some more about water? You have been talking about the development being particularly water efficient but, with the exception of the stormwater ponds near north Weston, I am not aware of anything apart from the standard water sets of urban design, which all new developments in Canberra have to have. What will you be doing above that?

**Mr Robertson:** I think you are referring to the fact that some of that non-potable water that we will collect will be used for irrigation of public spaces.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, I am aware of that but more generally the publicity for Molonglo—Wright and Coombs, in particular—has been that it will be particularly good from a water saving point of view. I am wondering what is planned, apart from the standard things that are required, in a water sense of urban design.

**Mr Robertson:** “Standard” is an interesting word, because it has only in more recent times become standard. It is not standard across the whole of the territory. In relation to some of the things that we have been pioneering in suburbs like Harrison, Forde and other places, yes, if people accept those as standards now we are doing that. We are also looking at where we go beyond. But we are also conscious about what is an appropriate level of some of those activities. Is there the return or are there more efficient ways of doing things on that more public scale?

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, chair. I think a couple of officials have referred to some of the joint ventures that the LDA is involved with. I want to ask a few questions about one of them, Woden Green. I think it was referred to as Woden East but I think it is now referred to as Woden Green. I think it has been around five years since that joint venture was entered into with the LDA. Is that correct?

**Mr Robertson:** No, that is not correct. My understanding is that it was sometime in 2006. It has been around quite a few years but not that long.

**MR SESELJA:** And what has actually been developed to date, since 2006, as part of that joint venture?

**Mr Robertson:** There has been quite a bit of infrastructure that has been dealt with, and that joint venture has also been delivered partly on behalf of the capital works budget. I am just trying to work out the name of the other one. There is Easty Street and another one. It joins Callam Street. There are some roads that come through that precinct. There has obviously been relocation of a lot of other services and electricity and sewerage. There is a big sewerage main going through the area as well. There has been work in terms of preparing the site for development.

There have been—and for those who watch the ACTPLA website for development applications and things—quite a number of approvals that have been obtained preparatory to work commencing. You are probably aware that late last year there were 179 units in the first residential development, called Avoca, that were developed. There was some other land. There are a group of doctors, as I understand, who have purchased another site for medical and other office facilities. There are also some other units which will be taken to the market, to sell off the plan.

Certainly, when I joined the LDA, the intention was to initially focus on some of the commercial elements. There is a large, I think it was about, 12-storey development in Callam Street which has been designed and approved. There are a couple of layers of basic parking there. That is between the channel and Callam Street, the stormwater channel.

**MRS DUNNE:** On the car park, where Dolly's used to be?

**Mr Robertson:** Sorry?

**MRS DUNNE:** On the car park, where the food van used to be.

**Mr Robertson:** Very close. I am more familiar with the Civic Dolly's than the Woden Dolly's. But in relation to that, when that had basically been approved, it had been the subject of some EIA processes with commonwealth tenants and others who wished to locate to that area. There is a very large investment in some of those things. You would appreciate that certainly private sector developers would not do it and it would not make commercial sense for the LDA to build such a building on spec. And there are still some problems with processes which may mean that the building, using the existing designs, proceeds.

**MR SESELJA:** For the—

**Mr Robertson:** It was about 18 months ago when a commonwealth tenant or commonwealth body who was in advanced stages of agreeing to take up the site there withdrew under pressure from the department of finance as the GFC struck. There has been a lot of work done, a lot of planning for it. There is a lot of basic infrastructure and in the next short while the soils will have turned on Avoca.

**MR SESELJA:** After four years or more, why do we not yet have one unit that has been built or one office that has been built as part of this development? It does call

into question, I suppose, the ability to get out to market the land that has been promised when we see a joint venture which, after four years, has not actually delivered on one unit or one piece of commercial office accommodation.

**Mr Robertson:** That is a question that obviously the LDA board and I have also been asking. I think there has been a lot of movement over the last couple of years in relation to that development. As I said, we have got building approvals for the Avoca units and a couple of the other developments. These things do take time, both to get sites ready for release and then developed. I think this—

**MR SESELJA:** When the land—sorry.

**Mr Robertson:** If I could just address that issue because you asked a broader question about that capacity. If you actually look at what has happened over the last couple of years in relation to the other joint ventures, whether it is Crace or whether it is Forde, there has been a large volume of releases out of those. In fact, when we finalise the numbers for this year—and there are still releases happening in Forde, virtually as we speak—you will see that the releases out of those are significantly in advance of what was estimated at the time of the land release program when the numbers were set 12 months ago.

In relation to the LDA's own developments over that time frame, the last couple of years that you refer to, Bonner has gone from being, in June 2008 with a dozer just starting to scrape the side of a hill, to a place where we have sold a couple of thousand sites for a couple of thousand dwellings. There are a lot of people now living in Bonner. We have got a vibrant, living showcase display village which has actually got, I am told, 500 or 600 visitors each day on the weekend and others on Mondays and Fridays.

A couple of years ago, at the time when Mr Haskins, Mr Young and I joined the LDA board, in the very first stage of Franklin, about 100-plus dwellings were all that had been released. So in that whole time frame, all of those couple of thousand dwellings in Franklin have now been established. The Franklin road corridor is being developed.

Yes, in relation to Woden Green, it has been slower than some of us would have liked. Market conditions have played a large part in that. But when you actually look at across-the-board performance, it would be hard to argue that we have not actually outperformed most of the private sector people. Look at what we have done compared to some of those englobo releases.

**MR SESELJA:** When you—

**THE CHAIR:** We do need to go to Mr Smyth in a moment. It will be the final question before 11.30.

**MRS DUNNE:** What are we doing at 11.30?

**THE CHAIR:** We are moving to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

**MR SESELJA:** When did we agree on that?

**THE CHAIR:** It is on the program.

**MRS DUNNE:** That was not what I was told when I asked the committee office this morning.

**MR SESELJA:** It is not on the program.

**THE CHAIR:** It is on the program.

**MR SESELJA:** Sorry, we are going to have 40 minutes for the LDA. Is that correct?

**MRS DUNNE:** There are no times on the program.

**THE CHAIR:** I can have a look at the program but can you ask your question, please.

**MR SESELJA:** I do not believe that has been agreed by the committee. When you talked about X number of blocks in any given year being released to market, have any of the blocks over the last few years that you said have been released to market made up the joint venture at Woden Green?

**Mr Robertson:** The 179 units that have been sold off the plan at Avoca have.

**MR SESELJA:** When were they first counted in the blocks released at the moment?

**Mr Robertson:** This current financial year they will be counted, because they have been released. You have got 179 different purchasers who have got those. We certainly cannot release them again to anybody else in the future. Those people are now waiting for construction to be completed, to happen.

**MR SESELJA:** When do we expect that construction to commence?

**Mr Robertson:** I am expecting it will commence within the next month.

**MR SESELJA:** How much has the LDA made from this joint venture to date?

**Mr Robertston:** Woden Green?

**MR SESELJA:** Yes.

**Mr Robertson:** In any of our activities, when you talk about “made”, we count revenue on a settlements basis. Because those units have not settled, in that context we have not made anything. But the ACT government has made a substantial amount of money already. And \$25 million was the deemed land value, and at the time that that arrangement was put in place that amount then went from the LDA to Treasury.

Part of that, of course—half of that—is the joint venture partner’s contribution, the private sector partner’s contribution. So they are also keen that things happen, because they have got a very large equity investment in there. They see very great returns over time, but they also have not made anything in the short term.

Because of the work that has been done with improving the site and everything, the land value of that precinct—I do not have the exact figure, and Mr Kelly might be able to help me with that—my understanding is that the value now, based on pretty conservative assessments for borrowing purposes for financing of those buildings that I have referred to, is probably in the area of \$40 million. So depending on whether you are an accountant or what, some people might think we have made our half of \$15 million already. But that is a working investment.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Just going to the numbers on the LDA, Chief Minister, I notice that the estimated staff was 87 and the outcome was 87 staff, but, from page 504 of budget paper 4, you have managed to spend an additional \$2.6 million on staff over the year.

**Mr Robertson:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** The notes say that that is to assist in the increased land program. What happened to the staff? Were they employed and then fired?

**Mr Robertson:** Earlier, in the discussion on land and property services, Mr Dawes mentioned the creation of that department and some of the transfers and responsibilities. There have been in the order of 16 positions that have transferred from the LDA to LAPS. In a formal sense, that transfer has only just happened, and some of those positions are shared positions. In future, there will be another element. You will see in the services that there is another element where effectively there will be a service-level agreement between the LDA and LAPS, where we are sharing, for example, the HR staff. In our own right, we are too small an organisation to have our own strategic HR teams, so we are sharing a small group. One is a recruitment specialist, one is a skill enhancement expert—

**MR SMYTH:** So that explains why, even though you are getting an extra 17 FTEs in the coming financial year, your expenses on employees actually go down?

**Mr Robertson:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** It is from the transfers?

**Mr Robertson:** Yes, and it is just different people at different levels.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay.

**Mr Robertson:** But also, as part of that—at the time of last year's statement of intent, the LDA was aiming for a land release figure of just over 3,000. As the market continued to grow, notwithstanding the more constrained financial situation in the rest of the country, the government took a decision during the year to increase our target. Of course, that required some resources.

**MR SMYTH:** The land revenue line at the top of page 504—when a block or a parcel of land is sold, does the purchaser pay immediately?

**Mr Robertson:** It depends. Generally, no. What happens is that, like any real estate transaction really, you will get a deposit on exchange of contract. What will happen after that is that—in our case, and we have talked about the Avoca example already—settlement will occur when the physical construction is completed, whether it is a block of land, or a unit in the case of Avoca, with the joint venture. That is the point at which we get the revenue.

Earlier I mentioned that we count our revenue on a settlements basis in accordance with the revenue recognition policy that the board has. In some cases, which is probably what you are alluding to, it comes back to the point that Ms Le Couteur raised earlier about what we are doing above normal. A few years ago, the LDA publicly went out to tender for some demonstration projects of affordable housing in the suburbs of Dunlop and Franklin as part of those conditions at the time. Those projects are completed. So in quite rare cases we have deferred settlement arrangements, but generally it is the same with the rest of it; the same things apply. With an auction, you get the deposit soon after the fall of the hammer or when you accept a tender; then settlement occurs at some point in time after that, and that is when you get most of the cash.

**MR SMYTH:** But in the case of Woden Green, if you sell in 2006 and you do not build until 2010 or 2011, what price do you pay in 2010 or 2011—the balance that is owing from 2006?

**Mr Robertson:** No. The thing that needs to be remembered about Woden Green is that it is a fifty-fifty joint venture between the LDA and the private sector partner. What has happened at that time was that cash was paid by the private sector partner to participate in that joint venture. That again is a public tender process that reported a range of criteria that appointed our partner. Then you have got a project that is really no different from where you have consortiums in the private sector with people operating or other JVs. Money is spent on improving and servicing the sites. This means all sorts of machines out there doing all sorts of things. I referred to the sewer lines; there are data lines and all sorts of things.

**MR SMYTH:** Are there any other arrangements? Some people pay up front. If you are an ordinary punter, you might go to buy a block in a ballot.

**Mr Robertson:** No. Why I mentioned that thing about up front is that occasionally—it is rare: most people who buy land from the LDA want to hang onto it—for whatever circumstances, you might have a block of land that is handed back to the LDA after the settlement letters go out. So for whatever reason, and every so often, single residential blocks in LDA estates are handed back. In those circumstances, it is ready to go then. There is no reason why you could not sell it straightaway. So it will depend on the terms. Sometimes, rather than people paying a deposit and then waiting on it—it is extremely rare—people may decide that they just want to come in and get told straightaway.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay.

**Mr Robertson:** And they are blocks that are ready to build on immediately.

**MR SMYTH:** Other arrangements would include things like the fact that we do not extend line of credit or vendor finance to developers?

**Mr Robertson:** No, no vendor finance. I referred to the demonstration where there was that public policy that we were trying to achieve where part of those contract conditions were effectively deferred settlements, but I would not call those vendor finance.

**MR SMYTH:** So we do not provide finance to developers?

**Mr Robertson:** No. And just for absolute clarity, the built form construction, the joint ventures and most of the physical works are done on borrowings which are non-recourse borrowings to the territory. The joint venture partner will line up finance. For example, in Woden, Avoca has finance being arranged through a bank by the joint venture partner. That is part of what they contribute to the joint venture as well as the initial cash payment and management skills.

**MR SMYTH:** This is perhaps for Mr Kelly. The other revenue line is consistently \$60,000 straight across the previous years and the outyears. What is included in other revenue and why is it static at \$60,000?

**Mr Kelly:** That revenue is just miscellaneous revenue. We have some occasional fees and charges of a very minimal nature that we charge.

**Mr Robertson:** Perhaps I could help Mr Kelly.

**Mr Kelly:** Yes.

**Mr Robertson:** For example, we are the custodians of the former offices at Kingston. When we moved early last year—I think I probably mentioned this to the equivalent of this committee last year—we had Property Group managing that for us, and we get a bit of rent.

**MR SMYTH:** The resources received free of charge—you were not expecting any; you got \$440,000 and there is nothing in the outyears. Is there a reason for that?

**Mr Robertson:** I will have a go and Mr Kelly can add any more that he thinks I have left out. Over the last 18 months there has been a lot of activity within Canberra around building—the commonwealth stimulus package, essentially. There was one block of land which we provided to DHCS. They have certainly purchased other blocks in other estates. But this was one we provided and it was just the way it flowed.

**MR SMYTH:** That is fine.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** In relation to budget paper 4, page 348—

**Mr Robertson:** Sorry, which department's pages are they? I am sure they are not the

LDA's.

**MS BRESNAN:** It is in relation to commercial land release. I was going to refer to it. I realise it is not in your indicator. Obviously, we know that ACTPLA has a role in commercial land release. I was just wondering what role the LDA plays—if you are involved in the processes of commercial land release.

**Mr Robertson:** Sorry, would you mind asking the question again, Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** Sure. It is in relation to commercial land release. Obviously, we know ACTPLA has a role in commercial land release. I am just wondering what role the LDA have and how they work in connection to ACTPLA on that.

**Mr Robertson:** Commercial land release is one of the LDA's core tasks. We release land for residential purposes, commercial purposes and industrial purposes. We are effectively given a list of instructions, for want of a better way, and that is the land release program that Mr Dawes has referred to. We do what is needed to take those opportunities to the market. You may be aware that we have got some sites in the city which are being auctioned next week. We have sites all over Canberra that we release during the year. There is a land release table that is published each year by the government in the context of the budget.

That is the first step in our operational plan in relation to land release for those coming periods. We do things like the site investigations. We are involved in preparing the sale documents. We work with ACTPLA because ACTPLA has an approval role around some of those deeds of agreement. So we work with ACTPLA on those. With the commercial releases, we engage commercial agents who manage some of the processes for us. We then collect the revenue, take our costs out and give the profits to Treasury.

**MS BRESNAN:** The strategic indicator discussed there—I realise, again, it is ACTPLA—is about the five-year strategy in relation to residential community and commercial land supply. What role have you had in developing that strategy, if any?

**Mr Dawes:** The land supply strategy sits in the portfolio of Land and Property Services. We coordinate across government and have the relevant agencies that are responsible for infrastructure, capital works and planning meeting to facilitate the land release program that the government ultimately signs up on.

ACTPLA obviously are an important part of that group as well. They have input into the planning advice, depending on whether it is industrial, commercial or residential. Once that is signed off by government, as Mr Robertson has pointed out, it is then embedded into the statement of intent. They go and prepare those blocks of land, whether it is residential, commercial or industrial, to take to the market. But the land release program is set by our area.

**MS BRESNAN:** So you enact the strategy; you do not actually have a role in developing it?

**Mr Dawes:** We have a role. We actually develop that land release program. Once that

is signed off we hand that land release program to LDA to implement and go ahead and take those opportunities to the market.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What population growth rate is assumed in developing it?

**Mr Dawes:** Obviously we follow what is recommended by government. Going back a couple of years, the forward estimates showed a population growth of 1.2. In the last 12 months we have seen that go to 1.9 per cent. We are monitoring that quite rigorously. There are a number of other factors that we take into account as well. It is not only population growth that we look at. We are fine-tuning our tools because we look at household formations as well.

Household formations, over the last couple of years, were 2.7, going to 2.4. That has a significant impact as well on drawing numbers. We also look at migration. Over the last 12 months it has grown by 2,580. These are the sorts of things that we take into account. The raw data indicates that you have around 2,500 development opportunities to take to the market. We have seen much greater than that because of some of the impacts that the commonwealth had with employment.

Again—and that is part and parcel of the role that we talked a bit about earlier—our interaction with the private sector, the residential council that we are involved with, is across government. ACTPLA chairs that particular residential advisory forum where the private sector has involvement. There are the commercial and industrial committees as well. We look at intelligence that is coming from the private sector. Again, we also conduct further meetings with industry to try and ensure that we are getting the full perspective. Obviously we get lobbied from time to time by vested interest groups.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So you are assuming 1.9 per cent?

**MR SMYTH:** With the land release program—

**THE CHAIR:** One at a time, please.

**MR SMYTH:** With the land release program there are 5,000 blocks in 2010-11.

**Mr Robertson:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** 5,000 in 2011-12; 3,500 in 2012-13 and 3,500 in 2013-14. That is when they are released. When will they be build-ready?

**Mr Robertson:** Sorry, what was that last question?

**MR SMYTH:** When will the blocks be build-ready? We have seen land released before and it has taken forever.

**Mr Robertson:** When you look at the components of the 5,000, a lot of them—even within LDA estates—will be multi-unit sites. A large proportion of those will be ready to build on immediately. The other thing about it is that when you look at the joint venture releases, those releases are when blocks are ready to build on in relation

to Crace and Forde. So all those ones that we are releasing in Forde this year, for example, have got all the services and they are now ready to build on.

As we go through the LDA estates, it is within a 12-month period that they will be ready to build on. Often the time frame is a lot less than that because we release blocks through a number of mechanisms in our own states. We have the public ballots, we have builders options and we have allocations to display village builders. We cater for a range of different needs.

We have multi-unit sites that we release close to when they are ready to build on—for example, some of the things in the Bonner local centre that we released recently, sites on Flemington Road, which are multi-unit sites. It depends on the nature of the block. I do not have the figure in my head for the next 12 months, but a lot of those will be ready to build on straightaway.

**MR SMYTH:** Could you take that on notice and give us the year-by-year breakdown of the sites and when you expect them to be build-ready?

**THE CHAIR:** I note that has been taken on notice. Then we will go to Mrs Dunne for a supplementary.

**Mr Dawes:** I think one of the key objectives of government is to get ahead of the game. One of my KPIs, if I can put it that way, is probably at risk because we would have liked to have caught up to the supply as well, but there have been a number of factors. At the end of the day, one of the intentions of the land supply strategy is to ensure that we achieve our desired position to have completed land available for individual purchasers to walk on the site. Looking at the underlying demand that is still out there in the present market, recently when expressions of interest were called for the Bonner ballot we had around 800 registrations for 350 blocks.

We have still got a long way to go. The whole purpose of putting more resources and effort into the land release program over the next two years is to get to the point where we can have blocks available on the market and to minimise that time. In terms of the blocks that we are selling at the present time in Bonner, people will not be able to build on them until March or April next year. There is a time lag there at present. This has happened before in the ACT market. It is not new. The important thing, especially after what we have seen over the last couple of years with the accelerated land release program, is that we are getting to a point where we will catch up.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne and then back to Mr Seselja for a final question.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question in relation to the land release program, which is indicatively set out on page 122 of BP3. Correct me if I am wrong but is this the first time it has appeared like this and is there a more detailed breakdown of the land release program? Once upon a time there used to be a booklet.

**Mr Dawes:** If I could respond to that, we do but it is not a booklet these days. Obviously, with the innovation of websites and all of that, it is available on the web. One of the things that we have done with—

**MRS DUNNE:** So it is available on the web?

**Mr Dawes:** It is available. I know that all of the industry organisations have all of that. If you do not have a copy, I am more than happy to supply it to you.

**MRS DUNNE:** Just tell me what the URL is later in the day.

**Mr Dawes:** What we do is that we actually set down the land supply program for the next four years. We actually allocate where those blocks are going to come from, what estates, and the commercial and industrial as well. Not only do we talk about the size of the parcels of land that we are taking to the market, but we also talk about what gross floor areas can be built. That was a request from industry as well.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. That is what I have been looking for and I could not find it anywhere.

**Mr Dawes:** I know the industry have welcomed that because it actually gives them the opportunity to plan ahead over the four years.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you then tell me, Mr Dawes, whether either of blocks 8 or 10, section 34, Hawker are on the commercial land release program?

**Mr Dawes:** I do not know that intricate detail, but—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am sure you do, on Hawker.

**MRS DUNNE:** I am sure you must be intimately familiar with the—

**Mr Dawes:** those particular blocks were on the land release program this year—

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, and the year before.

**Mr Dawes:** and I think actually you probably missed what I had said earlier. I will reiterate it. They are still on the program because they were in this year. One of the things that I do not like doing is double counting; so they are there to be released. As you know, there has been community consultation that we had with the traders, which I think actually went very well that particular night. We have actually followed up with the traders as a commitment that we gave to the traders that met that night addressing some of their individual concerns.

**MRS DUNNE:** I have been told that there is a consultant out at the moment—

**Mr Dawes:** Yes, that is correct.

**MRS DUNNE:** visiting the traders individually?

**Mr Dawes:** That is right, because that is what was requested from that particular evening review.

**MRS DUNNE:** Chief Minister, your commitment on radio at the beginning of the

year was that the land would not be sold this year. I presume it is this calendar year.

**MR STANHOPE:** Correct.

**MRS DUNNE:** And you propose to sell it sometime in the second half of this coming financial year; is that correct?

**MR STANHOPE:** The commitment I made was that we would not sell the land this year. That was an expansive time frame simply to give confidence to people that there would be thorough community consultation, that we would not be rushing it through, there would be no sleight of hand and that we would re-engage, consult, seek to address concerns that remained.

That is not denying that there was an exhaustive consultation process prior to that with 5,000 households being individually letterboxed and the meeting was advertised exhaustively throughout Hawker and Weetangera. But some concerns remained, particularly amongst some traders. So as to give that assurance and accepting, as Mr Dawes acknowledged earlier in the hearing today, Mrs Dunne, that we all learn, he acknowledged on behalf of his department and the LDA that there were lessons to be learnt from Hawker. We have now embraced those and—

**MRS DUNNE:** Mr Dawes told me that from one of the consultations he had learnt a lot; so yes.

**MR STANHOPE:** Yes, and I think you are all aware that we seek always to consult.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could I suggest to you—

**MR STANHOPE:** We are possessed by it these days, but we still go through consultation processes where—

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne, we do need to move to Mr Seselja's last question. We have officials waiting.

