



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2011-2012

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2011-2012](#))

Members:

MR B SMYTH (The Chair)
MS M HUNTER (The Deputy Chair)
MR J HARGREAVES
MR J HANSON
MS C LE COUTEUR

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 23 MAY 2011

Secretary to the committee:
Ms G Concannon (Ph 620 50129)

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

| | |
|--|------------|
| ACT Policing | 664 |
| Community Services Directorate..... | 726 |
| Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission | 664 |
| Justice and Community Safety Directorate..... | 664 |

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 9.06 am.

Appearances:

Corbell, Mr Simon, Attorney-General, Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services and Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Leigh, Ms Kathy, Director-General

Hammond, Mr Greg, Executive Director, Capital Works and Infrastructure

Crowweller, Mr Mark, Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency

Foot, Mr David, Chief Officer, ACT Ambulance Service

Barr, Mr Conrad, Deputy Chief Officer, ACT Fire Brigade

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Executive Director, ACT Corrective Services

Purvis, Ms Alison, Acting Courts Administrator, ACT Law Courts and Tribunals

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission

Gray, Mr Malcolm, Senior Commissioner

Buckley, Mr Mike, Commissioner

ACT Policing

Quaedvlieg, Mr Roman, Chief Police Officer, ACT Policing

THE CHAIR: The minister is now with us. We will start the session. I will start by reading the opening statement. Welcome to this hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates. Today's proceedings will look at the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, including ICRC, Emergency Services, ACT Policing, Corrective Services, and Courts and Tribunals. Can I remind the witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the yellow card on the table before you. I ask: have you read it and do you understand it?

Mr Corbell: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Just for the information of all here, we are as always being recorded by Hansard for transcription as well as being webstreamed and broadcast live. We are also trialling Committees on Demand so you can see yourself replayed at estimates until 30 June on the computer screen. Are you happy to proceed?

MR HARGREAVES: Not any more, he says. Not any more!

THE CHAIR: I take that as a yes?

Mr Corbell: Yes, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Members, if questions could be concise and directly relevant and,

minister, if answers could be concise and directly relevant and short, that would be good. Minister, over to you—an opening statement perhaps?

Mr Corbell: No, no need for an opening statement, Mr Chairman. I will continue to try to answer questions.

THE CHAIR: We might go straight to the ICRC. I was wondering, minister, about the number of complaints. I note that the seventh dot point on page 484 relates to competitive neutrality complaints. How many complaints have been made to the ICRC during 2010-11 to date and what has been the nature of those complaints?

Mr Corbell: I might invite Mr Gray, who is the Senior Commissioner with the ICRC, to come to the table and assist you with your question. I should note too, Mr Chairman, that under the new administrative arrangements, the ICRC is now within the portfolio responsibilities of the Treasurer, but obviously we are in the transition period.

Mr Gray: No formal complaints have been received during the year.

THE CHAIR: So how many informal complaints?

Mr Gray: No informal complaints, as far as I am aware.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Mr Buckley: Businesses sometimes come to the ICRC and discuss what is the competitive neutrality policy. They ask in informal ways how they would go about making an application to it. The previous Senior Commissioner spoke to, I am aware of, two businesses in the ACT about competitive neutrality issues and advised them of the procedure. He also spoke to the relevant—there was correspondence with the relevant departments to ascertain the issues and the procedure.

There was then discussion with those enterprises and as a consequence of the information which comes back, those businesses may then wish to proceed with a competitive neutrality complaint. Now at this stage, the discussions with them do not involve the names of businesses; so I would be loath to suggest who they are at this time in that they have not decided whether or not they wish to make a competitive neutrality complaint.

THE CHAIR: I notice that on page 4 it does talk about supermarket policy. What advice did the ICRC give to the government in relation to its supermarket competition policy in the ACT?

Mr Gray: The ICRC's functions in this area are conducted through its membership of the supermarkets committee, which was established by the government a little over a year ago, I think. Various matters have come before that committee and the ICRC has provided advice as a member of the committee through the committee. As far as I am aware, the ICRC has not provided any advice as the ICRC itself.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur, was that a—

MS LE COUTEUR: That was largely where I was going with my supplementary, but I will continue on that. While you say there have been no formal complaints, there has clearly been a lot of discussion about supermarket competition policy in the press over the last year. Do you monitor that and form any views and will that be fed back to the government?

Mr Gray: The committee has a responsibility to monitor and to report and the way the committee has decided to discharge that function is effectively by asking the ICRC on its behalf to monitor price movements in supermarkets across Canberra. We have conducted one survey. We are in the process of conducting a second survey. We will prepare a report for the committee, which will be submitted to them in August and then the committee will determine what is to happen to that information. It certainly forms a base—it could form a base for advice to government.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you look at the domination of different supermarkets, their market share—you only look at the pricing outcomes? So that is not one of your interests?

Mr Gray: We look at it—sorry, we collect the information by region, by suburb and by type of supermarket—the size and so on; the service levels. There are two separate—

MS LE COUTEUR: And ownership?

Mr Gray: Sorry?

MS LE COUTEUR: And ownership of supermarkets?

Mr Gray: Yes. Oh, yes.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Hunter?

MS HUNTER: I wanted to go to budget paper 4, page 483. Under the commission's objectives, there is a second dot point about facilitating an appropriate balance between efficiency, environmental and social considerations. Those words struck me as interesting because normally with a triple-bottom-line analysis, it is economic, environment and social considerations that are looked at. So can you tell me how you exercise that function and whether there is a difference between economic and efficiency, or are they the same thing for you?

Mr Gray: Efficiency is an important part of economic, but it is not the only aspect of an economic evaluation we might do. In terms of the way we discharge that function, in every review that we do and every report that we prepare, we always make reference to that section of the act and we always have a section in the report that discusses those three aspects of the duties of the commission.

MRS DUNNE: So what you are saying, Mr Gray, is that this act is couched in terms of efficiency rather than the broader economic considerations.

Mr Gray: No, it is not.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, did I misunderstand what you said, Mr Gray, when you said that when you report, you report about those elements because it is in the act?

Mr Gray: What I said, Mrs Dunne, was that—there were two parts to the question. The first part was: was efficiency the whole of economic? The answer to that question was no. It is an important part of it but it is not the whole of an economic evaluation of a given topic. The second question was: how do we address those three elements? The answer to that was that in every report that we prepare we make reference to that section of the act and we have a section in the report that discusses each of those elements separately and the way they have related to the conclusions that we have reached.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, but my—

Mr Corbell: The act makes specific mention of the requirement for the commission to have regard to environmental considerations in determining its—as it goes through its decision making in relation to its functions under the act there is a specific requirement that the commission have regard to particular considerations when it comes to environmental matters or environmental sustainability issues. The commission reports against those when it determines, for example, price paths in relation to water, electricity and so on.

MRS DUNNE: But my question was actually about the issue of efficiency, which was Ms Hunter's question. Is the remit of the commission couched more in terms of efficiency than in broader economic terms?