**MRS DUNNE:** Just a very brief suggestion for future reference and future budgets; could the detailed program that you have spoken of, which I could not find, Mr Dawes, could we cross-reference it in this?

**Mr Dawes:** Yes, I will certainly take that on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. That would be great.

**Mr Robertson:** Chair, just for the *Hansard*, it is actually available directly on the LAPS website. There is also a link on the LDA website if you have already got that as one of your favourites.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Robertson.

**MRS DUNNE:** I am not going to answer that.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, chair. Just a couple of questions around a couple of the contracts that the LDA has entered into around Bonner. You mentioned Bonner before. I think it has been oversubscribed, is that right, in terms of the land that has been released?

**Mr Robertson:** We have had a lot of registrations, which are more than the blocks that are available. We have not actually gone through the block selection yet. That is happening, I think it is 6 June—whatever that Saturday is, if it is the 6th?

**MR SESELJA:** Okay.

**Mr Robertson:** Beyond that we will then know whether we have still got blocks available then to sell over the counter or whether they have all been selected.

**MR SESELJA:** I will refer to a couple of the contracts: Bonner display village landscape construction, \$567,000. It seems a lot. What are we getting for that contract?

**Mr Robertson:** I do not have that detail there. I do not know if you have had the opportunity to have a look out there at the Bonner display village, but it is actually a precinct where there are about 10 or 12 display homes. There is also the information office which the LDA has set up there. So it is quite an area that is covered by that landscaping contract. I do not have the details in my head though.

**MR SESELJA:** If you take it on notice, just let us know how that contract—

**Mr Robertson:** Sorry, just on that one, Mr Seselja. The contract and the schedule to the contract would be on the contracts register.

**MR SESELJA:** Sure.

**Mr Robertson:** So I am not sure whether you need any more than that. I am thinking of the efficiency of the committee.

**MR SESELJA:** Any further detail that can be provided but particularly, was that contract tendered, was that single select or was it open tender? How was that done?

**Mr Robertson:** My assumption would be that we tendered it, but with the delegations it was not one that I signed off on. Again, that would be shown on the website.

**MR SESELJA:** Okay. Finally, design and construction of the Bonner land sales office, \$448,000. Why do we need to spend \$448,000 on a site office?

**Mr Robertson:** It is not actually a site office. It is a sales information office. We have had some discussions earlier with Ms Le Couteur, and others are asking questions about what are we doing around sustainability. So we have set up that precinct to demonstrate a whole lot of different approaches to sustainability. There is an eight-star house there as part of that precinct. The others are all at least six-stars.

There are some seven-star homes as well. Really, the building you are referring to is the first point of entry there. There is information. There is access to some LDA staff when the display village is open. There is a range of things.

The good thing about that particular building is that once its role with the display village is concluded, it has been designed so it can be readily refitted for a home. I am expecting that it is another one of those things that is really an investment. We are meeting our responsibility to the broader community by informing them about sustainability things, access to sales information—

**MR SESELJA:** How much will that refit cost?

**Mr Robertson:** I think what would probably happen is that we would sell it as is. Whoever purchased it would refit it to what they wanted, just as we have done in relation to the similar facility that we had at Harrison.

**MR SESELJA:** How much did that sell for?

**Mr Robertson:** I will have to check that and let you know.

**THE CHAIR:** Note that that is taken on notice.

**Mr Robertson:** But in relation to—you mentioned the cost of that dwelling. When it is actually sold I am expecting that we will recover our costs.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you to officials from Land and Property Services and from the LDA. We will now move on to DHCS and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Can I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the yellow-coloured privilege statement before you on the table. Could you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

**Mr Manikis:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Seselja will take the first question, as he will need to leave early today.

**MR SESELJA:** And I do apologise to the minister and officials. Chief Minister, I think you are coming along to the Red Shield event?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**MR SESELJA:** I have to go a little early; so I apologise for leaving soon. Minister, the traditional landowners genealogy project, BP3 at page 93 and BP4 at page 383, was originally promised at \$150,000, I think, before the election. What led to the reduction in the promised funding?

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you. The government responded through the budget to advice from the department that the level of funding that has been provided actually is the level of funding that was requested by the department. On the basis of its

investigations and the business case in relation to the split across two years, it might be helpful if Mr Hehir and Mr Manikis expand on that. But it was the amount that the department sought off the government in the budget process.

**Mr Hehir:** The split over two years is undertaken on the basis that this will actually take quite some time to deliver, and we expect the payment to be made in a couple of parts, as we move through, for the research.

The process for the research, from my understanding, is that it will be both looking at the written record but also undertaking quite a bit of consultation around the verbal histories that people have, which I think is going to be quite a lengthy part of the process. But I might ask Mr Manikis to talk to the actual detail of the costings.

**MR SESELJA:** Just before you do or, Mr Manikis, just to assist as you answer, has the project been downscaled or was the original estimate incorrect?

**Mr Manikis:** I think the original estimate was an estimate; so in terms of correct or incorrect, I do not think you could say that. It was an estimate. What we have done is that we have hardened up the figures a bit through our discussion with people in the profession who are experts in this area.

We also got a bit of guidance out of the facilitator that we have employed for the elected body, whom we have a similar amount for. Even though we believe that the work there is slightly different—we think the going rate is about \$50,000 for this work—I think we will get a very good product each year for two years. We still have to put some rigidity around the project; so we have not as yet finalised what the project will look like.

The way that will pan out over the next few months is that we will need to speak to people like the National Native Title Tribunal in New South Wales, for example, who do this sort of work. We have had some preliminary discussions with them that have led us to this conclusion that is good for the money and is what will be required. But we will need to have some more discussions as we strengthen up the proposal ready for it to be implemented early in the new year.

**MR SESELJA:** Why has the name changed from the Ngunnawal genealogy study to the traditional landowners genealogy study?

**Mr Manikis:** It will be an all-encompassing project and it will take into account all those families in the ACT that consider themselves to be traditional custodians.

**MR SESELJA:** When did that change, that approach?

**Mr Manikis:** That was the intention from the start. It has been the intention from the start, when we started talking about this project, and I think the fact is that we have got other groups in the town and that is a decision that they made, where they moved from Ngunnawal to Ngambri. And let us face it, it was their decision, not our decision.

**Mr Stanhope:** There are also courtesies in relation to a group such as Ngarigo from the South Coast-Cooma that claim or assert traditional ownership or custodianship or

access to aspects of the ACT's traditional lands. Similarly, with the Wiradjuri from Tumut, there are families in Tumut who claim Wiradjuri heritage—as there are claimants from the South Coast and Cooma who claim Ngarigo heritage—who also assert traditional rights or custodianship. And we expect that this process will provide an opportunity for some of those issues to be explored.

But at its heart, it is about probably the majority group which is or has traditionally identified as Ngunnawal. But in recent times an extended family has identified as Ngambri. And I think you are all aware of some of the tensions that this has created within the broader Indigenous community within the ACT. At its heart, this particular proposal is designed to assist the broader traditional Indigenous peoples of the ACT to deal with some of the issues around their heritage and their genealogies and their family linkages.

I must say that I have a concern that it will not resolve all of the problems for all of the Indigenous families within the ACT. I think some outcomes are potentially fraught. I did address that issue at my last meeting with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. Some of us have simply lost linkages. On my mother's side, her father was an abandoned child who was brought up in an orphanage. And I use that example.

I have concerns that there are expectations that have been created through the possibility of genealogy that will not be met for some people and I think the point Mr Manikis makes is that we need an extended period, with detailed consultation and great sensitivity, in seeking to deliver this project, because I believe it will inevitably disappoint some people, and disappoint them quite severely, I believe.

**THE CHAIR:** Obviously, choosing the people to undertake this project is going to be critical. What are you doing around that sort of process at the moment? How are you going about it and what is your time line?

**MR HANSON:** Can I ask that we ask about the terms of reference as well. Could you incorporate that in your answer?

**Mr Manikis:** Sorry?

**MR HANSON:** The terms of reference for the review: could you incorporate that in your answer?

**Mr Manikis:** Okay. We are at the very early stages of developing this project, and we will be undertaking consultations with the family groups before we get to terms of reference. As far as the time line is concerned—we have got the rest of the funding over the two years—we hope to be able to deliver something tangible, taking the community along with us, well before the two-year mark.

As far as whom do we select or how are we going to select, clearly there are some principles there. It will need to be an independent person, not connected to the current families. That is something that we have learnt from past experience in this area. So it will be someone independent.

We will take advice from similar exercises in other jurisdictions, particularly New

South Wales. They have developed quite some experience. In that native title body, there are units that actually do background checks on families. I think that is where we need to draw on that experience, so that we can get something that will work here. At the end of the day, if we do—as the Chief Minister has indicated, there are a lot of sensitivities—this one incorrectly, certainly the consequences will negatively impact on the families themselves.

**Mr Hehir:** I am going to be a little bit more cautious than Mr Manikis. I think that this may well take us the two years. I think the sensitivities that the Chief Minister has talked about, the need for consultation and discussion through this process, are going to make it a lengthy process. So, notwithstanding that we can learn from other organisations, I think that working with quite a varied community and a number of different family groups is going to take some time. It is going to need to be handled sensitively.

What we can say is that we believe it should be done within the two years and that we will work with the community as sensitively as we can to meet those time frames. But, ultimately, given the highly intrusive nature, in a sense, of this work for many of the individuals, even though they would like it done, I think that in a sense they will potentially find this quite intrusive and quite difficult. We are going to need to work with them within their time frames on it.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, did you have a supplementary?

**MR SMYTH:** No, I have a new question.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to go to the ATSI Elected Body and to know what sort of consultation had been done with them about the 2010-11 budget. They obviously delivered to government their first report. They had held an estimates-type process and they had a number of recommendations there. Not a lot of those seemed to have been picked up within this budget at all, so I am wondering, Chief Minister, how you are going to be responding to that report.

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you, Ms Hunter. The government was very conscious, and at one level self-conscious, that in this particular budget there was limited capacity for operational or ongoing funding for a number of issues. In my discussions most particularly with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, they identified with me that their highest priority was the genealogy. It is not significant funding but, in the context of responding to a highest priority provided to me at my last meeting with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, it was the genealogy.

Having said that, in relation to Indigenous issues or funding or responses, it is misleading, although it is always convenient, to look at that organisation within DHCS that has overarching responsibility for Indigenous affairs, namely, Mr Manikis and Mr Harwood and their responsibilities. But, of course, their major function is to work with every other government agency. Across the board in all that we do there is a particular focus on how we, in the provision of services which we provide at the hospital, within our schools, at Bimberi or at Alexander Maconochie, ensure that the needs of Indigenous people are given priority.

Indeed, I was very pleased and privileged to be at Winnunga Nimmityjah in the context of this government's support for Winnunga Nimmityjah and the level of support and the level of funding that is provided to Winnunga Nimmityjah now from both the commonwealth and the ACT government. I do not know what percentage increase there has been in successive years over the last decade, but it is absolutely massive. In my conversation at Winnunga Nimmityjah with Judy Harris and Julie Tongs—within the last; you were there—I discussed with them the operations of the centre. Julie Tongs, the chief executive officer, indicated to me an almost incapacity to employ, with the current structure and governance, the resources that have been made available to them and just how massively resourced they are now, relatively.

If you look at the recommendations which the elected body made, they go to issues around fundamental health and education reporting and statistics. And we are working—

**THE CHAIR:** I think that was the key issue that came through, around the need for that sort of level of data collection, which has been picked up as an issue and CMD is looking at this issue.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, and we are responding to that. So you cannot see a dollar amount perhaps in the budget, but we are responding to issues around data. Each of the agencies responded to it as part of their mainstream work. The Chief Minister's Department, I believe in its next data set—I think it is now prioritised that almost the next data work to be undertaken by the ACT demographer will be that work. I am aware, just recently, of significant work in the creation of a task force headed by ACT Policing in relation to issues around how to better coordinate responses to those Indigenous people that come in touch with the criminal justice system on the street.

**THE CHAIR:** And we did hear from ACT Policing the other day.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, and very significant work. You could go through every department in relation to specifically employed Indigenous education officers, within Health in relation to Indigenous liaison officers. There is always capacity for more, but I think it is not entirely reasonable to look at this budget for direct funding applied to recommendations by the elected body and not have regard to the work and the priority which agencies are giving, accepting that we can always do more and we can always do better.

**THE CHAIR:** One of the things that they did raise, and you just touched on it then, was employment. I think they raised the issue of employment in the ACT public service. Do we have some sort of target—

**MR HANSON:** Can I have a follow-up on the funding before we move on, Madam Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** around employment in the ACT public service and, if we do, how are we going with it?

**Mr Stanhope:** I do not know whether we have a number target but I think Mr Hehir and Mr Manikis could report on the work that we are doing in relation to employment

within the ACT public service of people that identify as Indigenous—and it is a very good story to tell.

**Mr Hehir:** Within the economic participation national partnership, all the governments have signed up to increasing the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce within the various governments. The target is to increase it to the percentage of the population, to make sure that there is representation. I think Mr Manikis has the figures there, but I think our broad target is 1.3 per cent. I think we are at 1.2 or 1.1—we are on that sort of margin—so we are moving forward on that target. We know what that figure is—both our traineeship programs and more work being undertaken by the Chief Minister’s Department more broadly around employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, retention, development et cetera. We will also support those targets being undertaken. So, yes, there is a target that we are working to and that is broadly understood across all chief executives. The Chief Minister’s Department are actually doing the broader policy work around those employment arrangements.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary, Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** Yes, a supplementary on the issue of funding, Chief Minister. When Mr Williams, the chair of the elected body, appeared before this committee, he said:

As to the funds that have been put into the budget at the moment, all I can say is that, truly, the allocation of funds directed to Indigenous people in the ACT is horrific.

That is pretty strong language. How do you reconcile his view that the level of funds is horrific with the statement you just made regarding the allocation of funds? Who is wrong?

**Mr Stanhope:** I would have to take the question on notice in relation to dollars, if you want to have the ACT government’s commitment to Indigenous programs quantified, and even just in the context of the previous response in relation to employment and the level of employment and the work that we are doing to achieve our target, a target proportionate to the representation of Indigenous people within this jurisdiction.

We are running targeted training programs deliberately designed to ensure that we reach target and we provide those sorts of opportunities. I could work across each of our agencies, but I would need to take it on notice, in relation just to the Indigenous-specific aspects or funding and the funding that is provided through mainstream but ensures that priority is given to Indigenous people.

This is the issue in relation to how you describe the funding. There is a significant level of mainstream funding which would not be identified as specifically Indigenous; but the outcomes or the outputs of a particular service are directed and targeted directly at Indigenous people and Indigenous families. I could speak of programs that are provided throughout child and family centres. I could go out and divide up the funding. It appears in the budget as Gungahlin child and family centre, it appears in the budget as Tuggeranong child and family centre; but there are dedicated Indigenous programs in those facilities and in those services. We do not aggregate our

funds—

**MR HANSON:** Why do you describe it like that? Is it about a failure of communication between the elected body and the government? He is coming in here and saying that he thinks the level of funding is horrific; you are saying that no, it is not, and you have just outlined why. Why is that? Is it a breakdown in communication? Have you not translated how that budget is actually provided in services to the Indigenous community?

**Mr Stanhope:** I thought we did. I cannot speak for Mr Williams; all I can do is indicate that this government gives significant priority to Indigenous people within this community and funds a suite of programs, through mainstream service provision but without dedicated Indigenous funding. I cannot speak for Mr Williams.

I simply reiterate the level of support which we seek to provide in Indigenous-specific programs, such as the Indigenous-specific drug rehabilitation facility or healing farm. It is a \$12 million commitment, a very significant commitment, to a specific program. And there is the level of funding which Health provides to Winnunga Nimmityjah; there is an Indigenous-specific liaison officer at the Canberra Hospital and Indigenous-specific education officers within the department of education within our schools; there are Indigenous-specific programs in our schools; and there is specific support for the housing needs of Indigenous people and Indigenous-specific employment programs. The levels of funding are significant—accepting, of course, that, in the context of issues around Indigenous disadvantage, the level of need and the commitment we have made to closing the gap, there is never enough funding to meet Indigenous needs. But we do well as a jurisdiction.

**MR HANSON:** In relation to specific Indigenous funding, there was an election promise—and I have got it here—to provide new funding of \$240,000 to institute an Indigenous leadership grants program to encourage the leaders of tomorrow to undertake capacity training today. Has that been implemented?

**Mr Stanhope:** That specific funding has not, but that commitment was made for this four-year term of this Assembly, and it is a commitment that will be met.

**MR HANSON:** So it will be met?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, it will be met. All our commitments will be met.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Williams, when he appeared, also raised concerns about the staffing of the Indigenous elected body. He is concerned that it is staffed by only one officer. Why has that number been reduced from two to one?

**Mr Stanhope:** I would have to defer to Mr Manikis in relation to the administrative arrangements around the elected body.

**Mr Manikis:** That is true. There is a SOGC and an ASO4 that provide secretariat support to the elected body. We provide support to the elected body. The support that

is directed to the elected body comes from the whole five officers that are in the secretariat there, the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. So we have not just extended the two that were budgeted for initially: the whole five provide support—which is the totality of the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Not only that; there is also support from the whole division, from housing and community services as well.

We see that function of support for the elected body coming not just from one or two positions but, rather, from the whole office specifically and, where there is a requirement, from beyond the office to the business unit and the housing and community services resources.

**Ms Lambert:** There is also the funding that Mr Manikis referred to before, for the facilitation for the elected body.

**MR SMYTH:** Has the independent facilitator gone ahead? Has that position been filled?

**Mr Manikis:** That position has been filled. It has been filled by the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre.

**Ms Lambert:** That is also support for leadership capacity that was referred to before. In relation, too, to some of the programs that we are doing, we have partnerships externally. We have a very significant partnership at the moment with Relationships Australia, which is a very successful program in terms of providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who work informally as counsellors in the community with formal qualifications. We had 15 people graduate from that last year, and we are expecting to be in partnership with them for the next financial year. Again, that is dollars that are not explicit in the budget, but it is dollars that we provide.

**MR SMYTH:** How long will that facilitator position last for?

**Mr Manikis:** That is ongoing for four years, and then we will review it. That has been budgeted for over the four years—for the outyears.

**MR SMYTH:** Can we have a breakdown—it is something we always ask for, Chief Minister—of the budget for the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs?

**Mr Manikis:** I can give you that now. The total budget is \$937,000.

**MR SMYTH:** What is the breakdown between expenses for staff and—

**Mr Manikis:** I will go through it, if you like.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay.

**Mr Manikis:** Salaries, \$446,000; superannuation, \$76,000; admin, \$242,000; grants, \$174,000. That should all add up to \$937,000.

**MR SMYTH:** And four staff, did you say?

**Mr Manikis:** There are five staff.

**Ms Lambert:** You would also, of course, have to add into that portions of my salary and Mr Hehir's salary, as we do work across government. I chair a task force of relevant chief executives, so you might want to think about theirs as well. There is a lot of resourcing at a very high level going into this work. That is the bare funding, if you like, or the bald funding for the actual office, but there is a lot of other funding that goes with it.

**MR SMYTH:** Given that Mr Williams has said that the funding is horrific, would you like to take on notice and work out what that total number is from the department?

**Ms Lambert:** We could certainly have a look at the portioning, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that that is taken on notice. Ms Bresnan—

**MR SMYTH:** The \$242,000 for administration—what does that get broken down into?

**Mr Manikis:** I am happy to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** We will note that is taken on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** How are initiatives funded in other programs? Where does that funding come from?

**Mr Manikis:** Initiatives in relation to?

**MR SMYTH:** You have some budget initiatives, but any other initiatives that the area wants to undertake. Where is the funding for that?

**Mr Manikis:** It will come out of that.

**MR SMYTH:** It will come out of the admin?

**Mr Manikis:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay.

**MS BRESNAN:** My question is in relation to—

**Mr Stanhope:** I want to say something on this issue of funding with some of the other supports that are provided and the effort that would be required to separate out an allocation. For instance, I can advise you that in 2007, there were 212 self-identifying Indigenous tenants in public housing, with 481 registered residents. That was in July 2007. In February 2010, there were 425 self-identified Indigenous tenancies, housing 875 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents. We have made a massive effort to engage in terms of their housing needs.

**Ms Lambert:** Indeed, we have not identified—

**Mr Stanhope:** Housing ACT has doubled the number of Indigenous people—

**MR SMYTH:** I think we all know that in each of the departments there are various components. I do not think anybody is disputing that, but you have got the head of the elected body that you set up—

**Mr Stanhope:** Sure, and I am telling you how difficult it is to—

**MR SMYTH:** saying that the funding for Indigenous people is horrific in the ACT.

**Mr Stanhope:** I do not disagree, and it is a matter of major concern. But I am just saying—we can hypothecate some of the chief executive's salary to give you a number and I can do some hypothecation for Housing ACT around the cost of actually doubling the number of Indigenous people in public housing in the ACT, but I am not quite sure how useful an exercise it is, except to say—

**MR SMYTH:** Perhaps it is a number you can communicate to Mr Williams.

**Mr Stanhope:** that, as a result of deliberate, targeted effort by departments, through a chief executives steering group chaired by Ms Lambert, we have delivered results such as a doubling of the number of Indigenous people in Canberra accessing public housing in the last two years.

**THE CHAIR:** I would take it another way. This statement—

**Mr Stanhope:** How do you want to cost that? How do you want to cost 875 Indigenous people in public housing?

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, rather than that exercise—

**MR SMYTH:** But the problem is that you have got your elected representative saying it is horrific.

**THE CHAIR:** We had Mr Williams making that statement. How will you communicate what is delivered through government? Obviously, you have some liaison with the elected body. Is it that you go in and do a sort of presentation on the various programs and that sort of thing to explain—

**Mr Stanhope:** We do that. I, the chief executives and my ministerial colleagues meet, and we meet as a cabinet. I have to say to you, with great respect to Terry Williams, whom I admire enormously, that he has never once suggested to me that funding for Indigenous issues was horrific. He has suggested it to you, but not to me. I will take the opportunity in future, perhaps, to be a little bit more specific about—at the end of the day, I am not sure it is about dollars and cents.

**Ms Lambert:** Yesterday Mr Williams was at a Sorry Day afternoon tea that we had. I did speak to him informally about the need to brief him on some of the detail that we

have been talking about today.

**Mr Stanhope:** There is also an issue about outcomes and some of the outcomes that are achieved here in the territory.

**MS BRESNAN:** My question has possibly been answered, but I was interested in knowing how the unit works across the department when issues come up, for example if they have brought up particular recommendations—that issue, indeed, of what are some of the ATSI-specific programs being funded in other departments, what role the unit plays in actually communicating and what are some of those issues making sure those programs get prominence, get funded or at least get discussed in the overall funding framework.

**Ms Lambert:** Certainly they have a higher prominence in our department. We take very seriously our lead role in this area. The housing outcomes were a deliberate outcome of a very significant targeting process that we did, including the employment of a specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing manager. Within our own department, we set very high targets. I have a very high profile in driving those targets across the department. As the Chief Minister has said, and as I have said, we have a chief executives task force which meets regularly and commits to driving these on behalf of the Chief Minister. There are a couple of mechanisms which enable us to do that.

**MS BRESNAN:** In terms of the data collection project which has been discussed, I just wanted to clarify: did you say that probably in next year's budget there would be some information included? Or was it the annual report that some of the data would start to be communicated?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, the data collection. It will be reported on separately.

**Mr Hehir:** The data project is being undertaken across a number of different agencies.

**MS BRESNAN:** I am aware of that, yes.

**Mr Hehir:** That is being coordinated through an officer within DHCS.

**Ms Lambert:** I should also add, Mr Hehir, that that is, again, dollars that have been contributed across agencies to that project to enable it to occur.

**Mr Hehir:** That is right. A number of agencies have contributed to that project.

**THE CHAIR:** So when will we start seeing that data?

**Mr Hehir:** At the moment, we are still doing the exercise in terms of what the mapping process, the question process, needs to be. We are working with the AIHW in terms of how we actually improve the data and what links we need to develop. At the moment, for example, I know we are working closely with the Office of Regulatory Services in terms of trying to improve data identification around deaths. It is a significant hole in the ACT data system, as it is with one or two other jurisdictions. We have gone to other states and had a look at how they follow up that question. It is,

of course, a very difficult question to ask people at that time. Other jurisdictions are doing it, so we are working both with them and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in terms of how we do it.

I think we will start to see the data coming together in the annual reports not for this financial year but the following financial year. You will see better data coming through. That will gradually improve over time. Unfortunately, it can be quite a slow process to see the results of good data collection. You will see that improve over time. It is something that will take some time. I believe we will start to see some of the results of this work coming through in the following financial year.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, you meet regularly with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council?

**Mr Stanhope:** Well, I meet with them, but not—

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry?

**Mr Stanhope:** I meet with them, but in the context of a fairly irregular meeting program. The United Ngunnawal Elders Council does not meet all that often. I have taken the time to stay in touch. I met with them at their second-last meeting, I believe it was. They do not meet particularly regularly, so I would not want to be misleading.

**THE CHAIR:** When is it planned to have the next meeting?

**Mr Manikis:** They have only just met.

**Mr Stanhope:** They met in the last couple of weeks.

**Mr Manikis:** They are also coming together with AIATSIS for their conference in the first week of June. They will come together as a group of elders to welcome a lot of the elders that are coming in from interstate for that conference. It is a native title conference. They have been working with AIATSIS, and we have been providing some support for them to do that. But as to their next formal meeting after that, we have not set a date yet, or they have not set a date yet.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned there was facilitation for the elected body. Is there also facilitation for the United Ngunnawal Elders Council? How does that work?

**Mr Stanhope:** Its secretariat is provided by Mr Manikis's area, so it has full secretariat support.

**THE CHAIR:** Who chairs that?

**Mr Stanhope:** The chairs are elected by the council. I think it is fair to say, Ms Hunter, with great respect to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, that they would acknowledge that they have had some governance issues. Indeed, most recently I think Mr Manikis attended, essentially, in a facilitation role in terms of how governance might be improved. I understand from Mr Manikis that it was a very fruitful meeting.

Mr Manikis, at my request, put a number of positions to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council in terms of ongoing future governance arrangements in relation to membership, satisfaction by the group or consensus around who should be attending meetings, issues around entitlement of eligibility and issues around the structure and ongoing agenda of the council. I understand from Mr Manikis—perhaps he should respond—that it was fruitful. The council does face, in the context of its interrelationships, some challenging issues.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** Just one last question. Chief Minister, I asked Mr Williams a question during his appearance before the committee about support to Indigenous commercial entities, and his response was that there is no support. We have had several questions over the last couple of estimates and annual reports about the future of Billabong. My understanding is there is still no lease for the Billabong Aboriginal Corporation. When will Billabong get a lease so that they have some security, so they can actually develop their Indigenous business?

**Mr Stanhope:** I must say that I do not have that level of detail, Mr Smyth. It is difficult sometimes to respond publicly to some questions in relation to issues where, in relation to organisations or individuals, there have been a number of challenging issues as between that organisation and government, other than to say that the government has, over a number of years, sought to work collaboratively, cooperatively and productively with Billabong. Billabong does do some good work in some areas. But it has to be said that not everything that Billabong proposes or would wish to pursue is supported by government. I do not know the current nature, but I understand that Billabong is pursuing a very valuable housing program in partnership with the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, it is.

**Mr Stanhope:** In the context of its programs, the government has a contract, a contractual arrangement, most particularly in relation to Billabong housing, and we are very pleased with what has been produced through that particular collaboration. But there are other collaborations that Billabong from time to time has sought that have not been supported by either this government or the commonwealth government.

**MR SMYTH:** Are you supportive of them having a lease?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am supportive of Billabong. I am supportive within the constraints of value for money and reasonable—

**MR SMYTH:** Sure. You can be supportive of them, but they do not seem to be getting anywhere very fast. We have talked about this for a couple of years now. Would you take on notice what the progress is on the Billabong lease?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am more than happy to have a look but, at the end of the day, value judgments are made. Judgments are made in relation to tendered programs. Judgments are made in relation to proposals that are put to government by all sorts of

organisations, including Indigenous organisations.

**MR SMYTH:** But this is a continuing lease on a property that they currently occupy, which I assume they pay rent for, that they would like to develop further but can go no further until they get a lease.

**Mr Stanhope:** And they also cannot develop it further without funding.

**MR SMYTH:** That is true, but you cannot get funding unless you have got a lease.

**Mr Stanhope:** That is right.

**MR SMYTH:** It is a chicken and egg situation. Perhaps you will take it on notice. I look forward to your response.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that has been taken on notice. As mentioned at the commencement of the hearing today, there is a time frame of five working days for the return of answers to questions taken on notice at this hearing. In relation to questions given on notice, these will be accepted for three working days following today's public hearing for Land and Property Services, the Land Development Agency and the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services.

Members, please provide any questions on notice pertaining to Land and Property Services, output class 1, the Land Development Agency or the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, output class 3.2, community affairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, by close of business on Monday, 1 June 2010.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the Minister for Land and Property Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and officials for attending today and, in advance, for responding promptly to questions taken on notice and given on notice.

This afternoon, we will continue with DHCS, output class 4, children, youth and family services, 4.2, care and protection services, and Housing ACT. This hearing is now adjourned.

**Meeting adjourned from to 12.34 to 2.02 pm.**

Appearances:

Burch, Ms Joy, Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Women

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Lambert, Ms Sandra, Chief Executive

Hehir, Mr Martin, Deputy Chief Executive

Mitchell, Ms Megan, Executive Director, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Duggan, Mr Frank, Senior Director, Strategy and Purchasing

Collett, Mr David, Director, Nation Building

Matthews, Mr David, Director, Housing ACT

Manikis, Mr Nic, Director, Office of Multicultural Affairs

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Senior Director, Governance, Advocacy and Community Policy

Overton-Clarke, Ms Bronwen, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Chief Financial Controller

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome to the public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates. The Legislative Assembly has referred to the committee for examination the expenditure proposals in the 2010-11 appropriation bill and the revenue estimates from the 2010-11 budget. The committee is due to report to the Assembly on 22 June 2010 and has fixed a time frame of five working days for the return of answers to questions taken on notice.

The proceedings this afternoon will continue with the examination of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and commence with output 4.2, care and protection services. This will be followed by Housing ACT, ageing, multicultural affairs and the status of women.

I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the yellow-coloured privilege statement before you on the table. Could you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**Ms Lambert:** Yes.

**Mr Hehir:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I remind witnesses to keep their responses to questions concise and directly relevant to the subject matter of the question. We have a great deal of ground to cover during the hearing and I would like to maximise the opportunity for members in attendance to put their questions directly today rather than on notice.

Before we proceed to questions by the committee, minister, would you like to make a

brief opening statement of no more than five minutes?

**Ms Burch:** I was thinking that this is a continuance of yesterday, so I am happy to move in from then. When we get to housing and the office for ageing and women, I might make a statement if that is okay.

**THE CHAIR:** I would also like to say to the committee that we are dealing with care and protection. There can be some sensitive matters. People need to be very careful about issues around confidentiality and privacy. I particularly say that there needs to be some caution and that if people could avoid trying to focus on individual cases that would be much appreciated.

I would like to go to page 374 of budget paper 4. We know that staffing and a massive investment in the tertiary interventions dominate the agenda for spending in the area of out of home care. Can you detail how the substantial amount of money announced in the budget will be allocated within care and protection services?

**Ms Burch:** One of my officials, either Ian Hubbard or Megan Mitchell, I am sure will cover off the detail, but there is an investment in support of out-of-home care, and that will go to cover costs of support and counselling to NGO partners and into contingencies and subsidies for foster and kinship carers. These are direct payments for support and it recognises the increasing cost of supporting children in out-of-home care.

**Ms Lambert:** There is also in these dollars more capacity for us to provide therapeutic interventions. We are working on developing a holistic process through therapeutic interventions. Often people focus on a facility. A facility is important, but it is only one step in the process and it is really used only when young people are at severe risk of harm either to themselves or others. This will also assist us with the developing of that suite of services.

**Mr Hehir:** Another aspect that we are looking at in terms of more of an early intervention approach is the utilisation of a small amount of this funding for the case management processes. What we are finding is that the work we are doing in case management coordination and working with families and other services is proving very effective. It is not quite the tertiary end, in the sense that they are in the care system, but again it is that working with families to avoid them becoming involved in that more statutory section. That is certainly one aspect that we are looking to be able to utilise. It will be a balancing exercise through the year. Of course, we need to make sure that there are sufficient funds to pay the carers, have sufficient contingencies and deal with the increasing complexity of the young people that we are working with.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it possible to get a bit of detail about that recent amount of money?

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I just note that was taken on notice.

We also know that almost every child within the care and protection system will be experiencing some kind of trauma response either to their current situation or to what

they may have experienced or witnessed. Children experiencing trauma have many support needs, and quite often their carers do as well. What is the department doing to recognise these needs and respond to these needs? We did hear a little from Ros Hayes about some children receiving therapy, but it is becoming an area where there is more and more research. There is the brain science behind all of this. I am just wondering how the department, the government, is responding.

**Ms Burch:** Ms Mitchell and Ms Lambert can talk on this, but it is also recognising that supporting these children, families and carers is the accumulation effect of neglect as well as discrete incidents and backgrounds of trauma. There is a range of needs that the department responds to.

**Ms Lambert:** One of the things we have done over the last couple of years is engage the services of Dr Joe Tucci, who is the head of the Australian Childhood Foundation. He has been working with us quite consistently around the way in which we need to work in the area of considerable trauma. He has been doing some training courses with particular foster care, as I understand, and so on. We are very engaged with the Australian Childhood Foundation, which is really at the forefront of this work. He is also helping us with the therapeutic service model which I mentioned before, the suite of services. We have been relying quite a lot on him. Of course, we also have our own psychs in the department who provide support and assistance. Megan, would you like to add more?

**Ms Mitchell:** As mentioned by the minister and the chief executive, Joe Tucci from the Australian Childhood Foundation has been engaged by the department. He is already working in a consultancy service sense on a range of placements, either ones that the department is directly supporting or ones out in the community sector, where there are complex therapeutic needs related to trauma. The Australian Childhood Foundation has developed a service model that is specifically based on trauma theory. It is really the accepted wisdom these days that that is what you have to address if you are going to change behaviours and patterns and re-establish attachment, bonding and normal development for many of these children.

**THE CHAIR:** How easy or difficult is it for children to get some access to psychologists with the department? Is there a waiting list?

**Ms Mitchell:** We have a range of psychologists on a sort of retainer list that we utilise privately as well as having a number within the department that we utilise for both assessment and counselling. It can be difficult in the ACT to access that in as timely a way as we would like. Part of developing these therapeutic services is to up-skill the service base so that we do have more of these services available in a timely manner.

I cannot comment on waiting lists. All I know is that sometimes it takes a little while to source the right provider for the right child in the right circumstances. We often get people in from New South Wales to come down and support us with some of these children, and many of them need sustained counselling and support to overcome the trauma.

Part of the new out-of-home care money will be devoted to establishing not only the consultancy service that we are already establishing but specialised therapeutic

placements—foster and kin placements—for children who have very high needs, the kinds of children that you are talking about.

**THE CHAIR:** How does the department interact with, say, the department of education? Obviously many of these children are going to be attending our local schools. Is there a role to play there, particularly when you know that there is a child who has suffered significant trauma that obviously can play out at school through a number of behaviours? How does that work?

**Ms Lambert:** I am sure Mr Hehir will provide more detail because he has been taking the lead in this area, but we have built a very close working relationship with education, and we have particularly intensified that over the last couple of years as we worked to make sure that we can provide the best possible opportunity for children in care when they are at school. We have agreements with them around individual learning plans; we have agreements with them around notification to us as the actual parents of those children and so on as well. We have engaged with them pretty substantially on the specific level around this as well. We continue to work with them right across the spectrum in terms of the needs of children and young people. Martin, you have been leading this work; you might like to comment in more detail.

**Mr Hehir:** We have been tackling this in a number of ways. We have many that are very high level in education, in terms of ensuring that the needs and complexities of behaviours of some of these young people are understood. There is the need to be able to work with some people who have suffered quite extreme trauma in their life and are showing some of the behavioural results from that. What we see is a very good engagement, particularly around student support services.

The chief executive and the Department of Education and Training are very passionate about making sure that we do the best we possibly can for the children in care. I think that is reflected very well in the exercise we have undertaken, working with education, the G8 Project, which is working with eight schools in the north of Canberra, particularly guiding them around the sorts of issues that some of these young people may have, working with the principals, having an officer out there talking to them routinely, talking about what they can do. This is actually an important aspect of the work that we have been doing.

The community owns these children and it is not just a matter of referring them off to care and protection to get it off your books and you do not have to worry about it anymore. They are part of our schools; they are part of our sporting teams in many cases; they are part of our general community. So we work with Education about things that they can do in a really practical sense about how to work with those young people.

It actually works quite well, broadly in terms of working on how to address behaviours in the school, through to how to work in a supportive manner with some of the young people and children that are in the care of the chief executive. Education are very keen for us to roll that out further. Certainly the feedback they are getting from their principals in the G8 is that it is a very worthwhile exercise and they have got a much better understanding of and enjoy the working relationship with us.

**Ms Lambert:** Also, the new legislation enables us to establish care teams now. We can now involve the teachers. We do not have the same limits we used to have in relation to the sharing of information, though we go through a very formal process around that sharing nevertheless. Those care teams include teachers now, and that has been a real asset. I guess what we are doing is working more with teachers under the new legislation, in that sense in a case management model, which is a different model from the ways we have interacted with them in the past. Having two departments interacting is actually a really good liaison around that care team model.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, chair. Minister, in relation to the \$800,000 for grandparent and kinship support services which was committed to, I think, before the last election, you told the Assembly that the procurement process was underway. I think it was in November you said that. Could you talk us through when the procurement process started, the key dates for the procurement process and even an update as to where it is up to?

**Ms Burch:** The procurement process is in the public domain. It is active. We are seeking people to tender and submit to provide that service. The discussions around that procurement and the scope of work really have gone back many months—and I am sure Mr Duggan can provide the detail—of working with interested groups, the stakeholders and carers, to see what is the scope of practice and what is the best way we package to best meet the needs of support for kinship carers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.

There have been ongoing discussions with kinship carer groups. Part of the delay has allowed one of those organisations to become incorporated. And I stand by that as a good decision, to allow a group of people who may have an interest in the procurement process to become incorporated.

Through that time there have been ongoing discussions and indeed we have put in the care liaison officer position. It is embedded within the department. Part of the dialogue is the offer of assistance. Back in August, we saw practical assistance in response to comments made by carers around library, toys, car seats, those types of things. Groups chose not to take up that offer of funding, for their reasons, but certainly the offer was there.

The kinship care association has been incorporated and has continued to meet with the department and work closely with the department on that practice. Certainly, they were made aware of the procurement process when it came online. Mr Duggan could go to more detail on that, if you like.

**Mr Duggan:** Just as a foreword, this has been a difficult process for us because we have been learning very much about kinship care. The information that we are being provided by carers is really formulated. We believe we have put out a very suitable tender. The kinship carer group on two occasions in the last two weeks have actually said that whoever had written the tender documents actually understood this area and described this as a spot-on tender process. And they are really accepting of how we formulate the package that we are going to purchase.

We had an issue and discussions with kinship carers to actually formulate the group. This occurred in about April 2009. We knew that there were a number of people interested in the area of kinship care. We have had discussions with carers. We know that it has doubled and I shall say it is our biggest out-of-home care service. I think it has doubled from 113 kinship placements in 2005 through to, I think, over 260 children, within that arena.

We invited nominations to formulate the kinship carer group. We started to have quarterly meetings with kinship carers. The group basically did put up a range of proposals about material support. We agreed on those issues with the group.

We kept meeting with the group. We developed some significant new program options with them and we developed a bi-monthly current connections newspaper. We are in the process of developing a kinship carers handbook. We have just recently, with the Australian Childhood Foundation and kinship carers themselves, developed six modules of training. I was interested to hear about the therapeutic component because we are actually working with kinship carers on the therapeutic component. It is not in isolation from foster care.

Our most recent training on trauma and neurobiological issues was so well subscribed that we will be repeating it. We have just got a very kindly email from them saying it was the best training. In fact the kinship carers group are now saying we should mandate the kinship carers for training information because they felt that we have actually begun to really hit the mark.

We have facilitated their carers group, both north and south, with the drop-in centres and we even got them to participate on the out-of-home care committee to practise partnership groups, and we even had them on our practice talking conference because we wanted other non-government services and their own staff to understand exactly what are the issues impacting on kinship carers.

As to the tender process, as we developed what we believed carers wanted, the kinship carers group went through two transformations. In October, they had a committee that had a president, vice-president and a range of members. Subsequently that committee changed, around December. There were a number of issues within the group and they were finding it difficult to pull the group together.

We were ready then to go out to procurement and they approached us, saying: "Look, we are in a bit of flux at the moment. We will not be available during the January-February period because of holidays." Then we proceeded with the procurement process in March. The final result was that I contacted the kinship carers group in advance of the actual tender going out.

**MR SESELJA:** So you were ready in December, but the procurement—

**Mr Duggan:** I was ready with the information. I started to formulate our procurement documentation because we had to develop the programmatic phase. But I did not send out the procurement until March.

**Ms Lambert:** One of the things I will say, if I could add to this, is that this area of kinship care is, if you like, the latest frontier in care and protection. We have many reiterations of things that become a focus. This is about families reporting on families; so it is a very emotional circumstance to work in. I think we have doubled our numbers in formal kin care in the last four years or so.

**Mr Duggan:** Five years last August.

**Ms Lambert:** Five years, thanks. So we have doubled them in the last five years. It is very traumatic for these families. I was not there last year, but I think that has been evidenced in some of the interactions we have had with them. Families are families and, when you enter into a formal kin situation, often—but not always—you have been involved in reporting on your own family. So it is a very tough and difficult area. I think we have tried in this process, from my examination of it, to take into account the needs of the group to form in a way that enabled them to compete for the tender.

This is the turn—Estimates-27May10-23.doc

**MRS DUNNE:** Could I please follow up, Madam Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. I would like to go back to Mr Seselja's original question. The election promise was for \$800,000 over four years. We are at the end of the first year of those four years. Not very much of that money has been expended. There has been some money, I understand, that has gone to Marymead, according to the answer to the question on notice.

**Ms Lambert:** It has been an ongoing relationship we have had with Marymead.

**MRS DUNNE:** So is the money that has gone to Marymead over and above the \$800,000 or is that being subsumed into the \$800,000?

**Mr Hehir:** That is out of the \$800,000.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay.

**Ms Lambert:** If you remember, that was originally money that the commonwealth funded and then they pulled away from it. So this was—

**MRS DUNNE:** I had not recalled that.

**Ms Lambert:** Yes, some of this money was then used for that.

**MRS DUNNE:** So there is \$800,000, \$200,000 ideally to have been expended this year, and you have spent 20, 23, something like that, on the Marymead program.

**Ms Lambert:** And then there is the carer liaison officer.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. The carer liaison officer is \$60,000 within the department,

but the original commitment from the Labor Party platform was “to create a dedicated service run by a non-government organisation to provide information, advice and support to grandparents”. I am just trying to work out how that marries with providing a carer liaison officer in the department. To my understanding and to the understanding of the grandparent and kinship carers, the \$800,000 was for a non-government organisation. So can you explain to the committee, and through the committee to the kinship carers, why over four years \$240,000 of that \$800,000 would be allocated to the department?

**Mr Hehir:** In formulating the series of measures to address this issue, we looked at what both kinship carers had told us and what our own experience had been in terms of what was successful. We had a look at similar processes we have in place with the Foster Care Association. Just to give you sort of a quantum figure, the Foster Care Association gets about \$56,000 worth of funding in a year. What we had done with the Foster Care Association was utilise some of their funding that had previously been provided to them to start the process of a carer liaison officer, with their agreement, and certainly the feedback that I have had and the chief executive has had from the Foster Care Association is that that is the best support they have had in a long time in terms of having a way into the department that advocates for them in an effective way, so taking that advice and our experience about how effective that process was—

**THE CHAIR:** Could I just clarify, Mr Hehir: you said the Foster Care Association. Is that who you meant or—

**Mr Hehir:** That is who I meant, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**MRS DUNNE:** I understand that, Mr Hehir, and I understand that organisations who are working in this very difficult area might appreciate some liaison. But I really need to go back, minister—you were not the person making this commitment back in the 2008 election, but you are the person who has carriage of it now—to the commitment—

**MR HARGREAVES:** C'est moi.

**MRS DUNNE:** Was it you?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes, absolutely, and a damn fine job the minister has done too.

**MRS DUNNE:** The commitment was for \$800,000 for a non-government association, but now we are being told that \$240,000 of that \$800,000 is being hived off to pay for public servants. I do not want to be seen to be—I do not want anyone to characterise me as—denigrating public servants.