Mr Gray: It depends on the review. In some areas, efficiency will be the dominant economic consideration. In the context of other reviews then other aspects of economics might be relevant.

MRS DUNNE: Could you give an example of where efficiency would be the highest priority?

Mr Gray: In, for example, the recent mid-term review we did of water prices. One of the principal things we have to do in such a review is to satisfy ourselves that the way that Actew have gone about discharging its functions is efficient; that they have purchased their inputs at competitive prices, at prices that are reflective of the market in which they are operating, and that they have applied those resources in a way that is efficient and that has used the minimum amount of inputs to get the output that they are required to get. So that would be an example. I am struggling to think of an example where broader economic considerations might be relevant.

Sometimes it is the incentive structure that a particular decision may create that is important to us. The government is trying to achieve certain outcomes. We have to address ourselves to the way that those outcomes are conditioned by the determination that we might make. We have just recently completed a racing inquiry, for example, into that industry and the nature of the government support for it. In the case of that inquiry a broad range of issues were relevant and we were not particularly focused on

the efficiency or otherwise of the racing industry in the ACT. It was more its place in the total community, the contribution it made and the role that the government might have in regard to that that was relevant.

THE CHAIR: All right. We will go back to Ms Hunter and then we will just work our way along the line—

MS HUNTER: The Assembly recently passed a motion and it requested the ICRC to undertake some work in the next financial year. It is a review of the economic, environmental and social aspects of the urban water ponds versus a greywater market. Have you had a chance to have a look at this as far as setting up a framework that you would use to make the assessment and if you have can you give us a little bit of an overview of that?

Mr Gray: We are aware of the motion that the Legislative Assembly passed. We have looked at it. We have had very preliminary discussions with the department but we have not yet begun to frame an analytical framework to tackle that issue.

Mr Corbell: And the government, Ms Hunter, has not yet made a formal referral to the ICRC. That referral has been caught up in the process of the budget and changed portfolio responsibilities. It will now be a matter for the Treasurer to consider.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Just continuing on that, when the referral does in fact happen, sometimes people look at dollar values for environmental issues and environmental services. Is that something that you are likely to consider as part of the inquiry?

Mr Gray: It will depend on the reference when it arrives, I think. It is hard for us to respond when the precise shape of what we would be asked to look at is yet to be determined.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. In that case I will go to something else which hopefully will be clear. In budget paper 4 on page 486 you were expecting to get \$1,181,000 from the government but you are only estimating to get \$474,000. Why—

MR HARGREAVES: No. That is—

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Hargreaves has just told me I have got it wrong—

MR HARGREAVES: Look at these two. Look at that one there as well, the 2010-11 outcome.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am looking at—

MR HARGREAVES: Look at all three.

MRS DUNNE: How about Ms Le Couteur asks the question?

MR HARGREAVES: Mrs Dunne, join the committee and you can say what you like.

THE CHAIR: Ask the question.

MS LE COUTEUR: There are two figures which are substantially different, for user charges, between what you estimated for this year and what the budget said. My question relates to the substantial difference.

Mr Gray: I think the principal difference is the service agreement that we are anticipating or on the verge of concluding with the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate to advise the minister on methodology and subsequently to conduct the greenhouse gas—

MS LE COUTEUR: So are you saying the government did not ask for you to do as much because it was busy with—

Mr Gray: No. The government is asking us to do a new task and we are concluding a service agreement to enable us to do that task. That service agreement contains charges which contain the cost.

Mr Corbell: The commission is anticipating its service charges will increase. The revenue from service charges will increase as a result of entering into an arrangement with the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate for the purposes of providing advice on greenhouse gas inventory monitoring.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. And the reason it is a lot less than the budget amount for the year—I am sorry; I did read out the wrong number—

MS HUNTER: You had a budget of 883 and you actually had an outcome of 474.

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Hargreaves was correct; I read from the wrong column in my question, but there is still a \$400,000 difference.

Mr Corbell: I am sorry; could you just indicate which other figure you are referring to, Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: As I read it—maybe I have got it wrong—under “2010-11 budget” you have got a figure of 883 for user charges, ACT government.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: And if you go along to the estimated outcome it is 474, which is about half what you expected. Is that—

MR HARGREAVES: Is that because the SLA has not kicked in yet?

Mr Gray: That is right.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, members, but if you go to page 489, the notes to the variation—

MS HUNTER: There is an explanation.

THE CHAIR: there is an explanation. I hate to step in, minister, but the decrease is because of a reduction of revenue and the increase in the coming year is because of an SLA which apparently has not been signed yet but is expected to be signed.

Mr Gray: Yes.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS HUNTER: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Clearly it is a decrease in revenue. There were fewer inquiries done, I am assuming is the actual answer?

Mr Gray: There is a new function that we are taking on in the coming year that we did not have in the previous year.

THE CHAIR: All right. Mr Hargreaves?

MR HARGREAVES: Thanks very much, Mr Chairman. Page 484 of BP4 indicates at the third dot point “overseeing pricing arrangements for retail electricity for franchise customers from 1 July 2011”. I am interested to know how that is going to differ from the current regime or whether it is going to be the same. It says you are overseeing the pricing arrangements for retail electricity. Am I correct in my reading of that in assuming that your commission will in fact be playing the major role in the determination of retail electricity prices?

Mr Gray: The situation with the TFT at the moment is that we are in the middle of a two-year period of operation of the commissioner’s mandate in this area. We set prices a year ago for a two-year period with provision for review halfway through the period. We are in the process of doing that review now. We will announce some time around the middle of June the prices that will rule for the coming financial year as part of that two-year arrangement. Having announced those prices, we will then be monitoring the performance of the industry against that price guideline to make sure that things are operating properly and as they should be.

MR HARGREAVES: That explains it very much. Thank you, Mr Gray. The flow-on question that I have from that is: am I also right in assuming that your commission sets these prices at arm’s length from government?

Mr Gray: Yes.

MR HARGREAVES: The actual mechanism: do you recommend to the minister who sets the prices according to legislation or do you have legislative authority to actually set them yourself?

Mr Gray: We set an average tariff and then an average price increase. There are a variety of separate tariffs which ActewAGL maintain for a range of different sorts of customers. They then come back to us with a proposed set of detailed tariffs. We check to make sure that those detailed tariffs give rise to the average price adjustment

that we have mandated and then we sign off on the schedules and they become authoritative for the financial year.

MR HARGREAVES: They become authoritative at that point and then you would announce them through whatever media opportunities you can. Okay. So if people wanted an explanation as to why electricity charges rose or what influences there were, such as paying for new infrastructure or something like that or whatever—

Mr Gray: Yes.

MR HARGREAVES: they would address their questions to your commission, yes?

Mr Gray: Yes.

MR HARGREAVES: Beautiful. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne and then Mr Rattenbury.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Gray, has the ICRC had any role in advising the government on the proposed changes to the change of use charge tax in relation to units and the like and do you agree with the government's assessment that developers will absorb the costs of the change of use tax?

Mr Gray: I am not aware that the commissioner has given any advice in that area.

MRS DUNNE: So the commissioner's advice was not sought on the implications of the change in this tax?

Mr Gray: No.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: One of the areas the commission does have responsibility for is to make a recommendation to the minister for energy about the annual rate for the feed-in tariff. Are you required to make a recommendation every 12 months or is it only at the request of the minister?

Mr Gray: On the tariff itself, the legislation requires the minister to seek our advice and he makes that annual determination.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. And do you use the same model each time you calculate what the tariff should be or are you updating it?

Mr Gray: We take account of any changes in circumstances that have occurred since the last time we gave advice, obviously.

MR RATTENBURY: And did the minister ask you this year to model a tariff rate for medium-scale generators when the legislation was amended earlier this year?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

Mr Gray: Yes.

Mr Corbell: Yes, I did.

MR RATTENBURY: Can you tell us a bit about how you went about that modelling? The minister has left the tariff rate for medium-scale generation at 75 per cent of the premium rate, which was the default position in the legislation. I am interested in how that compared to what the modelling showed.

Mr Gray: What we attempt to do is establish the extent of the incentive that is provided to those who might install the PV arrays in question by looking at the rate of return of the project. In our advice to the minister, we suggest a tariff that puts that rate of return at around the long bond rate level.

MR RATTENBURY: Did you make a specific recommendation on what the tariff should be for medium-scale generators, and was that different from what might be called the microgenerators?

Mr Gray: There are serious difficulties in making recommendations about medium-scale generators, because the nature of their costs is quite varied and is in some cases significantly different from the cost for microgenerators.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes.

Mr Gray: There is a large degree of judgement involved in reaching a conclusion on that complexity of matters. We put some advice to the minister and he made a decision.

MR RATTENBURY: What was the nature of your advice to the minister?

Mr Gray: The nature of the advice to the minister was that the 75 per cent should become 100 per cent.

MR RATTENBURY: I see.

Mr Corbell: The ICRC recommended that the price for medium generators should be the same as the price they recommended for microgenerators. I did not agree with that advice.

MR RATTENBURY: Why did you recommend that it should be the same as for microgenerators?

Mr Gray: Because the commission felt that there were no strong arguments for there being a differentiation between micro and medium generators in this regard. As far as we could see, there was no economic rationale for that differentiation.

MR RATTENBURY: I note also that the commission this year recommended to the minister that the price for microgenerators be reduced.

Mr Gray: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, why did you not follow the advice from the ICRC on both of those matters?

Mr Corbell: I had regard to a number of factors, Mr Rattenbury. The first was that I was very aware of my commitment last year that the price for microgenerators would remain unchanged for a two-year period. When I made that commitment last year, it was based on the advice of the ICRC at that time. The ICRC recommended to me last year what the price should be for microgenerators; they also recommended to me that the price should remain the same for a two-year period. So that is what I said at the time, and I felt it was important that I was consistent in relation to that matter. The other factor that I took into account was that, in my view, the ICRC took a fairly optimistic view of the ongoing strength of the Australian dollar in terms of the exchange rate and therefore the relative costs of purchasing solar equipment—panels and so on. I was less convinced that that would be the case throughout the period of the coming financial year. Those two factors together led me to determine that the price for the microgenerator category should remain unchanged.

MR RATTENBURY: With regard to the medium-scale generators, the ICRC have made a recommendation of a 100 per cent tariff. You have declined to follow that advice. What impact do you think that will have on medium-scale installation?

Mr Corbell: There are two things at play here. The first is that the ICRC recommended a reduction in the microgenerator category and then said that the medium generator category should be the same price as the reduced microgenerator price. Because I took the decision that the microgenerator category would stay at the same rate as it had been for the previous 12 months, there was then the question of the medium generator category. I took a view based on the advice the government had been receiving from potential investors in the medium generator category about what they were looking at in terms of a price range. I took those issues into account as well as the advice of the ICRC in determining what the percentage rate should be for the medium generator category.

MR RATTENBURY: The ICRC recommended price, if I recall correctly, was 39½c per kilowatt hour. Is that correct?

Mr Corbell: It is around that figure; I cannot remember exactly.

MR RATTENBURY: The recommended price of both medium and micro-scale generation—you have left the medium price at 45.7.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: And the medium price has been set then at 75 per cent of that, which is going to be about 34c. So it is 5c a kilowatt hour below what the ICRC recommended.

Mr Corbell: That is right.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

Mr Corbell: That is based on advice we have been receiving from a range of sources as to what price range investors were looking for to install medium, which is between 34c and 38c a kilowatt hour. I must say that I was surprised when I received the ICRC's advice in relation to the medium category. Based on what my department had been hearing, we felt that was on the high side.

THE CHAIR: We might finish with the ICRC there. Any other questions you have, members, you might like to put on notice. Thank you, Mr Gray, for attending this morning.

Members, there is a lot to get through this morning. I would like to try and do ESA and Policing by the tea break. Then, after the tea break, if we could do corrections and courts, that seems to be a fair division. We might start with Emergency Services. Minister, in regard to the rest of your portfolio, I do understand the ICRC issue. Do you want to make a statement in regard to bits of the inquiry this morning that fall under—

Mr Corbell: No. Perhaps for the record, I should say that I do not intend to make any opening statements in any of these areas but I am very happy to try and answer the questions of you and the committee.

THE CHAIR: Fantastic; thank you, minister. The new headquarters at Fairbairn were flooded on 3 December. Have all the functions of the headquarters returned to Fairbairn?

Mr Corbell: Not at this time. The ESA comm cen is still operating from its previous accommodation in Curtin, but all other functions, I am advised, have returned to Fairbairn.

THE CHAIR: When do you expect the communications facilities to return?

Mr Corbell: I expect that to occur in the coming months. The damage caused by the flooding at Fairbairn was extensive. As a result of that, there has had to be extensive replacement of the underfloor cabling in the comm cen. There has had to be extensive replacement of walls, floors and carpets. There has had to be extensive reworking of the computer servers that support the comm cen function at Fairbairn. The ESA commissioner is in the process of filing his plans to prepare for a transition from Curtin back to Fairbairn later this year.

THE CHAIR: Was the government given any advice before the selection of the site at Fairbairn that it was in fact on a flood plain?

Mr Corbell: I am not aware whether we were or not, Mr Smyth. I am happy to check that, but it is probably worth making the point that flood plain considerations are only a consideration when it comes to an inundation event—that is, an event associated with a rising river or creek. That is not what occurred at Fairbairn. What occurred at Fairbairn on 2 December was a very intense storm event where there was localised flooding as a result of water flowing off the golf course adjacent to the Fairbairn ESA

building which resulted in an inundation of part of the ground floor of that building. It was not a result of a rising river course; it was a result of localised flooding from a storm event.