**MR HARGREAVES:** What, again?

**MRS DUNNE:** I think what Mr Hehir has described is obviously a very valuable service, but it does not seem to be—and I will say it is not—what was promised at the 2008 election. Why has there been a change in approach, minister?

**Ms Burch:** I think I can just build on what Mr Hehir has said. The commitment was for \$800,000, which was in last year's budget—correct me; it was in the last year's budget—which I believe you did not support, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** No. We are not going to talk about voting records. I am asking you, minister, about your commitment that the Labor Party made to—

**Ms Burch:** Can I give you the answer or do you want to keep on jumping in?

**MRS DUNNE:** I am asking you—

**THE CHAIR:** Come on, settle down. Minister, a question has been asked. Could you, please—

**Ms Burch:** Yes, but then she has jumped in and gone on again.

**MRS DUNNE:** The question is: there was a commitment to a non-government association; why has money been hived off from that commitment to pay for public servants?

**MR HARGREAVES:** There was no commitment to a non-government association.

**Ms Burch:** Now can you let me finish without jumping in again? We went out to—and I think we have said it along this line in the last 10 minutes—the people who receive this care and asked what they wanted. It was with their support that they saw the value in a carer liaison officer role, and it is indeed providing good support. Commitments are commitments of \$800,000. That is the core bit of the information that we need to hold here, and again I reflect that is the one you did not support, Mrs Dunne. But this is a commitment of \$800,000 into kinship and supporting these carers, who are doing a commendable job.

Part of that is in the carer liaison officer role. Can I use this opportunity, Madam Chair—I am sure you have received it—to make reference to, and table it if it has not got here, a letter from Marion Le. It is dated 18 May and she says:

During the course of my evidence I made an assertion, supported by Mrs Smyth, that I now know to be incorrect and unfair to the Department and the Departmental officers concerned.

So this is just correcting the record. I am assuming you have received this.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is published on the website.

**Ms Burch:** Following on from that, because a number of the things she said pricked my interest, I had my office call the president, Christine Carey, when she returned from her leave and, while she did articulate some concern, she mentioned that she was pleased with the progress that has occurred through the many meetings the association has had with the department and that she understands that both the department and the office will continue to work closely with them to ensure that they are providing

support and assistance for the valuable work which they do.

**THE CHAIR:** One of the issues that was raised when the kinship and grandparents group came to give us evidence was around not having information, not knowing where to go. Mr Duggan, I think you referred to a handbook. What will that handbook cover? Is it going to cover the sorts of things about what their entitlements are, where they can go for assistance?

**Mr Duggan:** Yes. We have developed a handbook and we are working with them so they can understand the whole system and responses that we can offer. We have also given them the contingency booklets. We have given the subsidy booklets. Realistically, this is a new group. It is a very isolated group because the foster carers are part of a community of foster carers, through an agency. These are individual members of our community, so it is about trying to harness them into a collective group and then being able to actually give information out to all kinship carers.

**THE CHAIR:** But obviously as children are coming through the system you are going to have some contact with them, you are going to have contact with those kinship carers, so is it your plan that when that occurs you will be handing to them the handbook, you will be sitting and going through it, you will be explaining—

**Mr Duggan:** Sorry, Ms Hunter, we have also developed fact sheets that we have given them on a range of processes. The training processes will allow us to further develop that with the kinship carers, but our intention is to give them a pack. We already give all new admissions the carer packs, depending on the circumstances of children being admitted into care, and we will continue to do that.

**MRS DUNNE:** Can I just follow on from that, Mr Duggan. You said you developed a booklet.

**Mr Duggan:** It is in development, I said.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is in development. When did you start that process?

**Mr Duggan:** I think we started that process over the last 12 months. It is a development of a booklet that actually explains the out-of-home care system, like a housekeeping booklet or a learn to swim booklet, about what is available, who to contact et cetera.

**MRS DUNNE:** What is the audience for that book?

**Mr Duggan:** There will be two audiences; there will also be foster carers and kinship carers because they are both equitable—the same amount of subsidy, the same amount of support et cetera. So, where we can actually utilise similar information, we use it in the booklet.

**MRS DUNNE:** You said there were fact sheets?

**Mr Duggan:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Are they finalised?

**Mr Duggan:** I think they are.

**Ms Mitchell:** Some of them are and some are in development. We are developing them according to their needs and their interests—what the key things are, what happens to you when you go to court. The things that perplex them the most we are working on first. What happens is that there is a youth and care allocation that always stitches people up whether you are a kin carer or a foster carer. So it is the things that really perplex them about the service system.

**MRS DUNNE:** What is the process? Take a hypothetical example: this afternoon a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle is called and you say that we need you to look after your grandchild, niece, nephew—whatever—today, 28 May. What would they get, depending on the age of the child?

**Ms Mitchell:** Can I first say that most placements are planned. Emergencies are rare, but now and again there is an emergency. Let us say there is a DV incident in the middle of the night where we need to find somewhere to put the baby. If there is—

**MRS DUNNE:** Somebody's parents are killed in a car accident.

**Ms Mitchell:** Or something like that, yes. But they are rare, luckily. If there are kin available—generally it is accepted that if you can find a kinship placement that is a good thing because the child is familiar with the environment and they know the child—we would approach the kin carer or grandparent carer and see if they are willing to look after the child for a short period. Depending on the child's age, we have kits available which have nappies, formula, pyjamas. We can give people cots. We have got a range of items that we make available to anyone who needs them.

**MRS DUNNE:** How long has that system been in operation?

**Ms Mitchell:** About four years.

**Mr Duggan:** Four years and we have a resource room on level 5 in the agency. In fact, the other week we asked the kinship carers whether there would be anything else that they felt we did not have in that resource room. It is on level 5.

**MRS DUNNE:** Was last week the first time that the officials, the senior people in the kinship carers group, actually knew of the existence of that resource room? Is that right?

**Mr Duggan:** No, I cannot answer for all of kinship carers. A number of them were aware that we did have resources.

**MRS DUNNE:** It was reported back to me by a number of people that that was the first time they were aware of the existence of—

**Mr Duggan:** Yes, I accept that is—

**Ms Mitchell:** Some of them have not been aware of that because their experience was eight years ago or it was not an emergency placement; it was planned. But some of them were.

**MS BRESNAN:** We have been talking about the sort of support that is going to be put in place. Will the supports and the funding that is coming through for kinship carers be on par with what is available for foster carers? I appreciate as you said, Mr Duggan, it needs to be different in that foster carers operate within almost a community. But will we have some parity for kinship carers with the things that are coming through?

**Ms Mitchell:** They actually do have the same entitlements as foster carers. It is different depending on the needs of the child and how close the existing relationship is with the child. I think the key difference is in the area of training and development for kinship carers. In most states and territories it is not compulsory; there might be some modules; there is very little available. I think we are pretty much at the leading edge in developing training modules for kinship carers.

The issue there is getting it right. They do not need to know about all the things that foster carers need to know about when they get a child they do not know into their house, but they do need to know specific things. They still need to know about dealing with trauma. They are often older; so they need to know about how to deal with the changed education system and things that they thought they had said goodbye to if they agree to go into this new arrangement. They need to understand the court system just like the foster carers do. They need to understand how to deal with the very complex dynamics within their own family, deal with their own grief and guilt in many cases about their own family.

There are lots of different things for them as there are for foster carers. We are really keen to develop a suitable training program. Whether or not it should be compulsory, I do not know that every carer would want it to be compulsory. I think that we would have to explore that very carefully with the kinship carers.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne, I believe you want to go back to a question just asked, then Mr Smyth and then we will need to move on to housing.

**MRS DUNNE:** I was asking if the officials could walk me through what would happen in an emergency. We got to the care passage. What has been reported to me by people is—I would like some reassurance in this regard. A lot of the grandparents, aunts and uncles have said to me, “No-one ever checked my background. No-one ever checked to see whether I was suitable.” Some of those people have actually questioned whether some of the placements that they see in their grandparent kinship carer community are suitable. So what happens?

**Ms Mitchell:** I would like to assure you that it is a very rigorous process and I will ask Frank to go through that.

**Mr Duggan:** We initiate a preliminary kinship assessment check. There are a range of things we look for. First of all, we take up a police check on the prospective carer. We do a CHPs check. We check our own system to see whether there have been any

reports about the carer previously. We look at that. We look at if the child has stayed there before, what is the relationship with the child, what activities that they can support the child with, how is the house—physically, is it in reasonable shape?—where the child will stay. We do checks on all the adults in the house. That is our initial check. Then, following that, we do a comprehensive kinship assessment check.

It is a two-part parallel process. Sometimes that is done through the court process because it goes through court pretty quickly and we use independent assessors or we do the internal comprehensive kinship assessment. That assessment—

**MRS DUNNE:** That happens in every case?

**Mr Duggan:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** And would the carer know that that is going on?

**Mr Duggan:** Yes, but as part of the process, the legal process, we understand the kinship carers are getting very confused about the immediacy. Some of these mothers, as you know, will appear in court very quickly; so we are trying to work through with kinship carers these processes because there is a range of different assessment methodologies used, but the comprehensive kinship assessment is carried out on kinship carers.

**MRS DUNNE:** The overriding report that I have got back from these people is that they are concerned because no-one checked, and the impression they get is that it is all right because they are with their grandparents.

**Mr Duggan:** No, even with kin we go through a kinship assessment. Even with grandparents, uncles or aunts, at that level we still go through the assessment methodology to check things out and we write up the report.

**MRS DUNNE:** And they should be aware of that?

**Mr Duggan:** They should be. What I am also saying is—

**MRS DUNNE:** It would not happen in the background and they would be not aware of it?

**Mr Duggan:** No, but what also happens parallel to that, Mrs Dunne, is that there is a court process. Quite often people know that there are affidavits and reports. Quite often that occurs fairly quickly. I think people do get confused about what processes are going on. But we do undertake the process.

**MR SMYTH:** But, just on that—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, and then we will need to move on.

**MR SMYTH:** Ms Le, when she appeared before the committee, used the words “institutional abuse”. She said that she was aware of examples where basically the department had turned up and just handed over babies without any support, any

apparent checks or any of the requisites to maintain a baby in that initial period and put great stress on the families. You are saying that is not correct?

**Mr Duggan:** I am saying that we go through a preliminary check. We go through a police check. We go through a person's particular check through our own systems, and we do an assessment and then we do a further assessment, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** So the department just would not turn up at a household and drop off a baby?

**Ms Mitchell:** We cannot leave a baby without the person's consent as well. I did actually question Ms Le after and asked her if she could provide me some details of the individual case. So we had a discussion about that.

I must say that the case in question was some time ago and all I can say is that from the time I have been there—and I know before my time—the process is pretty rigorous and involves all the things that Mr Duggan said plus there is a range of resources made available to kinship carers at the time and on an ongoing basis.

**MR SMYTH:** Sure. Minister, since the words “institutional abuse” were used in the committee, what have you done to assure yourself that that is not the case?

**Ms Burch:** I refuted it and I—

**MR SMYTH:** It is fine that you refuted it but what have you done to check it out?

**THE CHAIR:** Let the minister answer.

**Ms Burch:** Can I finish my answer to the question, for heaven's sake? I immediately got in touch with the department and said, “These are some of the claims that have come through estimates hearings from Marion Le.” They were in my office the next day and we walked through this and I had a series of questions. I have been given assurances and I am comfortable that institutionalised abuse is not happening. I have also had my office to speak to some kin carers. They do not support the claim of institutionalised abuse.

**MRS DUNNE:** Have you spoken to Mrs Le?

**Ms Burch:** Me, personally?

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** Since that time? No, I have not spoken with Mrs Le.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay; not a problem. Forum shopping.

**MR COE:** Minister, if it is indeed institutionalised abuse—

**Ms Burch:** No, just a moment, I will just finish that. As has been said, Megan Mitchell has spoken with Marion Le. I talk with the department and I want to

speak to other carers. Marion Le is a respected, competent and capable woman but it is already on record that she has erred once during that proceeding—

**MR SESELJA:** So you are saying she is not credible?

**MRS DUNNE:** You should discredit everything because she corrected the record?

**Ms Burch:** No, I am just saying that she—

**MR SESELJA:** What a disgraceful attitude.

**Ms Burch:** She erred and—

**MRS DUNNE:** That is a disgraceful thing. I knew you would do this. I was just waiting for this.

**Ms Burch:** And can I say—

**THE CHAIR:** Members, settle down.

**Ms Burch:** I have asked other carers about their thoughts of institutionalised care and they say there is nothing there to support institutionalised abuse.

**MR COE:** Minister, Mr Smyth asked you what you did to satisfy—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Coe, one more and then we are moving on to housing.

**MR COE:** Minister, Mr Smyth asked you what you did to satisfy yourself that institutionalised abuse was not taking place and you said that you went and asked the department, you sought advice from the department. Do you think seeking advice about institutionalised abuse from the institution is necessarily the best way to go?

**Ms Burch:** With due respect, Mr Coe, I am sure the territory parent takes the role as territory parent very seriously. Evidence was put before me of the rigorous assessment of care. I asked around what examples, what cases, what has been put before to provide any evidence of this and I have also had my office be in touch with other carers. This has been part of something that I took very seriously and it is something that once you hear you do not just go, “That is okay,” and put it to the side. We have rigorous, rigorous systems in place.

The kinship carers have been involved, as have foster carers, in care placement and care arrangements for these most vulnerable children for many, many years, recently and some long term, some short time. Yes, I will go through the department and, yes, I will go to kin carers—

**MR COE:** So you are—

**Ms Burch:** and keep on until I am satisfied—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Coe, there are no more supplementaries. Sorry, we are going to

Mr Smyth for a new question.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, on the issue of support for people under child protection orders in the courts, Ms Le said she had been to court assisting one set of grandparents and said there were some young people there. She said:

Those young girls in the courts there—clearly away with it—are all on child protection orders. When I ask the department what is happening about them—they are under the care of the department, but they are living down in these flats, Allawah flats or whatever they are called—and the department does not have the caseworkers to follow up on them. And these kids are appearing before the courts. What is going on here?

Do we have enough case workers to ensure that all children under protection orders are adequately case managed?

**Ms Lambert:** I am happy to answer that and I do just want to say that, as a territory parent, I took those accusations of institutional abuse very seriously and did question my staff and go through all the things that were said and got some evidence around the details. I can say that we have a very active strategy in the department in terms of managing demand. We have no unallocated cases in the department. We work with people in a system of triaging, which is a standard practice used in the health process, to make sure that young people either have an individual caseworker or they are part of a team of caseworkers who look after them. So I am not aware of any circumstance where children and young people in my care are not provided with support.

Sometimes when people are adolescents it is quite hard to provide that support and it requires particular skills and working. But we work very hard to make sure everyone gets the support that they need and I take my role as territory parent in that sense very, very seriously.

**THE CHAIR:** We cannot have any more supplementaries at this stage. I am aware that we do have a very large area of Housing ACT and homelessness to cover and we have a number of other matters this afternoon.

**MR SMYTH:** Just before we finish, how many young people in your care have gone before the courts since the new act came into being?

**Ms Lambert:** I would have to take the actual detail of that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you. I note that has been taken on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** But they will always appear with a caseworker?

**Ms Lambert:** I did not say that they would always appear with a caseworker. What I said was that they would be working with a caseworker.

**MR SMYTH:** Why—

**Mr Hehir:** It will depend on the circumstance. I am not sure whether young people being referred to—I do not have any names, so it is very hard to check—were actually

care and protection clients. And we do not deal with all youth justice issues. It is—

**MRS DUNNE:** But there would be a system if there was somebody who was—

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you. So you have taken that on notice?

**MRS DUNNE:** in your care, who came up within the youth justice system? You would know about it?

**Mr Hehir:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** And that would also be reported to the Public Advocate?

**Ms Lambert:** We do our appropriate reporting to the Public Advocate. We are quite compliant with that.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you for appearing this afternoon and—

**MRS DUNNE:** So is that the end of care and protection, Madam Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** That is the end of care and protection, yes. We are going on to housing.

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, could I just ask a question of the minister or Ms Lambert, because I am looking for direction about where I might ask something? I do not know whether this comes within your department or within education: when tradespeople go to work, to carry out their trades at school—an electrician or someone visits—they have to have a clearance, a check, before they can go and work on a school property. Is that your responsibility or is that the department of education?

**Ms Lambert:** It is the department of education's responsibility. I know from my work last year on building the education revolution that they were working through that process around all the school sites that involved trades people.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Madam Chair, did you make a rule that there would be no further supplementaries or not?

**THE CHAIR:** This is slightly different; it is an inquiry, if you like.

**MRS DUNNE:** So would you know, Ms Lambert, whether there are any special arrangements for clearances because we were trying to get a whole lot of tradespeople into schools?

**Ms Lambert:** That is not my responsibility. That is the responsibility of the head of the—

**MRS DUNNE:** That is the responsibility of the department?

**Ms Lambert:** Yes, that is right.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay. I was really sort of resting on your experience as the

controller-general.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, thank you. We are now moving on to Housing ACT, output class 1, social housing services, 1.1.

**Ms Burch:** Madam Chair, can I make some very brief statements?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, brief statements.

**Ms Burch:** I thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss the work of my portfolio responsibilities for Housing ACT. Housing ACT has continued to improve service delivery to public housing tenants and applicants and to deliver the government's ongoing reform for social housing. The provision of effective housing services requires a balance between people and property and also a capital works program underpins this.

As the committee is aware, in 2009-10 Housing ACT received an unprecedented injection of funds from the commonwealth government. In the most welcome boost, \$87 million was provided to the ACT for construction of new properties, as well as \$6.4 million for repairs and maintenance. The original construction proposal for new dwellings approved by the commonwealth was for the construction of 350 properties, but since then we have advised the commonwealth that we will be able to deliver 420 properties.

Construction is well underway and by the end of June it is expected the construction of 55 properties will be finalised. Land zoned for community facilities will be used for the construction of two and three-bedroom units. Work is well advanced on these units to provide supportive accommodation for older people. The majority of these properties are scheduled for completion by the end of December 2010, with the remainder to be completed in April.

Under the social housing national policy agreement, we also received \$6.4 million to provide long-term, sustainable housing for homeless families. Under "a place to call home", this government has invested \$2.5 million in 2009-10 and I had the pleasure of meeting the family who moved into one of those place to call home properties recently. In the 2010-11 budget also we are pleased to provide \$750,000 for the refurbishment of the Uniting Church of Canberra's Pilgrim House in Civic. I was recently there, helping out over breakfast, and could certainly see first-hand what a benefit that refurbishment and extension will do.

So we remain committed to supporting the most vulnerable members of our community and know that the key to reducing homelessness comes through the combination of secure, long-term accommodation and appropriate support.

I hope that was short enough. I am sure I and my officials can respond to questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. I want to start with a question around the public housing asset management strategy. You had one from 2003 to 2008. I am just wondering whether we are going to be seeing a follow-on. What is happening? Are we still operating under that strategy or are we intending to put another one out?

**Mr Hehir:** The principles of the strategy remain sound. We have been working on a new one; we have been working on it for a reasonable amount of time and we are working with a number of different agencies around that strategy. It is proving to be quite complex, in dealing with quite a different range of issues. That is predominantly around the approaches we are looking to finalise around the multi-unit housing properties, in particular the larger scale ones.

**THE CHAIR:** So this is around redevelopment or somehow refurbishment or some sort of program around all of the—

**Ms Lambert:** And reconfiguring.

**Mr Hehir:** That is right. Yes, so it is—

**THE CHAIR:** A lot of work was done some years ago. I was part of that work and it was quite detailed work. Is that forming part of what you are doing here, or have you started again?

**Mr Hehir:** No, we have not started again. As I said, the principles of the 2003-08 strategy are really sound. In effect, what we are trying to do with the next one is build on that.

**THE CHAIR:** So there will be a new one that has got 2010—

**Mr Hehir:** Yes. We are working on it at the moment.

**Ms Lambert:** One of the issues is that the landscape is changing a lot as well, so we do need to wait for that to settle. And of course, this time a couple of years ago we were not expecting the additional work and the stimulus package to come our way. I would say that the work in the original strategy and the work we have been thinking through in this strategy stood us in very good stead in terms of what we selected to develop, which is the older persons units. We knew that where we had a bottleneck was in the family homes; and what we are doing, of course, is freeing up homes because people want to move into these units. We have had a very loud and supportive response from older people who want to stay within their areas but want to move into these two-bedgies. So we have used the work we have been doing, which builds on the earlier work too.

**THE CHAIR:** In the last decade or so, there has been a focus on older people's housing, because there was seen to be a large need.

**Ms Lambert:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And also to free up those larger dwellings. Of course, there is also the other end, where we have large families and there were just not enough four-bedroom housing and so forth. Is that also being addressed?

**Ms Lambert:** Yes. Just recently we have undertaken a program to extend houses in particular for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. There are five houses

where we have done that. We have looked at extending those and making them more liveable for larger families, particularly, in this instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But we do have an eye to making sure we have a reasonable stock of larger bedroom properties.

**Mr Hehir:** Just to add to that, let me say that that is actually part of the strategy around the construction of the two-bedroom older persons unit. Priority is being given to people choosing to downsize from five and four-bedroom properties. That is where we have longer waiting times, typically for larger families. So the prioritisation of people's access from those properties into the two-bedroom properties should help free up a lot of it. We certainly see it as being important in terms of our overall efficiency. But in terms of the construction of four and five-bedroom homes, or purchase on the market, that is quite an expensive process, so we saw that the value-for-money exercise of getting the two-bedroom units and accessing, after one move, the five and four-bedroom properties was actually the most cost-effective way to go forward.

We are getting quite a good response. We have certainly told everyone, and we are being quite clear in our communication to potential tenants to move, that that is where the priority will be—and the basis for that priority. It is also important to note that our “place to call home” properties are also being constructed on the larger scale. The actual allocation process with the Australian government was 250 matched by 250, so that gives us the capability to build quite significant sized houses. Again, that process is there.

So we are quite focused on trying to maximise the utilisation of that larger asset base that we have already got, but also to in a sense make sure that we have got sufficient accommodation going forward for our older tenants as well.

**Ms Lambert:** And that is where I got that number 10 from. Ten of our “place to call home” properties have gone to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

**THE CHAIR:** As you have said, you are focusing the stimulus money on aged units. Where are they being located? I suppose I do not need to know every suburb, but does that idea that they are well located, near public transport, near facilities and so forth still hold?