THE CHAIR: Localised flooding is normally from a storm event. Are any of the staff who worked on the project aware of advice given that potentially the new headquarters would be on a flood plain?

Mr Corbell: As I say, I am happy to take the question on notice, but I again make the point that the flood plain in question is, of course, the flood plain associated with the creek that runs down towards Lake Burley Griffin. I think it is Woolshed Creek. That creek is some distance—indeed, the Molonglo River itself. The flooding that occurred at the ESA was not from the Molonglo River.

THE CHAIR: We might have more on that later. Minister, in regard to the Bushfire Council, I saw that there was an advertisement in the *Canberra Times* on 30 April and on other occasions advertising for expressions of interest in positions on the council, including that of the chair and the deputy chair. Were the current chair and deputy made aware of this advertisement prior to it being published?

Mr Corbell: Yes. They were aware that their reappointments were only for a limited period of time and that the government would be re-advertising following that.

THE CHAIR: When were they made aware?

Mr Corbell: When they were reappointed they were made aware of the nature of the period of their appointment.

THE CHAIR: So in the lead-up to the next phase they were not informed that their positions were about to come to an end?

Mr Corbell: They would have known when their positions came to an end when they were reappointed.

THE CHAIR: So they were not told before the *Canberra Times* ads were placed on that Saturday?

Mr Corbell: They were aware that it was the government's intention to—let me put it this way: they were aware that it was my intention to only reappoint them for a limited period of time. I had the option of appointing them for a longer period of time; I advised them that I did not intend to do so. The reason for that is that I wanted to start renewing the membership of the Bushfire Council because it had been in its existing membership configuration for an extended period of time. As a result, I took the view—and I advised both the chair and the deputy chair—that they would only be reappointed for a period of one year and that following that period of reappointment the government would be advertising to look at refreshing the membership of the Bushfire Council.

THE CHAIR: But in terms of—

Mr Corbell: So they were advised when I reappointed them, which was last year.

THE CHAIR: But in terms of courtesy, would it not have been courteous to at least make a phone call to say, “Be aware that there is an ad this weekend for new positions on the council”? I have had complaints that members of the council were not aware that those ads were going in at all.

Mr Corbell: As members of council would be aware, their appointment is for a period of time and the government has a policy of advertising for expressions of interest for people once periods of appointment come to an end.

THE CHAIR: But would it not have been courteous to say, “The ads are going in this weekend”?

Mr Corbell: I think we have acted in an entirely courteous and appropriate manner.

THE CHAIR: Minister, could you outline what the role of the council is with respect to bushfire operational plans?

Mr Corbell: If I recall correctly, the Bushfire Council does not have any statutory or formal role in relation to bushfire operational plans, but it is available to give advice. As I am aware, the RFS does seek the advice of the Bushfire Council on a range of bushfire operational plan issues from time to time.

THE CHAIR: So there is not a formal role to endorse the bushfire operational plans?

Mr Corbell: No; that is the role of the RFS chief officer.

THE CHAIR: There seems to be some confusion in the advice being given to the council. They are hearing from within ESA that they do have a role, and yet from TAMS they are being told that they do not. What is the formal legislative requirement?

Mr Corbell: I would have to reference the act. Perhaps Mr Crossweller can help me here.

Mr Crossweller: Thanks, minister. My understanding, minister, is that the bushfire operations plan ultimately is signed off by the commissioner of the ESA after advice from the Bushfire Council and the Chief Officer of the Rural Fire Service. An amended bushfire operations plan has been put forward to council by TAMS as a result of the weather and the extensive grass growth of the summer, and that plan is currently being considered by the ESA and will be hopefully endorsed within the next week or so with any comments or amendments back to the proponent.

THE CHAIR: I am told that at meetings of the council the RFS advised that it was simply a rumour that the Bushfire Council is no longer required to approve the bushfire operational plans prior to those going up to the commissioner, but the advice that others are getting is that they do not have a formal role at all. Do they have a formal role in approving the bushfire operational plans?

Mr Crossweller: I think in supporting the minister, I have to check the act specifically, Mr Smyth, but, suffice to say that, as the commissioner is required to consult with the Bushfire Council on bushfire matters, it would seem to me that it would be a logical extension that the operations plan would go to the council for advice prior to the commissioner signing off. So if the commissioner is to make any determinations in relation to bushfire matters, he must, if at all practicable, consult with the Bushfire Council prior to making those decisions.

THE CHAIR: All right. Well, if you are going to check, minister, we will wait for that.

Mr Corbell: Happy to clarify the process, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Hunter?

MS HUNTER: Yes. I note that there are a number of capital rollovers. There are about 10 or so separate capital projects in the ESA where funds have been rolled over. I am wondering if we can get a bit of an update on why these rollovers have occurred. Some are around sheds. I think the Jerrabomberra shed is one of them and the Rivers shed. We have got the ESA new headquarters, there is ICT infrastructure, community fire units—there are quite a number of programs and rollovers. So could we get a little bit of a rundown on why there are so many rollovers?

THE CHAIR: And, of course, Tidbinbilla has been rolled over as well, minister. Is it four or five estimates that we have discussed the future of the Tidbinbilla shed?

Mr Corbell: Let me deal with each of them in turn, Mr Chairman. In relation to the Tidbinbilla RFS shed—your favourite—

THE CHAIR: One of many favourites, minister.

Mr Corbell: Indeed, Mr Smyth, indeed. The government provided funding of \$1.644 million in the 2010-11 budget for the construction of a new shed for the Tidbinbilla Rural Fire Service volunteer brigade. There have been delays in obtaining the necessary development approvals for this project. The project is located in the area of the Tidbinbilla nature reserve and the Birrigai education centre, if you are familiar with the general area.

There have been a number of environmental matters that have had to be addressed as a result of that location, and that has led to delays in getting the necessary approvals. We are hopeful that the approval process is reaching its conclusion. However, the department has had to roll over \$1.362 million into the coming financial year. The forecast completion date for that project is now November this year.

You have also asked about the shed projects. There have been delays in finalising the upgrade of shed facilities for the Jerrabomberra and the Rivers bushfire brigades. In relation to the Rivers bushfire brigade, that project is now complete and is being utilised by members of that brigade. Delays at that site were related in part to a failure on the part of the contractor to build the project to the specifications required and it required remedial work on the part of the contractor before the building could be

certified for use.

MS HUNTER: And what were some of those issues? Was there some problem with being able to open the doors?

Mr Corbell: My advice was that the slab was laid incorrectly by the contractor and had to be remediated after it had been laid. So it was at the wrong angle. Volunteers took acceptance of that building on 24 February this year.

In relation to Jerrabomberra, this project has experienced significant delays due to, again, poor performance on the part of the contractor. The contractor has not been delivering the project in accordance with specification. Further, there have been delays due to significant rainfall over the summer period. Stage 1 of that project is expected to be completed in May this year, and stage 2 is expected to commence in May this year.