**Ms Burch:** Can I just jump in. Down in Brindabella, it is Mount Neighbour, Conder, Bonython—that I know well. I was at Neighbourhood Watch, which I shared just down at Bonython—

**MS BRESNAN:** It is Rivett, isn't it?

**Ms Burch:** Yes; Rivett and Chapman. That is located right next to the new Bonython neighbourhood hall. The properties at Conder are opposite Mura Lanyon hall and within flat walking distance from the shops there. So in the main I understand that they are, but Mr Collett can talk more to that.

**Mr Collett:** I was just checking them off in my mind, given the southern focus in the minister's answer. I think the ones that are left are Macquarie, Curtin and Florey in

terms of our older persons' accommodation. But what I might add to the comments that have already been made is that the sites that were selected were not simply opportunistic; they were the result of significant research. In order to advance the policy direction that the chief executive and the deputy chief executive went through previously, we actually mapped the age and the tenure type of our tenants across metropolitan Canberra in order to determine those locations which would be best served by an addition of accommodation which will allow those older people to age in place.

We worked closely with the ACT Planning and Land Authority; we looked at the available community facilities that had not been utilised for other purposes; we looked at where the concentration of our tenants was; and we looked at whether the land was going to be suitable for accommodation, knowing what we did about the needs and aspirations of our older tenants. So it was a careful matching process. We have got a good geographic spread, I think you can see from the suburbs that were recounted. It is not so well represented in the inner north, where there is not a lot of land still available. We do have good holdings, though, in the inner north, so we will be building on our own land in those areas. But, as you can see, we have got Belconnen, inner south Canberra, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. A supplementary, Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** I do have a supplementary on that. Originally that housing was going to be for aged and disability, and it is going to be for older people or older people with disabilities. When we asked about this in annual report hearings, you said that the disability housing would be dealt with under another plan or another strategy. Is there any idea yet about how that would be a specific focus?

**Mr Hehir:** My recollection is that one of the developments, a CHC development, Gungaharra, does have a specific disability focus. There is also other work that we are undertaking with other organisations in terms of where an appropriate location might need to be or might be useful, so we are in discussion with the LDA around sites as well.

**MS BRESNAN:** So it will be with specific organisations rather than being a government-led strategy or program, as with the stimulus housing?

**Ms Lambert:** We have a significant modification program in public housing as well.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes, I know. I am aware of that, yes.

**Ms Lambert:** And we have just recently embedded—I think that is the word we have used—an occupational therapist within Housing ACT to expedite changes that are needed for our tenants who develop disabilities, especially as they age.

**Mr Collett:** So drawing those answers together, we have got a mixture of both supported housing for people with disabilities and also housing that is suitable for people with disabilities who are independent or are not involved in congregate living.

**MS BRESNAN:** I am aware of that. Originally, that stimulus housing was going to be

for aged and disability housing; now it is for people with disability. I am just getting a sense of where it is going to go in terms of disability, because that was not a question we asked in annual report hearings.

**Mr Collett:** That is right. We will be ensuring that a maximum amount of the housing that we are building is suitable for people with a disability. We are building on a site in Braddon, behind the Rex Hotel, and we have ensured that 25 per cent of those units will be accessible via lift access. We are providing a range of housing through church and other non-government organisations, including the Uniting Church and the Salvation Army, and there will be housing in those complexes which is specifically dedicated to the aged, both on the ground floor and with lift access. Those are all groups that are well versed in providing support for people with disabilities.

We have also got an exciting innovation that we are testing in some of the larger sites that have aged housing, and that is the provision of a third bedroom in a number of the units so that we can provide accommodation for older people who have live-in support, usually from a member of the family but not necessarily so. We have got about 10 of those, spread across our larger sites, and we will be very interested to see how that is taken up and how that is used. And of course, all of the building that is for the aged is designed to allow ageing in place. It is built to universal design standards so that people can move around the units immediately but, should they become significantly disabled and require modifications to the kitchens and the wet areas, the plumbing, the wall structure and the layout, all that has been done to make that suitable.

**MS BRESNAN:** With this housing, did you decide to go towards it being primarily for older people because of that need to move people out of larger houses into units and the target group was older people? Was that the primary reason why?

**Mr Collett:** Yes. Mr Hehir described the work that we had been doing on the asset management strategy in Forde, the work that we did in response to the stimulus moneys that became available from the commonwealth. So the government had for some time been aware of the under-occupancy of our dwellings—in some cases single, older people or couples who were still in a three or four-bedroom home—and we had a policy to move away from that before the stimulus package was announced. We found a way of bringing those two things together.

We were also concerned that the commonwealth had asked us to focus on reducing our waiting lists by providing housing for people who were experiencing primary homelessness or were at risk of being homeless. Aggregating them together in group accommodation was always going to be problematic. Putting them into new subdivisions was always going to be problematic. And so the ability to maximise the cost effectiveness of the spend, maximise the number of units, as the minister referred to in her opening remarks, by taking the economies of scale of large-scale developments but at the same time freeing up accommodation to attack primary homelessness and people who are at risk of being homeless in established areas, salt and peppered on larger blocks where they would be less conspicuous, was something that we thought was drawing together a whole lot of policy initiatives and getting a good outcome.

**Ms Lambert:** In relation to the stimulus, though, remember that that was a process where we had to go out to tender. It was not just our decision. We had to go out to tender and be part of the whole process that was a very formal and objective process and finally it had to be signed off by the commonwealth. We were not in the end the final decision makers. We were very much—

**MS BRESNAN:** They are the properties that we are talking about on the community facilities' land?

**Ms Lambert:** Yes.

**Mr Hehir:** No, the whole lot.

**Ms Lambert:** Yes, we still—

**MS BRESNAN:** The whole lot, yes.

**Ms Lambert:** The whole lot. There was a very structured process run by the commonwealth and all of those things that were criteria—and Ms Overton-Clarke, as the housing coordinator, will correct me if I am wrong—went into the tender and what got up in the tender was what the commonwealth decided, basically.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Prior to the stimulus package coming in, and not terribly much prior, the policy was around trying to address ageing in place. The challenge was that we had to take people out of a very large property that had grown too large for them and then give them something within their own area where their community supports existed. Did the increased number of properties that you have outlined in this report—it looks like 260 of them or thereabouts in the public housing bit anyway—actually assist in the process of the ageing in place and, if so, how did it happen?

**Mr Collett:** The mechanism we used to address that was the selection of the sites that were well located in relation to concentrations of people who were over 65, in public housing, in larger houses and on larger blocks that we might reasonably assume would be looking for some easier arrangements and arrangements which would allow them to remain in their home, should they suffer from a reduced mobility.

I think the chief executive made comments about the reception that we have had from the public information sessions that we have had around this housing. It is very clear, from the over 60 older people who attended each of the sessions that we ran, that we really hit the mark, as it were, with this. We had a significant number of people coming up and saying that they had lived in the area for 40 years. You could have written a copy. They had raised a family there, their house was getting too big for them, they did not want to move away, they wanted to stay there, they had friends, they had the family doctor that they had had for the last 30 years. It was almost advertising copy, and resident after resident came forward and said, "Can we put our name down? What can we do to advance ourselves on the list? We are desperate to get into this accommodation. This is just what we need."

We are really delivering on that initiative of allowing people to stay in their suburbs, stay close to their support facilities, stay close to their friends, often close to their

families, and to age in place. Not only by moving into this accommodation but also because of the universal design, the accessibility, the secure car parking, the secure front and rear yards, they can remain there for another 20 or 30 years.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And so—

**Ms Burch:** Sorry, just yesterday afternoon I met with an older tenant, the tenant of the month, a wonderful program that ACT Housing has. I just wanted to share that she has put an expression of interest in for Chapman because of all of those reasons. Just to see it and personalise what that policy position consolidates, I know that it is right. She expressed that her doctor was there and the connections for her family and that. So it will work and it will allow her to stay close, included in the community, participating in the community. I think it shows everything that is right with this policy.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Seselja.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I have a last question on this particular issue. I am aware that the stimulus package funds, as significant as they were, afforded us the opportunity to attack that policy with some vigour. When those stimulus funds dry up, will there still be a priority for the department in its construction regime going forward?

**Mr Hehir:** I think this is going to remain part of what we need to do. It has proven to be a very cost-effective mechanism to have this volume of properties delivered. I am not sure that we have got the final figures yet—I am not sure we have advised the Australian government on these final figures—but the Australian government originally anticipated about 307 properties from the ACT through our quantum funds. At the moment I think we are expecting to deliver about 437 properties.

**Ms Burch:** It gets better.

**Mr Hehir:** It does get better. It has proven to be a very cost-effective mechanism. It has enabled quite a significant increase in supply of social housing in the ACT through this process. But the numbers of older people and people approaching those ages in the ACT in public housing is still quite large. After this process has been finalised, there will still be many people residing in a family home with three or four bedrooms where they are by themselves or they are with their partner.

Some of them absolutely want to stay in those properties. I remember one older man coming up to me and saying “Don’t ask me anymore. I want to die here. I have lived most of my life here. Leave me alone.” There is always that side of it, but there are also those people who actually highlighted the real advantages of being in six-star, adaptable, accessible properties in a good location in good proximity to services and with many of their friends or being in close proximity with friends. So I anticipate this being a reasonable proportion of our future programs going forward.

**Ms Lambert:** The other precedent that has been set, of course, is the infill precedent, with the use of community land. That has gone very smoothly. We have had significant consultation but it has gone very smoothly, and it is one of the first times we have done that. We were aided in that process, of course, by the work we did with

other people in government and in the Assembly. That infill process has gone much more smoothly than I thought it would when we first contemplated it. So it has set a precedent.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, chair. Minister, I want to get some more detail on the shared equity scheme that has been announced. I want to know some of the details. I think the proportions that have been announced were 70-30. Maybe you could confirm that. Looking at how finance will be arranged, obviously IMB has been chosen to partner the scheme. Could someone talk us through the details of how these properties will be valued, what the payment terms will be and all of the details of how this scheme will work.

**Mr Collett:** With respect to the shared equity scheme, the details that you recounted in your question, Mr Seselja, were correct. The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services will retain up to 30 per cent as an equity proportion of the property, meaning that the tenant is required to acquire a loan of 70 per cent from IMB and to demonstrate to IMB that they can service that loan. That withdraws the need for a deposit and it withdraws the need for mortgage insurance. So it makes it—

**MR SESELJA:** The 30 per cent covers the deposit and the mortgage insurance?

**Mr Collett:** That is correct, so it makes it an attractive loan arrangement for our tenants, and it makes it an attractive loan for IMB to write. We see it as being very much an extension of the sale to tenant program which has been in operation for a decade or more—certainly for much longer than I have been in Housing—and which has been an important way in which we have been able to allow those public housing tenants who have made good, as it were, or who have found employment, who have improved their circumstances and are in a position to own their own home, to move into homeownership. The equity that is released goes into other properties, and that can address the public housing waiting list.

The ratio of 30 per cent as a maximum was based on us being able to cover our costs effectively by moving the rating charges, the home insurance, the cost of maintenance and the other normal household costs to the purchaser rather than loading them up with a rent component or an interest payment on the 30 per cent. That means we can do this without it being a significant draw on our funds.

We have looked very closely, of course, at the shared equity arrangements that exist in other jurisdictions. Western Australia, from my information, has the longest running scheme, which has been in existence for more than 15 years. Northern Territory borrowed their scheme and used it pretty much intact. Tasmania have recently introduced a shared equity scheme, I think at the beginning of the last calendar year, and we followed that very closely.

The significant thing that we have learnt from Western Australia is that the average payout term for the shared equity scheme is between five and seven years, so we do not see this as involving us in a long-term arrangement in the majority of these sales. We would expect that the tenants would refinance using whatever they have been able

to pay off, improvements in their circumstances and then the increased value of the land, to refinance, buy us out or sell the property and move on.

**MR SESELJA:** How does the 30 per cent stake work? How do they pay that out? Does that 30 per cent just grow each year with the value of the property as assessed? How is that assessed?

**Mr Collett:** It is assessed by valuation.

**MR SESELJA:** Each year?

**Mr Collett:** Yes, progressively. We would value at the outset. Again, it is similar to the sale to tenant program. We were required under the commonwealth-state housing agreement to acquire at market value, or dispose at market value. That is a very strong principle for us. We see this as advantaging those tenants who are able to purchase properties, but not at the expense of others on the public housing waiting list, so we will sell at valuation and then we will take a second mortgage, behind IMB, on the property. At the time when the property is disposed of or is refinanced, we would take a settlement based on valuation at the time of refinancing or sale.

**MR SESELJA:** In terms of the share of 30 per cent, how will that work if they do not refinance? How will it work, for instance, if they then sublease it or just rent the property out at some point? Does the government take a 30 per cent share of the income that is coming from that property?

**Mr Collett:** We have a requirement that they reduce our share at a five-year and a 15-year period. So that is written into the loan agreement.

**MR SESELJA:** So how much do they have to—

**Mr Collett:** To zero at the end of the 15 years, by 15 per cent of our interest after the five years. So it is progressively reduced, but we have set 15 years as the target for—

**MR SESELJA:** Is that worked out in the terms of the loan repayments with IMB so that in order to get to that they have to be paying off at least the interest and part of the principal of their 70 per cent, but then also part of the 30 per cent?

**Mr Collett:** Yes. They need to demonstrate that they have the financial capacity to do that in order to get the loan from IMB, because it is written into the tripartite agreement between ourselves, IMB and the tenant. It is considered by IMB to be a liability of the tenant, and they need to demonstrate through their financing of the loan that they can do that, and also satisfy the tripartite agreement.

**MR SESELJA:** Given IMB has 30 per cent covered essentially by the government so that you do not need the mortgage insurance, is their rate the same as their standard variable interest rate?

**Mr Collett:** Their rate to the tenants is the same as the standard variable, but as a building society with little overheads we were satisfied that they historically have been at the lower end of the lending rate. That, combined with their focus on clients

and their strength in the residential market, were the criteria that led us to select—

**MR COE:** How are the operational and maintenance costs split during that time?

**Mr Collett:** They are not split. I might not have made it clear previously. The leasehold of the property passes to the tenant and they are then responsible for all outgoings. We make sure that our interests are protected by requiring them to maintain property insurance for the life of the second mortgage, and we will carry out annual inspections to make sure that the property is kept in good order. We have also introduced a restriction on the tenants making capital improvements to the property prior to buying us out. Obviously, we have an interest in having our 30 per cent acquitted before they put in a swimming pool or an upstairs extension.

**MR SESELJA:** Obviously, it does tie up some capital for the government. Will the homes that are sold under the scheme be counted any more as part of the government's public housing stock or are they immediately not counted on the books of the government in that sense?

**Mr Collett:** No, the property is transferred to the purchaser. This is a sale to the tenant program and the tenant becomes the owner. So they will be taken out of the public housing asset.

**MR SESELJA:** I think it is a good thing if people are able to purchase their home in government housing, but obviously, with respect to the overall numbers we have for each one of those transactions, we have one less public housing property.

**Mr Collett:** Not for each one, Mr Seselja. At 30 per cent, the crude mathematics—Martin will probably correct me—would be that, for every three that we sell to a tenant, we would only be able to replace two units.

**MR SESELJA:** Yes. So presuming it is a successful program, and we hope it will be, does that mean the government, in order to keep up its targets for public housing, will need to expend more than it is currently projecting to?

**Mr Hehir:** That will depend on what processes we use and whether properties are actually sold. With some high-value properties, no, it will not be such an issue for us because we should be able to do that. As Mr Collett also indicated, we are looking at doing redevelopments on our blocks, so where we could take the land value out and just have the construction cost, we would anticipate we would be able to replace within that overall margin. It will require us to think about what we are doing. It will require us to be strategic in what we are doing.

As Ms Lambert indicated, the access that we got through the stimulus package to the community facilities owned land was very useful for us in terms of minimising the land costs associated with those properties. As Ms Lambert also indicated, that is a strategy that we will look at as we move forward. It does make sense to get as much as we can and to replace them one for one where we can. That will not always be possible. At the moment, we are still generating some additional cash flow over and above our operational requirements, so we are still able to grow, albeit at a relatively slow pace, our public housing property numbers in absolute terms. It is something we

are going to have to watch, and we have committed to the government that we will keep them informed of where our stock numbers are going.

**MR SESELJA:** How many people are we expecting to take it up in the first financial year that we are budgeting for?

**Mr Collett:** We have seen a fair amount of volatility in the sale to tenant program. It has probably been more volatile than our auction sales program.

**MR SESELJA:** How many in this financial year to date have accessed that program? Do you know?

**Mr Collett:** I would have to check the figure; I do not have the end of April results for that.

**MR SESELJA:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Just take it on notice.

**Mr Collett:** It typically fluctuated between 40 and 70.

**MR SESELJA:** You would have expected something more than that, presumably, because it is going to make it more available than the current scheme with shared equity?

**Mr Hehir:** Sorry; I might just interrupt there. One of the things we have noticed, and I do not know whether you have noticed it in the figures, is that we are seeing quite a significant reduction in terms of what we would normally term our market renters. Our market renters are typically the group that would pay this. Within the budget papers, we indicate that it dropped from 87 per cent to 90 per cent; that is quite a leap. From the period of my involvement, it has reduced from about 82 per cent down to 90 per cent. So we are seeing fewer people within public housing with the means to do this. The other side of it is that it will depend on what the actual valuation is and the matching of the valuation to the people and their income. So part of the reason the program has been so volatile is that we have quite a complex set of differentials for people to be accessing.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And the private property that is available.

**Mr Hehir:** Yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** On page 403, output 1.1, indicator “b” is about the number of housing properties. Over the next budget period—it should say it was 2010-11—we should have 11,992. Obviously, the stimulus has had quite an impact on that. Are you able to give us the figures on what is the absolute maximum number of dwellings Housing ACT would aim to have in public housing over the next two to three years—probably three years? Or what would be the level it would peak at?

**Mr Hehir:** We can probably identify our forward projections for the next two to three years.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes.

**Mr Hehir:** Is that what you are looking for in terms of property numbers?

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes. I guess it is what it would peak at in the next three years.

**Mr Hehir:** I think the member is asking for the projections two to three years ahead. Is that correct?

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** Just so you can see a trend of where the stocks will be?

**MR COE:** And also as a percentage. That would be helpful as well—percentage of overall housing stock.

**MR HARGREAVES:** What is important too, though, is that there needs to be an explanation—

**Mr Hehir:** I was just thinking about the other factors there in terms of the growth of the other stock, but yes, we can make some assumptions for that.

**MR HARGREAVES:** There needs to be an explanation also accompanying these figures to explain the actual numbers themselves. To take a figure of 11,992 can be misleading depending on whether people are having a three-bedroom house in the suburbs in their mindset or whether they are talking about a multi-unit complex in their mindset—or anywhere in the middle, because we have got everything in the middle.

**MS BRESNAN:** I understand what it is.

**MR HARGREAVES:** It would be helpful if, when you get these numbers, there is a bit of a breakdown explanation. That might be helpful.

**Mr Hehir:** We can do the breakdown.

**Ms Burch:** Can we include community housing in that?

**Mr Hehir:** Yes, it is in that.

**THE CHAIR:** Could I come back to that issue about the market renters dropping. You are right; the assistance has been targeted more, so we are seeing people who probably have some sort of pension or benefit who are in the housing system. How is that affecting your bottom line? It used to be that the 13 per cent bring in 30 per cent of the income, or 35 or whatever it was at the time. How is that impacting on the budget?

**Mr Hehir:** If you look at the revenue from tenants, you will see that it is growing. It does continue to grow, but it is growing more slowly than our costs. We work very

hard to keep our costs down, to keep a positive cash flow. That is important to us. That is an exercise that it requires a great deal of management to achieve each year.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it going to get to a point where it is almost impossible—where you are just not going to be able to run this system on the revenue you are getting from rents?

**Mr Hehir:** There is no doubt that most housing authorities in Australia which use an income-based rent are struggling. Many of them are going backwards. I think the last commonwealth report on this had us and Queensland as the only two jurisdictions moving forward. I could be incorrect about that; it is quite some time since I read that report. I would say, based on the growth in costs, that yes, the path will be crossed because the growth in cost is growing much faster than the growth in income. So that is absolutely an issue for us.

**THE CHAIR:** When will that happen, on your projections?

**Mr Hehir:** I am a bit reluctant to give that, because I think I have seen it four years out for the entire time of my involvement in housing.

**THE CHAIR:** Right.

**Mr Hehir:** It is not that I do not have faith in my financial people—Mr Hyland—but it is a costing exercise. We are always looking at what we can do differently and how we can do it better to try and keep those costs down—manage things differently. That is an important part of what we do.

**THE CHAIR:** Has Housing ACT been asked to contribute to the efficiency dividend? If so, how?

**Mr Hehir:** Yes, we have. The sum for the 2010-11 financial year was relatively small, I think in the order of \$80,000 to \$84,000.

**MR SMYTH:** And 2009-10?

**Mr Hehir:** The sum for the next financial year was \$1 million. That is something we are looking at. We have got a view as to how we can achieve that, but that is something we are going to take time to develop. It flattens out after that, so it is relatively stable for us. It is certainly nowhere near the contribution that we make elsewhere in the department, in our main departmental financial entity.

**THE CHAIR:** Although, as you say, this is always a balancing exercise around income and costs going up and so forth.

**Mr Hehir:** It absolutely is, but it is also important to recognise that the government has made a significant contribution to our capital and growth in numbers through the contribution of that land asset. That did allow us to move our numbers forward quite dramatically. It is certainly more than the 130 additional that we are going to achieve—has been achieved through that access to that land. I suppose that we look at these things on balance and say that having a significant amount of additional

properties now in the social housing system is worth quite a lot and is of significant value to the vulnerable people within Canberra.

**MR COE:** On the issue of market renters and the incomes of tenants, last year we heard that, as of 1 July 2009, Housing ACT would be able to obtain information about the income of all tenants. How has that changed your approach, how has that changed the communication you have with these tenants and have you explicitly targeted them for a shared equity scheme?

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Coe is right again in saying that we did, for the first time, seek financial information from our market renters.

**MR COE:** Is it only market renters or all tenants?

**Mr Matthews:** It is from our market renters. We obviously get income details from our rebated tenants; that is how we determine what their rent is.

**MR COE:** Sure.

**Mr Matthews:** We wrote to them asking them for the details of their income, of themselves and also their de facto partner—not of any children in the household. The government's policy was to look at and monitor households where there was sustained income over \$80,000 for two or more years. Last year was the first time that we did that. Those letters will go out to tenants again in the future to get the second year's information. Then we will be in a position of being able to have a conversation with households that fall into that category. I want to make it very clear that the government's policy is not a strict income-based approach but is very much looking at the individual needs of each household. For example, if we have people approaching retirement that are on that sort of income, we will take that into account as well as other issues that are facing those individuals.

**MR COE:** As a number, or a percentage, how many met the criteria for the first year?

**Mr Matthews:** I do not have that information on me. I will have to take that on notice. The numbers were relatively small. We also found that there was a degree of volatility in people's income. They may have been on \$80,000 the previous year but then they were not. Indeed, some had gone through the \$80,000 barrier for the first time that year. It is a group that changes. That is why the government's policy is to look at the sustainability of their income over a period. Obviously, you have to have a sustainable income if you are going to look at homeownership and be able to secure a loan.

**MS BRESNAN:** So there will not be a cut-off point in a person's income? As you said, it is about sustained income. You would not apply a cut-off point to someone's income for them to be eligible for public housing; it is about sustained income.

**Mr Hehir:** No. We have got the measure of \$80,000, but it is intended to be done with a view to their long-term sustainability. It is certainly the trigger point where we will start looking, though.

**MS BRESNAN:** I was thinking of a single mum with a couple of kids. She would

have different circumstances.

**Mr Hehir:** That is right. Individual circumstances are absolutely essential in terms of the process we are going to go through.

**Ms Lambert:** People with disabilities may also be well over that threshold.

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Coe, I can report that after we asked for that information a number of people did make some inquiries around sales to tenants and looked into other options. Certainly, people were considering the options. We encourage people to do that—to think about what is the best outcome for them and to think about the range of alternatives that they have.

**Mr Collett:** Madam Chair, before moving on, I can give an answer to Mr Seselja's question about the number of sales to tenants for the year to date. It is 27 this year so far.

**MR COE:** That is very similar to the year before.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** I wanted to ask about the HASI initiative. We have not heard much about its progress and how it is going. I think it was intended to start in February this year; is that right? I was wondering whether it has started up and, if so, how it is going.

**Mr Matthews:** For the benefit of the committee, the HASI initiative is the housing and accommodation support initiative, which is one of our commitments under the national partnership agreement on homelessness. It is a model of supported housing for people with quite a significant mental illness. Indeed, it has been highly informed by a successful model in New South Wales which has been independently evaluated by the Social Policy Research Centre.

Where we are up to with that specifically is that we have commenced the intake process. We are well advanced on the intake process in that referrals are being made by both Housing ACT and mental health services about the first cohort of clients that will come into that system. The latest information that I had was that eight clients were ready to be accepted into that system and case planning had commenced with that group of people. Their situations are very different.

Some of them, for example, might be in Brian Hennessy House and have been there for a period of time. The process for such a client might be about a planned exit. Others might currently be in the Canberra Hospital and under some sort of treatment order. Others might be existing public housing tenants that might not currently be residing in their properties. We will be working individually with each of those cases to make sure that we identify suitable accommodation for them and formally bring them into that HASI partnership where the money will be available for the intensive support package.

**MS BRESNAN:** Was that for 10 places? You say you have got eight clients at the moment.

**Mr Matthews:** The latest information I had was that there were eight clients that had been taken through the intake process and were regarded as being suitable for the program.

**MS BRESNAN:** I imagine it would be fully subscribed at some stage for the 10, given the needs in the community around this area.

**Mr Matthews:** We do not have any doubts that it will be fully subscribed, but the important thing to keep in mind with this program is that the client has got to fit the purpose of the program.

**MS BRESNAN:** Absolutely, yes.

**Mr Matthews:** It is about making sure that it is the appropriate response for that person's needs. We are very conscious about not wanting to set up people for failure.

**MS BRESNAN:** No, I understand.

**Mr Matthews:** It is about making sure that they are best placed to take advantage of this program and the opportunity it offers.

**MS BRESNAN:** People have just gone through the intake process. When do you expect that the living situation will actually start?

**Mr Matthews:** In a sense, work has already started. A number of these people are already involved in mental health services but on lower support packages. Their commencement into HASI will really be beefing up that support package and moving them to a different location if that is required. I want to make it clear to the committee that it is not a matter that there is no engagement taking place. Certainly, there is work for these clients—

**MS BRESNAN:** No, they are people that are already engaged in the system.

**Mr Matthews:** It is about the suitable starting point into the formal HASI program.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I just wanted to follow up on the market rent issue. I notice that you are developing a home-to-work program; is that right? I am wondering what advances have been made on this issue.

**Ms Lambert:** We have got a partnership with Anglicare. That is just getting going, I think, but David can provide you with all the details on that.

**Mr Matthews:** Thank you, Ms Lambert, and thank you for your question, Ms Hunter. Home to work is an exciting initiative because we have been able to secure an allocation of funding from the Australian government. It is very important that it is new money into the territory—some \$650,000 over an 18-month period. The basis of the project is that it is about supporting long-term unemployed people into education

and training. The particular focus of home to work will be public housing tenants in the 2612 postcode. That is the stock for us that is based around Braddon, Turner and Reid, and also in Campbell. It is around some of the high density housing.

The Job Services Australia system has a range of supports for people already, but the anecdotal evidence and also the perspective of DEEWR, very strongly, is there are some people that need extra support to enter into the system. Home to work will help bridge that gap. It will build on existing support that is already in place from the service providers and bring those employment brokers into place.

As Ms Lambert said, one of the great things about this is that it is a tripartite partnership. It is the ACT and Australian governments working together, but the manager of the project will be Anglicare. Anglicare have got a range of experience in this area. They do support schooling programs for young people. They will bring in that expertise. We will make sure that we have a suite of options for all the people that are facing employment barriers.

**THE CHAIR:** Is this the youth foyer model?

**Mr Matthews:** No. This is different from youth foyer.

**THE CHAIR:** Where is the foyer model up to?

**Mr Matthews:** The youth foyer-like model was due to come online next financial year. Again, it was a commitment that was made in the national partnership agreement for the next financial year. To explain my comment about youth foyer-like: youth foyer is a particular brand, if you like, but there are a set of principles that underpin it. It is really around a supported accommodation model which has a very active component around job seeking and education. There is a requirement for young people to be actively engaged in employment, education and training in order to be housed in the youth foyer-like service.

We will get that operational in the next financial year. Once again, it will be very much a strong partnership. We have been working with the Canberra Institute of Technology. We have made some initial approaches around opportunities to bridge people back into the formal TAFE system. Again, we will certainly build on our links from home to work where we have got opportunities to get people into paid employment.

It is a very exciting opportunity. It is one that a number of states and territories are looking at. For us, it is around adding to our list of current approaches. We have a range of youth accommodation options. We do not have a model that looks like youth foyer at the moment in the ACT so it will augment our existing picture.

**THE CHAIR:** Just a couple of others I wanted to check up on—Kids Under Cover: did anything happen with Kids Under Cover?

**Mr Matthews:** Absolutely, Ms Hunter. The ACT government gave a \$100,000 seed grant to Kids Under Cover. They have been establishing their operations in the ACT. Again, for the benefit of the committee, Kids Under Cover are a Melbourne-based

organisation. They have a very strong focus on working with the business community, which is one of the things that appealed to the ACT government around engendering some private sector support.

I am very aware of this issue because today I signed off a brief around the construction of a bungalow—one of the first bungalows under the Kids Under Cover initiative. We will be working with the Kids Under Cover organisation and also Barnardos around commencing the rollout of this in the next few weeks.

**THE CHAIR:** So you have got around any planning difficulties, which is good to see. Finally, because I think Mr Coe might want to ask a question, is there going to be a follow-up youth homelessness action plan?

**Ms Lambert:** In short, yes. I am about to start a conversation, or have a further conversation, with the youth sector in the next couple of weeks. There are still some ongoing actions which we would expect to be ongoing around training and so on from the last one. We also want to make sure that we make very close links with young people leaving care and so on. We want to have a real look at that in the context of the work we are doing in the youth services area as well.

**THE CHAIR:** And I believe that in the research projects that came under the last youth homelessness action plan there was some work done around living skills and so forth and I believe that report has been delivered to the department. Where is that up to and what is happening from here?

**Mr Matthews:** I can provide a response to that, Ms Hunter, which is that I am in discussions with the Youth Coalition of the ACT around the advancement of a living skills program. The provision of living skills support to young people is very, very important, especially for young people that have not necessarily grown up in supportive homes, who do not necessarily have those skills and who are also being asked to live independently much younger than are other people in the community.

There are a number of initiatives, such as the create your future program, which focus on living skills. There is also a strong focus on living skills in a lot of the youth refuges and a lot of the other youth services. We want to make sure that the delivery of living skills programs to young people is very robust, underpinned by academic research. The proposal that we are working through with the Youth Coalition of the ACT is how we might put together a toolkit-like project, based on some good academic rigour, and roll that out across the sector with some training as well. That is an important and exciting initiative for us and we are very committed to that happening.

**THE CHAIR:** And that means a number of organisations will be running it, so if a young person is moving around they can do different modules and be consistent?

**Mr Matthews:** That is right, Ms Hunter.

**THE CHAIR:** I am glad to hear that is moving. Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of days ago on WIN news we saw a

story about a family in Snowden Place—a case which the opposition have raised with the government before and which is not dissimilar to a number of other cases that we have raised with the government. I understand that Housing ACT paid for private security for that street and I also believe that the tenants concerned have since been relocated to a different unit in Red Hill, with removal costs met by Housing ACT. Does this not show that there is a pretty blatant disrespect for the tenancy agreement and that Housing ACT do not have a strategy in place to actually deal with troublesome tenants?

**Ms Burch:** We do have a strong strategy in place and policy around disruptive tenants, but I will let Mr Hehir respond.

**Mr Hehir:** It is probably best if I give a broad response to that to start with.

**THE CHAIR:** We do need to be mindful, Mr Coe, that we should not be focusing on individual cases. But I think Mr Coe would like to know what the policies and procedures around this are.

**Mr Hehir:** We certainly have a disruptive tenancies policy in place. I think part of the background that we need to talk about here is who we actually house and some of the issues that some of the people we house have. We have just had a conversation around HASI and the supports that are required for some of those individuals to actually live within our community. HASI is a good program in a lot of ways, in that it supports the tenant but in a way it also supports the people living around the tenant because it actually reduces the impact of some of the quite challenging behaviours that can be demonstrated through some mental health issues.

There are certainly some young people that we have housed. We have talked about the support programs we have around young people who also have very challenging behaviours. We have a program where we take young people from Bimberi where it is not appropriate for them to be rehoused with their parents and they are not willing to have other environments and we will house them as well. Again, their behaviours can be quite challenging and very difficult to manage. So again we have supported arrangements in place to facilitate that.

We have people who have experienced and are experiencing extensive domestic violence that makes their lives chaotic and difficult, and again the outcomes from that can be incredibly disruptive to the neighbourhood. We have families where the children growing up as teenagers are stretching the limits of behaviour and creating difficulties within the street.

The processes that we have and that we have utilised in this process are to provide support for the tenant to address their behaviour, where we can, and to work with families to address the broader behavioural issues. There is certainly an issue that welfare rights raise with me regularly, which is: why do people lose their tenancy because of their children? And I have a certain sympathy with that. If your child is proving difficult to control, it is hard to know why you are losing your tenancy.

We have a variety of circumstances. What we do, as I said, is work with tenants; our tenancy managers engage with them. We often will work with the tenants around the

issues, in terms of trying to understand what the issues are and working on how to resolve them. We also use conditional orders. I think it was in the term of this Assembly that we actually had the conditional orders changed to allow conditional orders beyond rent, which was a decision from the tribunal, from the Supreme Court, I think, previously. So we have got that. My understanding is that we have taken over 60 cases to the rental tribunal—sorry, the ACAT now; I must get my terminology right—and we have been successful in obtaining orders in most of those cases.

**MR COE:** Does Housing ACT do threat assessments or risk assessments? Do you actually evaluate whether private security is required?

**Mr Hehir:** This is a decision that is made at a tenancy level. I will ask David to talk to that, around the processes. But, certainly, while it is not common, we do employ a number of security guards in a variety of circumstances.

**MR COE:** And what cost is that?

**Mr Hehir:** The cost for security is about \$700,000 a year.

**MR SESELJA:** Across the department?

**Mr Hehir:** Across the department.

**MR SESELJA:** And in this particular case?

**Mr Hehir:** \$2,000, \$3,000 would be the order. We can get that.

**MR COE:** And how many hours or nights of patrol does that include?

**Mr Hehir:** I am not sure. I will have to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that has been taken on notice.

**Mr Hehir:** I suppose the picture I am trying to create is that we will go to the tribunal. We will issue notices to vacate. We do have to be able to prove and demonstrate to the satisfaction of the tribunal members, or tribunal member in each case, that the tenancy has been breached. We are very active in that process.

**MR COE:** I might say I do not think this has been conveyed very clearly at all. I have had many, many people in my office in tears, crying about neighbours, crying about the threat posed to their children and to their family members. I do not think this strategy is being conveyed at all to neighbourhoods that are dealing with these kinds of problems. People call up Housing ACT and lodge a complaint, they get a complaint number and they do not hear again, it seems, or they get a response which is really just a holding response. I think Housing ACT really does need to pick up its game and actually have a proper strategy that is clearly articulated to people when they complain.

**Mr Hehir:** I will have to take some of that on notice. What I will say is that we have put in place a complaints management process. I think it is fair to say that when I first

arrived complaints went directly to the housing manager and the response varied from that housing manager. I must admit that when I received a couple of responses from people saying, "I have written to you three times and you still have not answered," I asked, "What is actually happening?" So we put in place a formal complaints management process which has the letters and phone calls being received separately from the tenancy area. There is a holding response sent out. My understanding is that the time frame for a final response, where possible, is 21 days. I believe our practice, and I certainly can check and see how effective this is being applied in terms of the training process we use to support this, is to have our tenancy managers out there talking about the issues.

**MR COE:** Would you please take on notice a request for the average time taken to get back to these complaints—whether it is in fact within 21 days?

**Ms Burch:** We will take that on notice. But the number of tenancies that cause disruption is very minor. I think it is upwards of 30 and downwards of 50 or thereabouts.

**MR COE:** There may well be. But, if each one affects 10 or 20 households around—

**Ms Burch:** But I understand, Mr Coe, because I equally get correspondence around disruptive behaviours and I regularly sign letters in reply to your correspondence as well. So we are well aware of it and it is something that I have encouraged the department to be very active on. We do have policies and procedures in place. We can give a notice to remedy and a notice to evict. Indeed, that is what we need to do in the process leading up to an ACAT presentation.

But I take your point. Everyone in the community, whether you are in community housing, public housing or your private housing, deserves the right to live in their community in a level of comfort. So we do take disruptive tenants—it is quite difficult. As Mr Hehir said, I think at the beginning, sometimes our tenancy base requires a significant level of support and there are serious challenges there. It is not just a straightforward situation—get a complaint; move the tenant on. We do work well but we are happy to take on notice the response times as well.

**MR COE:** Thank you. I would be interested in hearing, perhaps from Mr Matthews or whoever, about what criteria are used to assign private security to situations like the one in Wanniasa because there are, of course, many of these. I do not think that private security have been deployed in every situation. But I do know of some where physical violence has taken place—where assaults have taken place. I am at a loss as to why this particular one would get it and not others.

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Coe, to answer your question from earlier on, the specific cost of security in the situation you mentioned was \$2,000. There were four nights of security guard presence. In terms of the criteria issue, it is clearly done on a case-by-case basis based on the issue in that neighbourhood and the concern that Housing would have around a safety and security risk. Clearly, the matters that you mentioned fall into the criminal realm. We are very concerned about the safety of not only our tenants but of neighbours as well. We urge people to take those matters up with the police and to deal with them as criminal matters.

In terms of the issue of security, Housing ACT, as is reported in the budget papers, owns 11,500 properties. Of course, we spend an amount of money on security patrols and the protection of those assets as well as all of the people that live in them. Mr Hehir was right when he mentioned a figure of \$700,000 before which, against an expenditure of \$139 million, is a relatively small amount of money.

But we do treat the problem seriously. We do have a security contract in place with ISS. We have regular security patrols of a number of our complexes and we have got the capacity for ad hoc arrangements where they are needed. Obviously, that is something that we would only do in a limited amount of cases where we were concerned about an imminent risk to an individual. But it is something that we have in our arsenal of responses when required.

**MR COE:** Do you have officers—

**THE CHAIR:** One more, Mr Coe, and then we are breaking for afternoon tea.

**MR COE:** Do you have staff that have appropriate qualifications in security vulnerability or risk assessments to actually make this call?

**Mr Matthews:** We have got staff that are very competent around dealing with the complex human services environments that Mr Hehir spoke about before in terms of assessing a whole range of risk factors for individuals. We obviously do that when we are assessing people's housing needs. We are working very actively with all of these tenancies that you mentioned, Mr Coe. I think it would be important for the committee to be aware that we are onto these cases and we are working with these individuals in a way that we cannot always fully articulate to individuals.

**MR COE:** But risk to life is the most serious kind of risk.

**Mr Matthews:** Yes.

**MR COE:** And I would like to think that Housing ACT has appropriate qualifications and appropriate skills within its staff to actually make this call. Are you telling me that you have those qualifications or not?

**Mr Matthew:** We put staff through specific training about dealing with aggressive behaviours and with the complex risk factors that you would mention.

**MR COE:** I am talking about risk to neighbours and risk to neighbourhoods as well.

**Mr Matthews:** Absolutely. The training covers dealing with complex people and the manifestations of their behaviours in the tenancy realm but also in terms of the impact on the community more broadly. That is where we do work with the police because the police are in fact the best agency to make assessments around potential criminal behaviour of the nature that you are talking about.

**MR COE:** So how many do you refer to the police in any given year for that sort of assessment?

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Coe, as you are aware, the individuals that write to you also make complaints to the police, which is what we encourage them to do. The police make those assessments around what they see are criminal thresholds and risk issues.

**MR COE:** Does Housing ACT make referrals to the police on a regular basis?

**Mr Matthews:** We report evidence of criminal activity that we see to the police and we encourage neighbours to do the same thing—people that live in local communities.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Meeting adjourned from 3.57 to 4.20 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will resume this public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates. We are looking at output class 3, community development and policy. The first area we will go to is multicultural affairs. Minister, you may make a brief opening statement.

**Ms Burch:** Madam Chair, I have got ageing, women and multicultural affairs. Do you want them in one fell swoop?

**THE CHAIR:** That would probably be useful, yes.

**Ms Burch:** I am pleased to continue to be here and I am happy to provide answers to your questions.

On the Office for Ageing, the government, in partnership with the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, have developed and launched the strategic plan for positive ageing 2010-14. The plan was organised under seven priorities and incorporates features of the World Health Organisation's age-friendly cities. Progress in implementing actions against each of these priorities is well underway and includes the development of a senior's information portal, making it easier for seniors to locate online information about services and community organisations.

We are providing \$100,000 per annum for grants which are targeted at the promotion of active ageing and social inclusion amongst older people in the ACT. Recent examples include funding for the grand party in Glebe Park and a booklet for legal information for women over 50 years of age and their families.

In keeping with our communication with and priority for seniors, we sponsored the retirement and lifestyle expo this year. The government continues to provide funding to the Council on the Ageing to administer the seniors card to around 42½ thousand Canberrans over the age of 60. The government also provides funding to the Council on the Ageing to manage seniors week. In 2010, more than 200 events took place during seniors week, including the Chief Minister's concert, seniors expo, the "life's reflections" photographic exhibition, local exhibitions and local community events. We have also released an updated elder abuse prevention policy, which provides the framework for preventing and responding to abuse of older people.

Moving on to my responsibility as Minister for Women, I would like to take a minute to explain the circumstances of not providing a women's budget statement for 2010-11. Minister Gallagher noted last year that it did not provide a totally clear picture as to the gender impact of budget initiatives and that other options required consideration. This provided us with an opportunity to look more closely at how a gender analysis could be used throughout government, including in the women's budget statement. We needed to explore what it would take to put gender analysis into practice. In this instance the government agreed to conduct a gender analysis pilot in ACT Health. The pilot has two aims: to undertake gender analysis of a particular area and to track the resourcing implications of gender analysis.

Moving to the 2010-11 budget, \$1.6 million in new funding has been provided to increase support for women who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, meeting the key priorities of the women's plan. Working on improving women's economic independence continues through the ACT Women's micro-credit program, which gives women on low incomes access to interest-free loans of up to \$3,000.

The uptake of the return to work grants has continued to grow, with 196 successful applicants until April 2010. Out of these applicants, 71 of the 36 per cent were from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and 14, or seven per cent, were from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. And 16, or eight per cent, of the women had a disability. I think that shows it is really starting to target the purpose of those grants.

Finally, I refer to my responsibility for multicultural affairs. The 2010-11 budget has continued to focus on helping multicultural communities to maintain their cultural identity and participate fully in Canberra life. The Office of Multicultural Affairs administers grants to almost 200 community organisations each year. The ACT government supports the maintenance of cultural identity through the language grants program. I am pleased to announce that this program will be supplemented by an additional \$25,000 per year.

The ACT government also provides project funding for initiatives to build outreach connections and enable young people from multicultural communities to access appropriate services and programs. Funding of \$25,000 per year over the next four years will be earmarked for organisations who support young people, particularly refugees and asylum seekers.

In December 2009, I was proud to launch the ACT multicultural strategy 2009-13.

Finally, there is no better measure of the strength of multiculturalism in the ACT than the National Multicultural Festival. The government is proud to support this spectacular event—an event that not only celebrates our diversity but shines a spotlight on the rights of individuals to preserve, express and enjoy their cultural heritage and traditions. More than 280 community groups and over 100 performers participated in the festival. I am pleased to report that, with all the invoices received, the festival's budget has been met.

I am happy to respond to questions, Madam Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to start with a question around this output class and, if possible—and you can take this on notice—get the budget for how the money is split up between multicultural affairs and ageing and also how much money goes into the Office for Women, to get some idea of the breakdown.

**Ms Burch:** Mr Hubbard can give you that.

**Mr Hubbard:** We will start off with the budget for women. That includes the group work. The total budget for that group is 1.788. I can break that up into its component parts, if you like, Ms Hunter.