THE CHAIR: With the Jerrabomberra shed, I am told that, when they back in the tankers, the shed is so narrow you can only open the doors on one side, and all the members have to exit through that side or actually have to get out of the cabins before they back the tankers in; is that correct?

Mr Corbell: I would ask Mr Hammond. He can address some of the detail.

Mr Hammond: Thank you. I would like to advise that I am pleased to say two things: firstly, that the La Nina weather pattern has ended today officially, and those in the construction industry will be very pleased with that. Also I am pleased to advise that stage 1 Jerrabomberra was completed on Friday and handed over to the volunteers. Also, the volunteers moved into the new area on the weekend, and stage 2 of Jerrabomberra commences today.

In regard to your question about the space inside the truck bay, my understanding in coming to this project fairly late is that there were a number of design bay management activities that happened throughout the course of the project, and there are minimal clearances on two of the bays for doors. In the other two bays in the total of the four bays, there is adequate clearance for door openings.

THE CHAIR: So is it correct that when you back a tanker in you can only open the doors on one side in those two bays?

Mr Hammond: It is correct that you can open the doors on both sides, but, depending on how much equipment you are wearing or the size of the person, yes, there are limits on those sides.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, just for clarity, I mean—

Mr Hammond: It is tight.

THE CHAIR: Well, tight? How was this allowed to happen and what remediation will be undertaken? The complaints I have had from the volunteers is it is more than tight. You can only open the doors on one side to get out. If you park the tanker

centrally in the bay, it is almost impossible to get out of the doors. So it necessitates moving it to one side away from the driver so that the driver can actually get the doors open and get out of the tanker; is that true?

Mr Hammond: That is a fair assumption. At this stage, I mean—

THE CHAIR: So is that a fair assumption or is it a fair statement?

Mr Hammond: It is a fair statement in that that is the current view, but I have not been out to the facility since the trucks have been moved in there to have a decent view of exactly how much clearance is on those sides of the truck bay.

THE CHAIR: So what remediation will be undertaken and at what cost?

Mr Hammond: It would be impossible to move the walls without a significant cost.

THE CHAIR: So we have built an emergency services facility where crew cannot get into both sides of the truck at the same time?

Mr Hammond: In two of the bays there is limited access on either side—sorry, on the right-hand side of the truck bay, say, 1 and then with truck bay 4, the left-hand side, there is limited opportunity to get into the truck, that is correct. The other two bays, there is ample clearance to get in and out of the truck with all your equipment.

THE CHAIR: Minister, what action will you undertake to rectify this situation?

Mr Corbell: Well, I will take advice from my department in relation to the matter. As Mr Hammond says, there are limits on what can be done, but I am very happy to take advice on that.

THE CHAIR: But surely this is just another capital work that the government has not delivered properly. I mean, these were planned for a long time. These are emergency response venues. Surely we should be able to get the width of a truck bay right.

Mr Corbell: Well, the project meets its overall function, which is to provide additional vehicle accommodation. Now—

THE CHAIR: Surely its function is to facilitate the rapid response of emergency vehicles.

MR HARGREAVES: Let him answer please, Mr Chair.

Mr Corbell: Well, as you and I know, Mr Smyth—

MR SMYTH: Yes, indeed.

Mr Corbell: vehicles, when they are stood up, do not always respond from inside a shed. Frequently they are parked on a vehicle apron outside the shed, which obviously allows plenty of capacity for crew members to get in and out of the vehicle. That is a common and frequent occurrence at any ESA facility. So it is not as though vehicles

have to be inside the shed for the purpose of response.

That said, it is, in my view, quite undesirable for this situation to have occurred. I am disappointed that those who have had charge of this project in the planning stages took this decision. It is not a decision that I was aware of but it is, nevertheless, one which disappoints me greatly, because these things simply should not happen. To the extent that it can be mediated, I am prepared to look at that matter. But, as Mr Hammond says, there are limits on what can be done, given the significant costs involved in relocating walls and so on.

That said, this upgrade still provides the Jerrabomberra brigade with a significant enhancement compared to its previous facilities, and I think that was always the objective. I think to that extent we have met that objective. But I accept that this particular detail is less than satisfactory.

MS HUNTER: Minister, or someone—

THE CHAIR: Is it a new question?

MS HUNTER: Well, we are actually in the middle of my question. This is the first part. You had mentioned that you had had concerns about the contractors for Jerrabomberra and Rivers, I believe it was. Are they the same contractor?

Mr Corbell: Yes, they are.

MS HUNTER: And so what is happening there as far as—

Mr Corbell: We will not be using them again, Ms Hunter.

MS HUNTER: Okay, that is probably a reasonable outcome. You were going through the rollovers for me.

Mr Corbell: Yes, thank you, Ms Hunter. I think the other rollover that is mentioned is in relation to the ESA training facility. The ESA training facility at Hume has been delayed due to significant wet weather events. That significant amount of rain that occurred over the November-December period in particular has resulted in significant delays to this project. As a result there has been a rollover of \$350,000. Scheduled physical completion date is June this year, and I must say, I drove past there the other day, and it is well advanced. Financial completion is expected in 2011-12 following the receipt of the necessary invoicing.

It is worth mentioning that there are a number of facilities being constructed for the ESA at Hume. The first is the refurbishment of the Snowy Hydro helicopter base as well as the construction of the ESA training facility. The Snowy Hydro helicopter base with enhanced accommodation facilities for aero medical crew was formally handed over in March this year. The administration building at the ESA training facility, which I mentioned earlier, received certification in early April and staff moved in on 20 April this year. Training props and tower facilities, which are part of the training facilities there, are due for completion, as I mentioned, in June. Also the government has completed the new facilities for RFS helicopter operations, and those

hangars and accommodation and landing pads are now complete. Have they been handed over to RFS?

Mr Crossweller: They are handed over to the occupier.

Mr Corbell: And they have been handed over to the government.

THE CHAIR: Just on Hume, when the Woden Creek there flooded in December and January, did the new Hume facility flood?

Mr Corbell: No, it did not. At that point in time we were only at the footings stage. There was significant—

THE CHAIR: So the footings were never underwater?

Mr Corbell: Well, only from the rain, not from the creek flooding.

MS HUNTER: What about the ICT infrastructure? It was rolled over from 2009-10 to 2010-11. Has that been completed?

Mr Corbell: I will ask the commissioner to assist you with that, Ms Hunter.

Mr Crossweller: Thank you, Ms Hunter. There are a number of projects in that space. The asset management project was scheduled for completion in June 2010. However, it has been delayed as a result of a need to revise project scope based upon operational requirements. The project was stopped in order to rescope to make sure that we got the right value for money and that the asset management system that we were implementing was made relevant to the needs of the business.