**MR SESELJA:** While you do that, Mr Hubbard, could you compare that to the previous year for each of these areas?

**Mr Hubbard:** I will not have that detail with me for the previous year but I can get that for you.

**Ms Burch:** We can get it back to you.

**Mr Hubbard:** For the budget for women, in salaries, you have got 590—

**THE CHAIR:** If you want to take that on notice, we might not go through the exact breakdown now because I know that is a lot of detail. Maybe you could give us the top-line figures, Mr Hubbard—

**Mr Hubbard:** The total numbers?

**THE CHAIR:** which is just between ageing, multicultural and the Office for Women, which you have now said is 1.788.

**Mr Hubbard:** Okay. For women, 1.788; for ageing, \$1,024,000; for multicultural affairs, \$3,056,000. I think it is important to note that grants take up a fair proportion of some of those budgets. It might be worth while giving you that information. For women, there is \$771,000 for grants; for ageing, there is \$242,000 for grants; and for multicultural affairs, there is \$495,000 for grants.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MR SESELJA:** Is there a reason, minister, why that cannot be reported regularly in the budget itself? It would be far more useful if this could—

**MR SMYTH:** We ask for it every year.

**MR SESELJA:** be split up as a matter of course and reported in the budget papers.

**Ms Burch:** I am happy to take advice on that and have a discussion with the department and Treasury to see what we can do.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, I want to get some understanding of what is happening out there with respect to representative bodies within the multicultural area.

Previously, for a while there appeared to be two peak multicultural representative bodies and the ministerial advisory council. I am not clear on what the situation is currently.

**Mr Manikis:** This is largely left to the community to organise themselves. The government supports the group or groups that purport to be peak groups or are representative of the multicultural community groups. You are right: some time ago, we use to have the ACT Multicultural Council as the peak group. Several years ago, back in 2005-06, the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum emerged. There was a decline in membership, as I understand it, of the ACT Multicultural Council, and internal issues, and we had the emergence of the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum. I understand that at the moment it represents itself as the peak group and is very active in liaising with government agencies and advocating for about 80 multicultural community groups.

**THE CHAIR:** Did you say that the ACT Multicultural Council had merged with the Canberra Multicultural—

**Mr Manikis:** No. They are still incorporated and they still exist, but I understand that their membership has dwindled. Certainly, we do not see them as being very active in the ACT, although they do play a role at the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils. They are represented there historically and they exercise a role on that national body. But that is more to do with the national body's constitution and the way they have set themselves up.

The Canberra Multicultural Community Forum represents about 80 multicultural groups, as I understand it. With respect to the way they have organised themselves, some very talented people are members of that group, individuals who provide professional writing and have interests in particular areas, whether it is international affairs, language or migration. So they contribute to policy development both at the ACT and at the national level.

**THE CHAIR:** Are they seen by the ACT government as the peak body in this area now? Would that be fair to say?

**Mr Manikis:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** The forum, sorry?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** It is certainly the one that I have more regular contact with.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can I ask a supplementary on that?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Is there a funding ratio between the two?

**Mr Manikis:** From the ACT's point of view, we do not core fund anymore, so we do

not provide funds to the council or to the forum on an ongoing basis. If they need funding, they come through the grants programs that we have got.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So it is the membership of the forum that would be getting the grants rather than the forum itself?

**Mr Manikis:** That is right, for the membership's projects and other activities that they might want to do.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What about the membership of the council? Would they be eligible for any—

**Mr Manikis:** Yes, if they apply, as long as they are incorporated as a group and go through the eligibility.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I go back to the same question: can you give us a breakdown as to how much funding these organisations' memberships have received?

**Ms Burch:** Through the grants system? I think we report that in the annual report.

**Mr Manikis:** In the annual report—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay.

**Mr Manikis:** at the back.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I have a supplementary question. Am I correct in assuming that these organisations are getting grants from the ACT government in their own right, not because they are members of either of these two groups?

**Mr Manikis:** That is right.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Making a connection between the two can actually be a bit misleading in our minds, if not in the mind of the community.

**Mr Manikis:** Yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Are both of these organisations financially solvent?

**Mr Manikis:** As far as I am aware, I can say that the forum is solvent. Last time I inquired with the registrar-general in relation to the financial statements of the ACT Multicultural Council, they had not reported at that time, but we will be chasing that up.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Is the financial solvency of an organisation a consideration when people are applying for grants?

**Mr Manikis:** It certainly is, yes.

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, in relation to ageing, what would you say are the three key

measurable improvements that the Office for Ageing has made to the lives of seniors in the ACT in the last financial year?

**Ms Burch:** We are not just doing multicultural to start off with?

**MR SESELJA:** Sorry, I thought we were going across the three.

**THE CHAIR:** We are starting with multicultural. I think it might be a bit confusing; so the minister did agree to do the opening statements all together—

**MR SESELJA:** Confusing to who?

**THE CHAIR:** but we are starting—

**MR SESELJA:** We have all the officials here, don't we?

**THE CHAIR:** We are going to start with multicultural, and then move on to—

**MR SESELJA:** I might ask the same question. Minister, in the area of multicultural affairs, what would you say are the three key measurable improvements for our multicultural communities in the last financial year?

**Ms Burch:** I know that one of the grants was around supporting, I think, Chin Wong. Some work was done through the grants for supporting older people, particularly Chinese, to be more included in the community and to give them some navigation tools and a resource about where they could access services. With ageing, multicultural or not, we are supporting aged people to age in place, supporting their access to services, supporting them to fully participate as they like. They would be the goals for what we want to do.

**MR SESELJA:** So we are on ageing?

**THE CHAIR:** So we are on—

**Ms Burch:** No, I said ageing, multicultural or not, but the focus is still on multicultural.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MR SESELJA:** Sorry, what were the three? There was a grant you had given and there was—

**Ms Burch:** The multicultural strategy sets out a focus on children and young people, older people and aged care, women, refugees, asylum seekers, harmony and religious acceptance. In the older people's focus, it does talk around access to services, accommodation, transport—a number of things. Mr Manikis has it there.

**MR SESELJA:** They are some things that you are planning to deliver. What are the deliverables?

**Ms Lambert:** The multicultural strategy has been delivered and has hard targets that will be reported on annually. So that is—

**MR SESELJA:** Have those targets been delivered?

**Ms Lambert:** Those targets—

**MR SESELJA:** It is one thing to say you are going to deliver something; it is another thing—

**Ms Lambert:** The target—the strategy came into existence in December last year. That was a key achievement of working through a series of consultations with the multicultural community. The difference with this strategy, perhaps, is the hard targets and the fact that they will need to be reported on annually. So I would regard that as a significant outcome of the work that has occurred.

**Ms Burch:** And it is not just the Office of Multicultural Affairs. It is across government, and we will ask them to report annually. We see that coming in through their annual reports.

**MR SMYTH:** In regard to some of the initiatives on page 93 of budget paper 3, what are the formalised criteria for funding the proposed language programs?

**Ms Burch:** Mr Manikis, do you want to answer that?

**Mr Manikis:** What we are looking at there is to lend some financial support to the 37 community language schools. Also, this additional money, the top-up money that we see there of \$25,000 for the next financial year, is to look at those groups or schools out there that have not necessarily been around for a long time but they might be fledgling. They have just started in the last little while.

In the past they have not been able to access the language grants program for assistance because we have tied it up with membership with the Ethnic Schools Association. So you really had to be a member of that association before you could access the grants program. We have opened that up a little bit now, because it has been drawn to our attention that there are quite a few schools out there that meet informally or on an ad hoc basis but provide a useful service.

**MR SMYTH:** Really, this is just a top-up to the community languages grants program?

**Mr Manikis:** That is right. It goes from \$60,000 to \$85,000.

**MR SMYTH:** And that is covering how many schools—31?

**Mr Manikis:** Thirty-seven schools in the past, but I think we are up to 43. That is right.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that enough to meet the need of these schools?

**Mr Manikis:** The language grants that went out just recently—I can tell you how many applications we have had just recently—

**Mr Hehir:** I might start the answer. These schools actually operate on very small amounts of grant funding, as you can tell if you just do the basic division. That is the nature of many of the schools. They are actually community organisations or members of communities who are working to try and keep the language and provide an option for younger people.

My understanding is that these dollars actually provide them with some resources for books. Sometimes they will use it for letting space or things like that. It is a useful addition to a program which community members actually do themselves on a voluntary basis, essentially. It does allow them to have access to a small amount of teaching materials or space to actually teach within. It is certainly not a large program. It does not require all the resources, but given these are largely delivered on a voluntary basis, it goes a substantial way towards that.

**MR HARGREAVES:** As a supplementary question, is it not true that the Ethnic Schools Association also receives just under \$100,000 from the commonwealth through the department of education?

**Mr Manikis:** Yes, it does. Through the commonwealth it gets supplementation of about \$100,000, but also a grant direct to it by us of about \$20,000 a year. So there is a little bit of resources going into it. There are about 3½ thousand students involved across the city. As I say, we have received 43 applications in the current round. The ask is about \$120,000. If you say \$85,000 is where we are at, yes, it is quite close.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Are there any quality assurance measures in place to ensure a specified standard of language education delivery?

**Mr Manikis:** We leave that to the department of education as well as the Ethnic Schools Association, who are responsible for the standards of the teachers.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So why does this program not come under the education portfolio?

**Mr Manikis:** We see it as both cultural and language. It is about maintenance of language and culture. It could very well; it is just the way it sits in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. It has traditionally and historically been there.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, just—

**MS BRESNAN:** I have another question from budget paper 3. It is in relation to the Multicultural Youth Services. It is good to see that some money has been given to MYS. There is \$25,000 there. We have had some feedback from groups like ACTCOSS and the Youth Coalition that there is a fairly large demand being put on the service. While I appreciate they do receive funding from other sources as well—

from the commonwealth—they are experiencing increasing demand. This \$25,000 probably will not be able to enable them to keep up with the demands they are facing. Is this something you are working with MYS on to make sure that the demands they are experiencing are being reflected in the funding they receive?

**Ms Burch:** I have had a number of visits to the multicultural youth drop-in service. One of the things I noticed there was their space restrictions. There was a conversation we shared. Sometimes if there is a bunch of young fellas being enthusiastic over a game of dominos, which I would not have thought was possible—to be that enthusiastic, but it happens—some others, particularly young women, may not want to share that space.

So what we have done in addition to providing this additional support, and there are other general linkages to youth services, is that we have offered them relocation. Indeed, we are relocating them to a larger space over in the Tara centre. That will give them far more space and it will allow them to have separate areas should the service want to do that.

Given that I seem to be tabling some things for the committee, there is a letter here from the president of the Multicultural Youth Services showing their appreciation for that move. There are different ways that you can support these types of organisations to provide that support to the young folk. Just on that, I think the funding will equate to a full-time equivalent of 1.5 days of a support counsellor into the service.

**MS BRESNAN:** That support is also being provided, but my question was about working with them, because they do have quite a big demand on their services. A lot of young people will go there because they do not feel comfortable going to general youth services.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** Also, as you are minister for young people as well, I am asking about working across departments on that issue, making sure, I guess, that they are recognised within the office for youth as well as multicultural in terms of the services they provide.

**Ms Burch:** Absolutely. One of the aspects of either this InterACT conference or earlier ones was how do you create an environment that increases inclusion and participation of our multicultural communities and newer communities, emerging communities, as they come through. The additional funding, which will provide a real resource in there, coupled with enhanced space, I think is a very good effort.

**Ms Lambert:** A good example of that cross-departmental working is the women's return to work grants. We provided some dollars for the young mums career club, particularly targeted at one community which enabled them to explore career and job aspirations and the things they needed to do to get that. That was particularly targeted at a young women's group, 22 to 25, in a particular community to enable them to be better skilled to apply for work and so on. You are quite right. We do need to make sure that we continue in our broad services to focus on them as a particular group, as we do for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

**MS BRESNAN:** One of the issues that came up last year in relation to MYS and in annual reports is that there seemed to be less of a recognition within the office for young people about what they were providing in that they were actually providing a very specific service to a specific group and it was about getting that recognition within different departments about what they are actually doing and that they are providing a very specialised service.

**Ms Burch:** Again, enhancing inclusion and participation of emerging communities is in the young people's plan under a number of areas—housing, transition, security and employment. It is going across departments; I think we are of a mind, Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hargreaves.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** After this question we will need to move to ageing.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I have got a couple of questions on the work experience and support program. How many programs were run in the last financial year?

**Ms Burch:** Two.

**MR HARGREAVES:** What were the participation numbers in those two?

**Ms Burch:** Twenty or thereabouts.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You have indicated an outcome from the target of 85 up to 95. Congratulations on that one. I saw one of your success stories only this morning. He was working over at Canberra Hospital, and he sends his best regards; he has got a full-time job. Fantastic—a Sudanese guy, by the way, which is even better. But I notice that you have got 85 per cent as the target here, which is the same as the previous one. How come you did not give yourself 95?

**Ms Lambert:** Because we allow for people who leave the program during it to get employment, which is a good outcome as well. That does happen. One or two, probably in most programs, get employment during the process of the program. We are trying to be accurate in our statistical measure.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Realistic. Okay.

**Ms Burch:** My understanding is that over 400 have been through the WES program to date.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** It is fantastic.

**MR HARGREAVES:** That is good. The placements are mostly with government departments. Do you plan to expand a bit more actively into the private sector?

**Mr Manikis:** We have had a look at that in the past, and we have had issues from our federal counterparts up there at DEEWR around work experience and unpaid work.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Right.

**Mr Manikis:** We seem to now have a policy that allows us to do that for the ACT public service. That program has been going now since 1997 or 1998, whatever it was. As the minister has indicated, some 400, 500 or 600 people have come under it.

**Ms Burch:** Four hundred.

**Mr Manikis:** Four hundred people have come through. It just seems that we can manage a group of 20 within the agencies; it seems like a comfortable arrangement with the relationship we have with the agencies in being able to place them. Going out into the private sector, I am sure it will throw up some other issues.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Right.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, can I just ask: what lessons have you learned from the blow-out of the \$500,000 Multicultural Festival from 2008-09?

**Ms Burch:** Thank you for the question. I have here—I would like, again, to table this for the committee—the results of the 2010 Multicultural Festival survey. I think you were not here when I arrived, but the 2010 Multicultural Festival—

**MR SESELJA:** Did you want to answer the question, minister?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Let her answer it.

**THE CHAIR:** One at a time.

**Ms Burch:** I am getting to it.

**MR SESELJA:** We look forward to you eventually getting to an answer.

**Ms Burch:** This survey, which was of nearly 3,000 people, shows an outstanding success—

**MRS DUNNE:** What did you learn from the budget blow-out the year before?

**Ms Burch:** with 92 per cent satisfied and 85 per cent going to attend again next year. What Mr Doszpot did miss in my opening comments was that this festival was delivered on budget.

**MRS DUNNE:** That is not what he asked you.

**MR SMYTH:** You are missing the budget in your answer.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, can we wait for an answer.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The question was: what lesson did you learn out of the budget blow-out of the previous year?

**Ms Burch:** The lesson I learnt was that it was my commitment to deliver a festival on budget, and that is what I did.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And are there any—

**MR SESELJA:** You just scaled it down.

**THE CHAIR:** Let Mr Doszpot ask a question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Are there any risk management measures in place to ensure that a similar budget blow-out will not occur?

**Ms Burch:** Absolutely. We put some good systems, programs and processes in place to have a festival that came in on budget and with such a high satisfaction rate. Again, I refer to the survey: 80 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the festival program. This is substantially more than the spectators in 2008, when just 68 per cent were satisfied with the program. So that shows that this—

**MR SESELJA:** Are you having a go at Mr Hargreaves?

**Ms Burch:** No. What I am showing is that this is becoming such a popular event—

**MR SESELJA:** Are you sure? I think you are having a go at Mr Hargreaves.

**Ms Burch:** and so well loved that each year more and more people—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Mr Seselja, you know that people do that at their peril.

**Ms Burch:** see this as—

**MR SMYTH:** She is laughing at you, John.

**MR SESELJA:** She is having a crack at you, John. No more dixers; I think you should ask the hard questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay; settle down. We do have a lot to get through. If you could finish—

**MR DOSZPOT:** What I am actually trying to get at, Madam Chair, is the financial implications, not a satisfaction survey. What I would like to know is: was an internal audit of the last Multicultural Festival conducted?

**Ms Burch:** I understand that this has been the subject of last year's estimates and annual reports. There were internal audits. We did look at processes; we did put

systems in place. And it was delivered on budget. That is telling us that the system has worked.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Was there an internal audit conducted at the conclusion of the last Multicultural Festival? That is the question.

**Ms Burch:** The 2010 festival?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Ms Lambert:** The one this year, you mean?

**MRS DUNNE:** The one this year.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The one this year.

**Ms Burch:** The one of four months ago. Your question was: was there an internal audit?

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is correct.

**Ms Burch:** An internal audit of the processes and how it was planned, how it was delivered—on budget—and how we have high satisfaction from the surveys? Is that what you are asking?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am asking whether you had an internal audit.

**Ms Lambert:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Will you table that?

**Ms Burch:** I will table this.

**Mr Hubbard:** We had a very close look at what were the cost drivers of the previous festival where we did go over budget significantly. Those cost drivers were essentially the duration of the event and also the footprint of the event. Because the festival was so popular the previous year, the footprint really expanded, and that significantly added to our costs. This year, we reduced the timing of the festival from 10 days down to three; that has a significant impact on the overall costs of hiring of goods and also facilities.

From a process point of view, we wrapped around a lot of financial processes. To be fair to the staff in the multicultural area, they just did not have those skills, so the financial expertise was brought in, mainly around things like fixed price contracts. To Nic's credit, he did put a lot of effort into making sure that all the major cost areas were tied up in a fixed price contract. As you would know yourself, if you can do that, you cut down your risk of a cost blow-out. That was very successful.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Could we see a copy of the internal review that was conducted?

**Mr Hubbard:** We did not actually do an internal audit. What we did do—

**Ms Burch:** An internal review is an internal process, and I do not think we are—

**Ms Lambert:** It is a departmental working document.

**MRS DUNNE:** This is not the FOI Act.

**Ms Burch:** We use it to inform how we put these strong systems in place. We will always review each Multicultural Festival, I imagine—it is certainly something that I would be instructing my department to do—about how we continue to deliver on budget a spectacular that continues to have 250-plus community organisations and performers and people from across Canberra and interstate coming in to celebrate.

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, will you table those internal audits for the last two years that have been done on the festival?

**Ms Burch:** No.

**MR SESELJA:** Why not?

**Ms Lambert:** They are generally regarded as working documents within the department.

**MRS DUNNE:** But this is not the Freedom of Information Act; this is an estimates inquiry, and estimates committees can—

**MR SESELJA:** There is nothing commercial-in-confidence about them. This is simply an appraisal of what the government has done. Why don't you want to table them, Ms Burch?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Madam Chair—

**Mr Hubbard:** I think it is less formal than that. The processes that we went through for the Multicultural Festival were much less formal than doing an internal audit.

**MR SESELJA:** So there is not an internal audit?

**Mr Hubbard:** No, we did not do internal audits. We formed a group of people with expertise in various aspects of running a festival and used that expertise to bring the festival in on budget.

**MR SESELJA:** The minister just told us before that there was an internal audit, so I am a bit confused.

**Mr Hubbard:** It was more of a review by using expertise of the staff there, so it was not written up as an internal audit or anything like that. There is not actually a document—

**MR SESELJA:** So what the minister said before was incorrect?

**Mr Hubbard:** I am not saying that.

**Ms Burch:** No. It is a misspeak perhaps. It is a way of determining that we internally—

**MR SESELJA:** So it was incorrect.

**Ms Burch:** No. That was being mischievous, so I do apologise for that. What I was saying—I may have called it an internal audit, but it is an internal review process. That is what the question was: is there internal review? Is there internal—

**MR DOSZPOT:** “Internal audit” was the question.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we have clarified that there was not an internal audit process.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am rather concerned about the crime scene that exists at the multicultural—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Do not go there, Steve.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Is there a problem with the statue that we have there?

**MRS DUNNE:** For the purposes of *Hansard*, that is a picture of—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes, it was put up there in case you knock it off.

**MR DOSZPOT:** No. Seriously, is there a safety issue with the statue at the moment? Is a leg about to fall off?

**Mr Manikis:** No, it is not.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What is that crime scene—

**MRS DUNNE:** It has been like that for at least a fortnight, to my knowledge.

**MR HARGREAVES:** So you have been over there looking at it.

**MS BRESNAN:** Longer than a fortnight.

**MR SMYTH:** It is actually part of the art work.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Manikis, do you have an answer to that question, before we move on to ageing?

**Mr Manikis:** Yes, I have.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Manikis. I am sure everyone would like to know it.

**Mr Manikis:** It is a temporary measure that we put in place.

**MR DOSZPOT:** You are moving the statue?

**Mr Manikis:** We are not moving the statue. We have hordes of people that come in as visitors to take photos and we would like to keep them away from the statue.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So that is keeping the hordes back?

**Mr Manikis:** That is right.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. We will now be moving—

**MR SMYTH:** Just for the record, Mr Manikis, could you define “hordes”?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Very simple: it is Vicki and Steve at the same time in front of the statue.

**MR SMYTH:** So the Mongol hordes or—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes, again, same story: Vicki and Steve in front of the—

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, members.

**Ms Lambert:** Can I just say that we are looking at something more aesthetic that will serve the same purpose. We are working towards that at the moment.

**MR SMYTH:** What—than the statue? That is a very poor comment on the statue.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Steve, we are going to put white hair on him so you cannot tell them apart.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, we are moving on to ageing, so, if we could move on to—

**MRS DUNNE:** Some of us are ageing faster than others.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Some of us have aged faster than others, Vicki.

**MR SMYTH:** We would appear to have the Holy Trinity at the end of the table there. I can work out Father, but you will have to work out the other two positions yourselves.

**Ms Lambert:** Son and Holy Ghost—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Being a good, old leftie, I am sitting on the left-hand side of the Father.

**Ms Burch:** Madam Chair, it is clearly getting to the end of a long estimates—

**MR SMYTH:** The comment is that there is nothing holy at the end of the table.

**Ms Lambert:** I did not say that. You are very good at putting words in a person's mouth.

**MR SMYTH:** What did you say, Ms Lambert? What did you say about holiness?

**Ms Lambert:** No. I said, if you are talking about the Son and the Holy Ghost, you have to go with the Son for the second one, because that is—you have to.

**Ms Burch:** It is too mind-boggling to think about.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Members, it is getting late, but we do have two important areas that we need to get through, and that is ageing and women. So I would like to start with budget paper 4, page 368, the 2010-11 priorities. What action items from the ACT strategic plan for positive ageing 2010-14 are being funded in this year's budget and what items are waiting to be funded or have been partially funded? I want to get some idea about what sort of funding is going to be put to that strategy or that plan.