The truck radio network P25 project is, in fact, progressing according to plan. It is expected for completion in October 2011. The roster system—the implementation part of this project—was delayed. That was largely because of the complexity in the transition of the communications centre from Curtin to Fairbairn. The same people were working on both projects. A number of these projects were affected by that implementation and transition. Because we took a communications centre from a hot site to a hot site we did not have the luxury of diverting it off to a third site whilst we built Fairbairn.

That is probably unprecedented. We did it seamlessly, but the complexity of doing that meant that we had to make some business decisions around some of the ICT projects. I guess I could go through each one but, in essence, the delay was the complexity about the technology around the 000. We understood its complexity to a point, but when we got into the space of transitioning we realised that we were dealing with something perhaps more complex than we had envisaged in the planning phase. A number of these projects have been pushed back, but they have all been subsequently restarted again and are continuing forward.

MS HUNTER: Is this going to be an issue again when you move everybody back to Fairbairn?

Mr Crossweller: I would not say no but, having said that, we learnt a lot from that transition. I think we will do it more efficiently this time. I think we will do it with greater known factors. At the end of the day, the 000 is our bread and butter and it is the most mission-critical system. I guess our intention is to continue these projects unabated. But if we need to again stall slightly—the transition period, I think, this time will be shorter than last time. I think the learning that we took from the first one will be brought into the planning phase for the second.

MS HUNTER: Do we have a date for when the work will be done to fix up the cabling issues and so forth and when the communications centre will be moving back? Have we got a date for that?

Mr Crossweller: There are two scheduled dates. The first service to retransition back into the room is the third week in July. The second service is the second week in August. Our confidence in those dates at the moment is around 65 to 70 per cent. The reason for that is that the insurance works and the repair work on the room are coming to a conclusion but there is a little bit of testing. As members would appreciate, when water inundates a room it often does not manifest for a few months. We are finding that little bits and pieces that did not manifest in the first few months are starting to show now. Our user acceptance testing and our testing for our infrastructure replacement are quite rigorous, so it may have an effect by a week or two on those dates.

MS HUNTER: You are confident that this will not happen again out at the airport?

Mr Crossweller: We have sought, through the government's insurers, to have a third-party hydraulic engineer engaged to assess the rectification works that were put in place by CAG. They had done extensive works out the back of the site and beyond the site. The problem appears to have stemmed way beyond the Fairbairn site where we are located down to the creek line. There was some substantial siltation and blockage of surface drainage which caused the water to bank up and then to spill over the bank behind our premises.

They have increased the underground pipes, for example, from 200 millimetres to 600 millimetres. They have put two points of discharge on the back of the building instead of one. CAG have come forward, at the request of the government and insurers, to make significant changes to the surface hydrology and subsurface hydrology around the building. We will rely on the third-party hydrologist's report before we physically move back, so we will need that report to satisfy ourselves that all that practically could be done has been done.

As the minister pointed out, it was a one-in-a-hundred-year flash flood event—not riverine flood event—and it was localised in that precinct. Like all these things, the design and the planning works to a point and then those things are tested in reality, and that rain event did test a whole range of systems. I think the key for us was that, despite all of that impact, we did not lose a 000 call. We did not lose capability and we were able to migrate back seamlessly and maintain service. That, I think, is a testament to the government's planning, its continuity and its foresight to be able to, on some level, make sure that if one of those unexpected events did happen, we had a capacity to continue, and that certainly came to fruition.

THE CHAIR: Moving on. Ms Le Couteur, then Mr Hargreaves.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a totally different question. There is very welcome money in the budget for more firefighters and ambulance people. Can you let us know how you are going to recruit all these people and train them, and then—a supplementary, I guess—retain them?

Mr Corbell: In relation to the Fire Brigade recruit colleges, the government is funding the ACT Fire Brigade to undertake additional Fire Brigade recruit colleges. These are colleges to replace an expected number of firefighters that reach retirement and take retirement packages over the next 12 to 18 months. It is very much continuity planning to make sure that we maintain establishment numbers within the Fire Brigade.

I can assure you, Ms Le Couteur, that positions in the ACT Fire Brigade are highly sought after. We get a very large number of applicants for the relatively small number of recruits that are selected. There are 32 positions, if I recall, in the next financial year—that is, two recruit schools. The ACT Fire Brigade have already advertised for and selected suitable candidates for the first of their recruit schools and they will undertake a similar process for the second of those schools or colleges.

In relation to the ACT Ambulance Service, there is no doubt that recruiting for ambulance officers is more difficult. It is a very competitive environment. Ambulance officers, at our level—and that is the issue in the ACT; they are trained to intensive care paramedic standard—can be very attractive employees, particularly in the private sector, mining operations and overseas aid operations where they can receive very significant pay packages.

Nevertheless, the recent work value case for the ACT Ambulance Service has seen a significant increase in rates of pay for intensive care paramedics—increases of up to 25 per cent in their base rates of pay as a result of the work value case that has been settled between ourselves and officers through Fair Work Australia in the last 12 months. That work value case will assist in making rates of pay competitive for intensive care paramedics. The staff are both intensive care paramedics and a number of other personnel. I might ask David Foot, who is the Chief Officer of Ambulance, to give you a bit more detail on this process, the types of employees and how they will be sourced.

Mr Foot: Thank you. We have done a fair bit of forward planning for the upcoming recruitment. It is a competitive market. We actually undertook a pre-selection exercise prior to the budget announcement, where we will have a student group commencing on 30 May this year. There are 15 students in that group. We have also recruited two additional students with bridging course qualifications into the ACT.

We are finalising documentation this week for a graduate intake. These are people that have either finished their bachelor degree in paramedical science with the universities or are in their last semester. The plan at this stage is to run through the recruitment process with those people that are in the last semester of their bachelor studies of paramedical science. We will then offer them placement with the service

and they then undertake the three-year training program to qualify at ICP. We also have ongoing lateral recruitment as well where we recruit people holding current intensive care qualifications from other states and territories of Australia to the ACT.

THE CHAIR: The retention rate for the Ambulance Service is currently what for this financial year?

Mr Foot: I cannot tell you for this financial year. I know that we have actually reduced our attrition rate. I believe our attrition rate in 2007-08 was about 10.8 per cent. In 2008-09 we had reduced that to 7.2. But I would have to take the other one on notice for this financial year.

THE CHAIR: Yes, if you can get that for me.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you do that for firefighters?

Mr Foot: I am sorry?

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you know the retention rate for firefighters?

MR HARGREAVES: He is the ambulance—

MS LE COUTEUR: Sorry, yes.

THE CHAIR: To the minister.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, to the minister. Minister, do you know the retention rate for firefighters? You said it was much better than for ambulance people.

Mr Corbell: I am advised it is lower than ambulance, but I will take the question on notice.

Mr Barr: I understand your question was in relation to turnover rates for firefighters?

MS LE COUTEUR: Absolutely.

Mr Barr: Historically we have around a three per cent turnover rate, which we consider to be quite good.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Barr: There was a decrease in that rate as a result of the global financial crisis. We were actually down to about one to two per cent for a couple of years. We are expecting that in the next few years some of those people who chose to stay beyond their normal retirement date will leave the system, so we expect to be up to around three, potentially four, per cent a year. The recruitment processes that the government has funded this year are part of our preparation for that, to ensure we maintain capability.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are we having a significantly older fire service? You said that

people were not retiring when you would have expected them to. Has this got any implications for the fire service?

Mr Corbell: I think they are retiring when we expect them to retire. It is just that a large number are retiring over a relatively short period of time—that is, there is a particular age cohort that is reaching retirement age and it is expected that a significant number of experienced officers will retire.

MS HUNTER: In the next financial year?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS HUNTER: So what is being done to ensure—

Mr Corbell: That is why we are funding the additional recruit colleges.

MS LE COUTEUR: So it is going to go to more than three or four per cent. That does not seem hugely significant. Most places would be very pleased to have only a three or four per cent turnover rate.

Mr Barr: As I say, we expect it to be between three and four per cent for the next year or two, which is up from around two per cent for the last couple of years.

MS HUNTER: Is it more an issue that you have a lot of experienced officers going at one time? Does that impact on how you might support, train, supervise, staff?

Mr Barr: We believe we have already addressed that in the way we train our people. Our recruits undertake a comprehensive 16-week training program that results in them being more highly trained than most of their colleagues in other jurisdictions. The training we give them gives them the best possible opportunity to perform at the required level as they come into our organisation.

THE CHAIR: All right. Mr Hargreaves?

MR HARGREAVES: Thanks very much, Mr Chairman. I just want to go a little bit more down that ambulance bit. If Mr Foot would like to join us, he will probably be able to do these—or Mr Crosweller or the minister. I have noticed that in budget paper 4, on page 249 you talk about strengthening the ambulance capability. We just talked about recruiting and all of that, but you talk about the provision of additional front-line ambulance officers and enhancements to the ambulance support structure. I note from page 267 that it would appear that that additional support runs out at nearly \$4.7 million, which I am assuming, by looking at its progression through the outyears, is an increase to the base of the Ambulance Service of nearly \$5 million a year going forward. You talk about sustainable front-line resourcing, and there are two elements of that on page 249—strengthening the capability, which is additional people, and then the enhancements to the support structure. Could you tell us about how many you expect to increase the numbers by and what you mean by enhancements to the support structure.

Mr Corbell: Thanks, Mr Hargreaves. It is worth making the observation that since

2007 the government has provided an additional \$20 million in recurrent and capital funding to recruit 44 additional staff to the ACT Ambulance Service for front-line operations, communications, clinical services, non-urgent patient transport, specialist flight operations and general management funding. That funding allowed the ACT Ambulance Service to introduce two additional intensive care ambulance crews across periods of peak demand. That is what we call peak crewing, where we put more ambulances on the road during the busy times of the day. That has been in place since March 2009. What the government is funding in this budget is an additional two intensive care 24/7—that is correct, isn't it?

Mr Foot: That is correct.

Mr Corbell: Two additional 24/7 ambulance vehicles and crews. That will lift our total number of 24/7 ambulance crews to—

Mr Foot: Nine plus your demand, so 11.

Mr Corbell: Yes, so from seven to nine cars on the road 24/7 and then two additional ambulance cars during periods of peak demand. So it brings the total number of ambulances on the road to 11 to service the city. This is a very important estimate. We know that we are seeing demand in ambulance services grow in the order of about 10 per cent a year—eight to 10 per cent a year. So growth in demand for calls to the Ambulance Service is a significant pressure for the ACT Ambulance Service.

This funding is the first step in the government's response to the findings of the Auditor-General and also the work done by Mr Grant Lennox in identifying what additional capability our ambulance service needs to be able to meet that demand and provide adequate response to the Canberra community.

The positions that are going to be filled will include 20 student paramedics, starting in July this year, training in July this year; 10 intensive care paramedics starting in November this year; and six headquarters staff. Those headquarters staff are particularly important. We need to continue to strengthen our clinical governance and training arrangements, because obviously ICP personnel need ongoing training and we need appropriate monitoring regimes to make sure the quality of clinical care is being maintained.

It is also about supporting the operations of the comm cen. One of the key recommendations of the Lennox review was to look at how we can strengthen our triage arrangements when 000 calls come in so that they are effectively and carefully triaged so that ambulances are only sent at the highest priority when they need to be sent. More effective triage can provide more effective utilisation of the ambulance resource.

That is the funding that is moving into place. This is a very important initiative and one that is going to give our Ambulance Service greater capacity for the coming years.

MR HARGREAVES: Thanks for that; those numbers are most helpful. Also, you talk in the budget papers about station upgrades and the relocation strategy. There has been talk about station relocation and the age of the infrastructure of stations for some

years. I am encouraged to see that something is actually happening around that now. Perhaps I could get an idea of what is actually going on, and what the thinking behind it is and how it is going to be delivered.

Mr Corbell: As members will be aware, the ESA is undertaking a series of studies to determine the best possible configuration for station facilities for the future growth of Canberra, reflecting growth in the total size of the urban area, north Gungahlin, Molonglo valley and west Belconnen and changes in patterns of demand within the city. That work was done by two consultancies over an 18-month to two-year period. Those consultancies have now given us a final considered view of what needs to be done to provide for the relocation or the upgrade of fire and ambulance facilities across the city to make sure we maintain standards of coverage and in some instances further improve standards of coverage for both the ambulance and fire service.

What the government has done is provide just under \$5 million for stage 1 of the station upgrade and relocation implementation plan. This will fund a project team that will do a number of things. First of all, they will go and scope and do appropriate due diligence on those sites which are determined to be included in phase 1 for station relocation. They will also do work on identifying and finalising issues around upgrades to existing stations where that needs to occur. They will also facilitate a consultation framework to go out and explain to the community what these studies have concluded and what they potentially mean, and seek community feedback on those issues to inform the government's considerations.

Finally, this project team has money available to fund the design of new facilities once due diligence and consultation have occurred. Basically, what we want to try and do is establish a pattern book of station facilities that can be replicated at multiple sites. We will be funding these designs up front at this stage of the project—the physical design of facilities—with the expectation that, with relatively minor or minimal change, those station designs can be replicated at a variety of sites across the territory. Rather than having to do one-off bespoke designs for each and every site, we will do a pattern design, if you like.

That is the funding that is being made available in this stage of the project. We need to start doing this now. Station relocation and upgrade are probably a five to 10-year project—to get stations where we need them to meet the growth of the city. We need to start that work now; that is why we are financing this first stage.

MR HARGREAVES: In relation to those upgrades, I understand that some of them will just require a physical upgrade, which is fine, because of the centrality of their location. You do talk about relocating some if they are on the wrong spot. That is fine too. With respect to new town developments like Molonglo, am I correct in assuming that there is conversation between ESA and the planning people about the right place to put them and about road access around the suburbs to allow ambulances to go in and out? I am reminded of the issues around the Gleneagles estate at Kambah, which is dreadful if you ever want to put a fire truck or an ambulance down those streets. Presumably those lessons are learnt. Is there conversation between ESA and the planning people?