**Ms Burch:** Meredith Whitten can talk to this, but, just to set the context, there is work going on; I think I made mention of the work on the portal. We are of the firm belief that not every plan needs every initiative to have an individual funding line. Indeed, the plan for positive ageing is across departments as well. Similar to the multicultural strategy, we will be looking to our fellow departments to progress areas within their portfolios and to report back through the MACA who is doing implementation and is monitoring the implementation. So you will not necessarily, as I have said, see a budget line, but that does not mean to say that work has not been identified and is progressing.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** One of the key areas in the strategic plan was identified as being information and communication. You would fully understand that, being a central policy area for ageing across the whole of the ACT government, one of the really important functions of that area is to bring together information about both government and non-government activities across the whole of the ACT community. One of the most important things and the first initiatives that we are working on is the website that will bring together as a portal information for seniors in the ACT. I will hand over to Meredith Whitten to explain a bit more about that and a couple of the others.

**Ms Whitten:** Thank you for your question, Ms Hunter. There are 58 actions in the strategic plan and the plan comprises an implementation plan which is for the period until 30 June next year. Many of those actions are with our department, but there are actions across other departments as well, and the budget does identify some funding in ACT Health and TAMS for some specific initiatives.

In relation to our department, the initiatives that Ms Overton-Clarke has referred to, we are managing within existing resources. We are currently mapping the seniors information services across our own government and also with the commonwealth. That relates to action 1. In relation to action 3, as Ms Overton-Clarke has mentioned about the seniors information portal, we have got a meeting with the ministerial

advisory council in June and we hope to be able to present to that council a development version of the information portal at that stage, and then we would be able to brief the minister after that as well. So we are keen to progress that one. It is our first priority. Action 22 was also around the elder abuse prevention policy; members may be aware that the government or the minister launched that fairly recently as well. So they are the key deliverables for our Office for Ageing.

In relation to other initiatives in the budget, in ACT Health there was increased demand for older persons services, which was about \$4 million over the next four years. There was also a growth in home community care for frail older people and young people with a disability, which is around \$9 million over four years. In the TAMS part of the budget, there was funding—which was broadly for the community, but there were some initiatives that came up during the consultations for the strategic plan on positive ageing—around lighting in the city, new bus stops and cycle and community pathways. They were some of the transport issues that were discussed during the consultations on the development of the strategic plan on positive ageing.

**Ms Burch:** If I can just add to that, the plan is looking to be an age-friendly city. A former colleague of mine was in Canberra recently. He is now the director at the UN for ageing and life cycle. He was very keen to have the ACT sign up to that network, so I have asked the department to investigate if there would be anything that would stop us from doing that. So it is that broader societal move forward as well, Ms Hunter.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Following on from that, minister, what do you see as the major challenges to Canberra becoming a more age friendly city?

**Ms Burch:** Demographically, I think by 2020, one in 20 will be 65 and over; so it is just that the reality of our community will mean that we need to have a community that affords people to age actively and participate. Some of these keys are transport and mobility. TAMS is bringing on wheelchair accessible buses. We are looking at transport and that community regional services have got community transport as well. Health and wellbeing is something that is also very important, to make sure that people age well, healthily. That is the focus with the positive ageing plan, as Ms Whitten spoke about.

The other focus area that came out very loudly from our older community members was information and communication. The strategic plan for positive ageing has seven focus areas that will really direct how broadly government responds to how we move towards a society having an age friendly city.

**MR SESELJA:** On page 380, budget paper 4, the accountability indicators list a number of ministerial councils that receive secretariat support and policy advice. What was the level of support provided to the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing?

**Ms Burch:** Ms Whitten?

**Ms Whitten:** The Ministerial Council on Ageing meets every two months and, prior to each meeting, there is a meeting with the chair of the ministerial council as well as the deputy chair. It is a planning meeting before the next council meeting. The Office for Ageing also provides secretariat support for the council meetings as well as any other support that is required between meetings, including the distribution of correspondence to the council and facilitating correspondence for the chair as well, as needed.

**MR SESELJA:** So what is the dollar value of that support?

**Ms Whitten:** It would be at least—

**Mr Hehir:** I think we will get you a breakdown rather than try to guess, if that is okay.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that is taken on notice.

**Mr Hehir:** I might add that one of the other things we did with the MCEEDYA was invite the chair and deputy chair to come along to the interdepartmental committee that actually did the development work for the positive ageing strategy. We invited a number of other groups to that. That is not quite normal process but we felt it was really important to include them in the policy discussion and debate. Certainly, their input was very valuable in that process. While it may not have been policy support—it was, I think, the assistance around development and having the opportunity to talk to quite a broad range of government departments—it was actually quite useful for them.

**Ms Whitten:** In relation to your question about the dollar value, I cannot give you the exact dollar value at this point in time, because it is part of one person's role and part of the manager's role and part of my time as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Could I go to Mr Hargreaves.

**MR HARGREAVES:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** I have got a general question, I guess, about the Office for Ageing. It is a question I asked the Chief Minister's Department also, around the ATSI issues. What work do you do in terms of working across departments about different issues which apply to that? I know you have got the strategic plan. Issues have come up; for example, the number of nurses which are required for home access to palliative care places, issues in the HACC program, and I appreciate they come across different departments. What work do you do probably, in particular, with Health that does deal with the majority of ageing issues? What work do you do in terms of policy to have consistency across government?

**Mr Hehir:** The IDC I referred to, Health was key partner in that, and they had very senior representation at that committee. Certainly, they were invaluable in identifying a large number of measures and processes that were in place. What was, I think, particularly interesting for some of the community groups that we invited along was that there was quite a range of programs that people did not have the information

about. So that was why communication came up as such an important message from that group.

We work very closely with the department of health around this area. It is an area of mutual interest, obviously, but they were certainly a key part of informing and developing the positive ageing strategy. And you will see a lot of that health focus in there, particularly around planning for your ageing process.

**MS BRESNAN:** MCEEDYA obviously are providing advice, but how does their advice or any recommendations they make then get passed on to other departments so that they are actually getting that input as well from that council?

**Ms Lambert:** There are a range of mechanisms. There is the IDC, but when it is necessary I will also—

**MS BRESNAN:** I understand there is the IDC, but the actual MCEEDYA—

**Ms Lambert:** I will also write, as the responsible chief executive, about things that need to occur and so on or take it to the forums where chief executives meet and do things like that. So there is a range of mechanisms to move that across government, as well as working at the officer level. The officers have good connections into the relevant areas of other departments and they work at that level as well. But if it needs a formal request, then it is one that would be done through letters between chief executives.

**MS BRESNAN:** And is that something that is fed back to MCEEDYA so that they know that has been carried forward?

**Ms Lambert:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** The chair of MCEEDYA meets with me regularly too outside of the formal meetings, and having them so closely tied to the implementation and the monitoring of how we move forward with this plan allows an open, continual dialogue. If their monitoring identifies an area that may need a bit of attention, it will certainly come to us through our processes, and then that will set off that communication thread.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne, a final question before we move on to women.

**MRS DUNNE:** I have got questions on women.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**MRS DUNNE:** But I would like to note, Madam Chair, that this is my last appearance in estimates; so it is Mr Hargreaves's last opportunity to get me kicked out.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** I leave the challenge over to you.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I was only going to do it if you were going to be naughty.

**MR SMYTH:** I assume you mean this year?

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, in this estimates process, this particular one.

**THE CHAIR:** I got a bit of a shock then.

**Ms Burch:** Given that we are noting last attendance, can I also advise that this will be Sandra Lambert's last attendance at estimates. Sadly, Sandra Lambert is going to find a desert island somewhere in Canberra and enjoy herself.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Springbank Island.

**MRS DUNNE:** A quick canoe ride to Springbank Island.

**Ms Burch:** Can I formally acknowledge Sandra's incredible contribution to the department and certainly her support and assistance to me over my time.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Hear, hear!

**THE CHAIR:** I think that would be echoed by the members of the Legislative Assembly, to thank you for your many years of contribution.

**Ms Lambert:** Thank you. I think it is something like 15 years I have been coming to estimates.

**THE CHAIR:** There are only about 16 minutes to go; so you might savour those last 16 minutes. We might move on to the Office for Women.

**MRS DUNNE:** I have got some women's questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I am going to declare a conflict of interest. I did not ask questions on ageing because I had a conflict of interest.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to go to the women's plan. Has the IDC outlining the women's plan been established, and who is involved in that? It is due, I think, in May.

**Ms Whitten:** Thank you for that question. The IDC has been established. The chief executive wrote to the chief executives of government departments and asked for nominations, and the IDC met last week. We are working towards implementation of measuring and reporting on progress, which is on page 17 of the women's plan. That was the first target that we needed to achieve, and we have met that one.

What we are looking at is working through the next deliverable, which is around developing and scoping the sex disaggregated data across government and then, quarterly, talking with my colleagues about reporting in the annual reports as required under the annual report directions.

**THE CHAIR:** That is right, because that gender disaggregated data project has been running through health?

**Ms Whitten:** Yes, they have had a pilot.

**THE CHAIR:** Could you refresh my memory: when is that supposed to be completed, that pilot?

**Ms Lambert:** I think the Treasurer said at the ATCOSS lunch that she was expecting it within the month and it would depend whether it actually occurred before she went on leave or after. So I am assuming that it is imminent; so mid-year, I would imagine.

**Ms Whitten:** And my understanding is that Ms Gallagher did table something in the community when she appeared.

**THE CHAIR:** She did. In fact she did give an update that she did table along the way. I know it is being piloted through health but what would be the role of the Office for Women? Could you just go back over that again? You will take that, ensure it goes across government—is that what you are saying?—and then ensure that it goes into annual reports?

**Ms Whitten:** The commitment is for ACT Health to deliver its report to our department. The Office for Women would then accordingly brief the Minister for Women and it would be a matter for the Minister for Women and/or government to make a decision about the next steps after that.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** I think Mrs Dunne is anxious. You have got questions?

**MRS DUNNE:** I am so anxious. Where to start? Could I ask in relation to the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women: what were the major advices that the council gave to you, minister, or to successive ministers in the course of this financial year, and what actions were taken in response to those different advices?

**Ms Burch:** The significant piece of work of the ministerial advisory council was the development of that plan and the extensive consultation process in which they had road trips, they had forums, online surveys, a whole range of things, to make sure that they captured the voice of the Canberra women and girls. So that was a key area of focus. They are always involved and interested in the women's grants process and recognising women through various recognition processes.

Again, I met with the council and met with the chair of the council as well regularly outside of the meetings to work out how we progress that. Recent discussions have been around women's safety in the community. So that will be something that I would like to explore.

**MRS DUNNE:** I was not really asking what work they had done; I was asking: were there specific elements of advice that they had given to you or to the previous minister

in the last financial year that required a particular action or particular response and, if so, what was that response?

**Ms Burch:** The focus of my dialogue in the six months of being minister is working through the plan, finalising the plan, and having confidence and assurance that the women's ministerial council were supportive that that was going to work for the women of Canberra and certainly reflected their views and inputs. And the other was—I am just trying to think. We were at CIT. What do we call that?

**Ms Whitten:** That was for the launch of the women's plan, minister, and—

**Ms Burch:** No, down at Reid.

**MRS DUNNE:** That was International Women's Day.

**Ms Whitten:** International Women's Day, of course.

**MRS DUNNE:** On the subject of International Women's Day, how much does the ACT government contribute to International Women's Day in the ACT?

**Ms Whitten:** On International Women's Day the minister presents awards for women in recognition of their achievements in the community. That is a significant event for the Minister for Women. During the month of March there are a number of events where either the minister participates or the Office for Women supports and/or attends events during that month.

**MRS DUNNE:** Do you give support to those events, either in money or in kind?

**Ms Whitten:** We do in kind. I would have to take on notice whether we have given any—

**MRS DUNNE:** Presumably the International Women's Day awards event costs some money. I am quite happy for you to take it on notice.

**Ms Whitten:** Yes.

**Ms Lambert:** We certainly fund that event. Our own event we certainly fund. We would have to take that on notice. I do not have those numbers here now.

**Ms Whitten:** There are a number of events.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that has been taken on notice. Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** I have a question around the return to work grants. I think we asked about this at estimates last year because there had been a slower than expected take-up. I am just wondering if there has been an improvement in the take-up of those.

**Ms Burch:** Can I just say that there has been a good—

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned some figures before.

**Ms Burch:** I did make mention of that in the opening statement. I think I will go to that.

**THE CHAIR:** It was 196.

**Ms Burch:** 196 to date. We continued to put it through to individual grants, but we also gave some funds to organisations and that broadened that network. They would have been working with women. Out of the return to work grants, 36 per cent are from culturally diverse backgrounds, seven per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, and eight per cent of these women have a disability. We recognise that it was a bit slow to start off with, but now I think word is out there and it really is making a significant contribution to these women.

**MRS DUNNE:** The 196—that is this financial year so far?

**Ms Burch:** No, that is up to April this year.

**MRS DUNNE:** So that is up to April.

**Ms Burch:** That is my understanding—over the life of the grants.

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes, that is what I was wondering—what period.

**Ms Whitten:** From February 2008, which is when the return to work grants commenced.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could we have a breakdown across the financial years so that we can see how it has improved, if it has improved?

**Ms Burch:** I am happy to table it.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** It gives the breakdown of the—

**Ms Burch:** Not by year, though.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** different categories in terms of the breakdown of gender, different types—

**MRS DUNNE:** No, I was actually interested in how it had grown over the—

**Ms Burch:** The year-by-year numbers of grants given out?

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** We can get that to you.

**Mr Hehir:** On an annualised basis, in that we had a bit of a funny start in February.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, I understand that.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Some of that information for last year was in last year's annual report, but we will give you an updated one.

**MS BRESNAN:** You said there was a fairly significant percentage from a cultural and linguistically diverse background. Did you target particular groups to get more information about the programs—multicultural groups or ATSI groups?

**Ms Whitten:** Yes. We have actually had a stronger promotional role during the course of the grants. Ms Lambert referred to the work that we have done with the Multicultural Youth Services and the support to young mums as well. Because of that work around 20 Sudanese women have applied for return to work grants since that time, so that is good.

**MS BRESNAN:** So it has been a success.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** I can just give you an update on those figures. In 2008-09 there were 81 grants and up to 21 May there were 101 grants. So that is now 1,004. So 123—

**Ms Lambert:** How can we get to 1,004?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Sorry, what am I saying? Sorry, 204. Instead of the 196, it is 204. My apologies: 81 in 2009 and 123—

**Ms Burch:** Perhaps we will table that, Bronwen.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. I note that that document will be tabled. Several years ago there was a social and demographic profile of women in the ACT. We did have a demographer at that time. That issue disappeared and it has now been reinstated. Is there any view from the minister or the Office for Women that that profile should be updated? You have got some demographic information in here, but I am sure it was more detailed. Has there been any discussion about that?

**Ms Whitten:** There has not been specific discussion about that recently. I think we have been focusing on the gender analysis work and developing the plan. It is something that we could—

**Ms Burch:** But suffice it to say that as that resource comes across into government the different agencies will be looking at how it can inform our ongoing planning and things like that.

**THE CHAIR:** That is right—inform your planning and your service delivery.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you linked to the CMD project around improving the data sets around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women?

**Ms Whitten:** Yes. In fact, we talked about that at the IDC meeting last week—the information and development work that CMD leads.

**Ms Lambert:** We are actually leading the specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data work. That is something I would expect Dr Anne Jenkins might have a look at once she has finished that work.

**Ms Whitten:** That is something we talked about last week.

**THE CHAIR:** That is progressing well. Are there any more questions from members?

**MRS DUNNE:** I have a request, Madam Chair, if I could?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** Through you, Madam Chair, I would like you to ask the minister to withdraw the comments that she made yesterday which are on page 3 of the uncorrected proof *Hansard*, where she said that I continue to misrepresent and to peddle untruths. I contend that that is unparliamentary language and it should be withdrawn.

**THE CHAIR:** This matter is going to be part of the private meeting that will begin at 5.30 this afternoon.

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, I am making a specific request—

**MR SESELJA:** That is not what was agreed yesterday.

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, I am making a specific request. I am referring you to the uncorrected proof *Hansard* where the minister said I continue to misrepresent and to peddle untruths. It is unparliamentary to say that I peddle untruths. It is tantamount to saying that I am a liar. That is unparliamentary language, and I would ask you to ask the minister to withdraw it.

**THE CHAIR:** As you will know, Mrs Dunne, the sequence of events was that we had a private meeting. I said that I would review transcripts around this matter and would then follow it up.

**MRS DUNNE:** This is the last opportunity the minister has to withdraw that on the *Hansard*. She made the comments on the *Hansard*—

**THE CHAIR:** I do understand, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** and it needs to be withdrawn on the *Hansard*.

**THE CHAIR:** Basically, the minister has made similar statements about public statements made by you, so at this point—

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, I did not make a public statement—

**THE CHAIR:** I did say that I would review the transcript.

**MRS DUNNE:** I did not make statements about the integrity of the minister on the *Hansard*. The minister came in here and put on the record of this Assembly that I peddle untruths. That is unparliamentary language; the standing orders require that it is withdrawn.

**MR SESELJA:** And she was wrong.

**MRS DUNNE:** I am asking you—

**MR SESELJA:** Totally wrong. Totally out of line.

**MRS DUNNE:** to ask the minister to withdraw her unparliamentary language.

**MR HARGREAVES:** On the point of order, Madam Chair—

**MRS DUNNE:** It is not a point of order; it is a request.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Excuse me; I am just on the point of order. I am not saying yes or no to yours.

**MRS DUNNE:** You are making a point of order?

**MR HARGREAVES:** The point of order is that Mrs Dunne has referred us to a page of the *Hansard*. With all respect to Mrs Dunne, I have not seen it, and I would like to see that before the committee deals with that.

**MRS DUNNE:** I am asking the chairman of the committee to exercise her role as the presiding officer—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes, and you got an answer. You have got your answer.

**MRS DUNNE:** as a substitute for the speaker, because this is what she is here in this place, and require a member who has used unparliamentary language to withdraw the language.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, you have heard the request from Mrs Dunne. Will you consider that?

**Ms Burch:** I have not seen the copy of the *Hansard* and I am not prepared to do anything. This is involved in a context—

**MRS DUNNE:** No; this is about the *Hansard*.

**Ms Burch:** of public statements made—

**MRS DUNNE:** It is not about the public statements.

**Ms Burch:** About public statements made by Mrs Dunne—

**MR SESELJA:** And you got it wrong.

**Ms Burch:** No, I did not get it wrong.

**MR SESELJA:** She was right and you got it wrong.

**Ms Burch:** I have been over that *Hansard*.

**MR SESELJA:** You said you have not. You just said you have not.

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam chair, this is not about the public stoush between Ms Burch and I—

**Ms Burch:** No; this is the *Hansard* of Tuesday morning.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is about—

**THE CHAIR:** It was the particular language.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is the particular language used in the *Hansard*, and it must be withdrawn. If she refuses to withdraw, she holds you in contempt. I am asking you to ask her to withdraw the question.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Madam Chair, there is a standing order to govern this at a later stage.

**MRS DUNNE:** She cannot. She cannot withdraw it at a later stage.

**MR SMYTH:** No, no; sorry—

**THE CHAIR:** No, Mr Smyth; just hold on.

**MR SMYTH:** She has made a request, as per the standing orders.

**MRS DUNNE:** My request to you is to require the member to withdraw “continuing to misrepresent and to peddle untruths”. They are unparliamentary words and they must be withdrawn.

**MR SMYTH:** They should just be withdrawn.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Madam Chair, that is not on the list of unparliamentary terminology.

**MRS DUNNE:** “Peddle untruth” is the same as saying you are a liar.

**MR HARGREAVES:** That is not unparliamentary language; it is not on the list.

**MRS DUNNE:** The list is not definitive, Madam Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** I am not clear about what is on the list, but I would ask you—

**Ms Burch:** What is and what is not? I am not clear what is parliamentary or unparliamentary—

**MRS DUNNE:** You had better learn soon.

**Ms Burch:** What I am clear about is that Mrs Dunne—we all know where this has come from: that Mrs Dunne has put comments out in the public arena—

**MR SMYTH:** No; that is a different issue.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is a different issue.

**Ms Burch:** It is related, because, if she called out—

**MRS DUNNE:** It may be related, but these are the words on the *Hansard*.

**MR HARGREAVES:** This is not a conversational forum.

**Ms Burch:** truths or put out things that were not true, then she may have a case to answer.

**MR SESELJA:** You have been caught out, Joy. You have been caught out making stuff up. You come in; you mislead. You mislead the committee.

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, she must withdraw.

**THE CHAIR:** This will now need to be taken up in the Assembly—

**MRS DUNNE:** No, Madam Chair; she must withdraw.

**MR SESELJA:** You mislead the committee again and again and again.

**Ms Burch:** No, no.

**MR SESELJA:** Because you were embarrassed.

**Ms Burch:** No, I am not.

**MR SESELJA:** That is what it comes down to: you were embarrassed at your answer.

**Ms Burch:** No. The public statement was around childcare, and childcare was the—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Madam Chair, I move that the meeting be adjourned.

**Ms Burch:** Haven't you even read it?

**THE CHAIR:** Order, members!

**MR SESELJA:** I have read it; it is right here. Do you want to go over it?

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Suspend the meeting.

**MRS DUNNE:** The minister used unparliamentary language.

**THE CHAIR:** I will now be adjourning—

**MRS DUNNE:** You have asked her to withdraw.

**MR SMYTH:** You asked her to withdraw; she must withdraw.

**THE CHAIR:** I said would she consider that; and, as I said, this is a matter that can be taken up in the Assembly.

**MR SESELJA:** No; you are in control.

**MRS DUNNE:** She must withdraw. You have just lost control of this. If you do not require her to withdraw, she is holding you in contempt.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne, I am telling you that this is a matter that can be taken up in the Assembly. That was what I said yesterday. I said that I would—

**MR SMYTH:** No; you said that you would check.

**THE CHAIR:** I said that I would look at the transcripts and I would follow up the matter and we would have a meeting later. I was very clear—

**MRS DUNNE:** It is not about the stoush, the “he said, she said” stuff.

**THE CHAIR:** in what I said yesterday.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is what she said on that answer.

**THE CHAIR:** As mentioned at the commencement of the hearing today, there is a time frame of five working days to return answers to questions taken on notice at this hearing. In relation to questions given on notice, the committee has agreed that written questions on notice will only be accepted for three working days following this public hearing for the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services output 4.2, care and protection services, social housing services, including Housing ACT, homelessness and community housing, and output 3.2, community development and policy, which includes ageing, multicultural affairs and the status of women. Members, please provide any questions on notice to the secretariat by close of business on Tuesday, 1 June 2010. Questions on notice pertaining to these agencies will not be accepted after that time.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services and DHCS officials for attending today and, in advance, for responding promptly to questions taken on notice and given on notice.

**The committee adjourned at 5.31 pm.**