Mr Corbell: Yes. There is detailed dialogue now with planning authorities in relation

to estate standards for the purpose of fire, ambulance and other emergency vehicle access. These are always complex matters to work through, but there is a good dialogue between our emergency services and our planning authorities in relation to these matters.

THE CHAIR: Mr Rattenbury; then we will draw this session to a close.

MR RATTENBURY: I just want to ask for a quick clarification back on the firefighter numbers. The evidence, as I understood it, was that the turnover for firefighters is not deviating very far from the long-term average of three per cent or so and yet the government has announced a significant boost to firefighter recruitment. Which is it?

Mr Corbell: What I told you is correct, Mr Rattenbury. What happens at the moment with an ageing workforce is that we rely too much on overtime. We have officers working multiple shifts and working high levels of overtime, which is expensive. What we need to do is make sure that our establishment numbers are at an appropriate, healthy level to reduce the reliance on overtime.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Just before we close, I have a question for the Ambulance Service. The recording of response times—how is that calculated?

Mr Crossweller: First keystroke from the 000 call.

THE CHAIR: First keystroke. The response times of the vehicles—do we use the automatic vehicle location system to determine how long they have taken and what speeds they travel at?

Mr Crossweller: All information in relation to the vehicles from the first keystroke from the 000 call is captured in the CAD system. The CAD system can then—we can pull forward reports on average road speed, shortest time, longest time and pretty much any data that relates to the response from the first keystroke to the arrival of the appliance on scene.

THE CHAIR: Do we record when the vehicle actually leaves the ambulance station?

Mr Crossweller: Yes, we do.

THE CHAIR: Is that cross-referenced with the automatic vehicle location system?

Mr Crossweller: It is the automatic vehicle location system that makes that determination through the mobile data terminal. When the call comes through to the ambulance, they receive the call and they activate the mobile data terminal. That acknowledges that they have received the call, and then they proceed accordingly.

THE CHAIR: Minister, we might move on to Policing. I am sure members will have other questions they can place on notice for ESA. Thanks for your attendance today.

Mr Crossweller: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, while we await the arrival of the AFP officers, could you please detail the implementation process for random roadside drug testing? Have we actually administered any tests?

Mr Corbell: Yes, ACT Policing have commenced the administration of random roadside drug testing in the ACT. These are largely operational matters and I defer to ACT Policing in relation to the detail behind that. But I can advise the committee that testing has commenced in the ACT and motorists have been tested.

THE CHAIR: I think he just threw to you, Chief Police Officer.

Mr Corbell: Can you provide any further details?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I can confirm that ACT police have commenced random roadside drug testing as of Monday, 16 May. Last week we conducted six tests on motorists. All of those were negative. The reason for the limited rollout at this stage is that we want to make sure we get the operating processes and practices and methodologies right before we go to greater numbers of testing.

THE CHAIR: Okay. What is the target number of testing in the coming year?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Our aspirational objective is to reach somewhere around 2,500 to 3,000 tests per year, which is about 60 a week.

THE CHAIR: What statistics from those tests will be incorporated in the criminal justice statistics profile that is issued to the Assembly?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I cannot answer that. We will certainly track the number of tests that we do and we will report that regularly to the minister.

THE CHAIR: Ms Hunter?

MS HUNTER: I note that the current five-year police agreement or arrangement concludes and a new one will be signed for the next five years. I also note that on page 260 of budget paper 4 there is the expenditure or the cost for ACT Policing. But we do not get accountability indicators and that information comes out in the annual report. So this is probably more a question for you, minister. Is this something that the government could look at? I understand that it is a different arrangement from other output classes but we sort of get that information after estimates, after the budget. I wonder whether there was ever any consideration about accountability indicators being featured in the budget papers.

Mr Corbell: I guess it is a bit of a sequence issue, Ms Hunter. This material is made available for Assembly scrutiny and traditionally it has been done through the annual reports process. You receive the annual report. You see performance against the annual report and you can ask questions and hold me and the ACT Policing officers accountable for that. I think it just reflects the way it operates in that this is a contract.

It is not a direct output by the government. It is a contractual arrangement and it just reflects the different nature of how that contractual arrangement operates. But it is no less accountable. It is just done in a different way.

MS HUNTER: Yes, it is just sometimes useful to have them during this time of the year.

Mr Corbell: Yes, we are very happy—the yearly purchase agreement is available to members. If you wanted to ask questions about the purchase agreement in this context, we would be very happy for you to do so.

MS HUNTER: We will. A final one on that, and that was the time frame for the new arrangement being signed; when are we likely to see it?

Mr Corbell: The arrangement is being finalised at the moment between the two governments, the commonwealth and the ACT. I and the commonwealth minister will finalise that shortly and then we would arrange to sign the new arrangement. So I would anticipate in the next couple of months.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: I will continue on the financial theme. The payment for the police contract increases by \$1.5 million from last year. Is this due to pay rises for the AFP or is it for more police officers or for something else?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I can answer that question. The increases are due to appropriations for the random roadside drug testing capability. That is three additional FTE plus supply costs. There is also an appropriation for the two unsworn administrative assistants to deal with some security licensing issues and there are some carryovers from previous years in terms of programs like the RAPID in-car computing programs.

MS LE COUTEUR: So does that mean that there is no allowance for any pay increases and if some did happen over five years, the amount would go up?

Mr Corbell: The government is aware that a new pay deal is being negotiated between the AFP through its national operations and that is how it is dealt with in relation to ACT Policing. It is a whole-of-AFP negotiation that is done between the commissioner, the commonwealth minister where appropriate, and the AFPA—the police association. We are aware that that could result in a pay increase which will have an impact on our contract costs. The government makes appropriate provision for that in the budget but obviously we do not foreshadow that specifically in the appropriation for ACT Policing. The reason for that is that you do not send that signal ahead of the completion of a pay negotiation.

MS LE COUTEUR: So it is not likely that we will have to increase the appropriation, that this is—

Mr Corbell: Well—

MS LE COUTEUR: Expected events have been factored in?

Mr Corbell: Payments to ACT Policing, if there is any pay increase, will have to increase. But the government has made provision for that in the whole-of-government budgeting arrangement.

MR RATTENBURY: Where exactly is that reflected?

Mr Corbell: These things tend to be reflected in a way that is fairly—

MS LE COUTEUR: Obscure.

Mr Corbell: discreet. For the reason I was mentioning earlier, Mr Rattenbury, you do not send the signal about what quantum you are prepared to put on the table, recognising that we are not the party that is putting the quantum on the table but has to simply be prepared to deal with the cost implications of whatever is ultimately agreed. The simple answer is that your question is probably best directed to the Treasurer. It is not allocated within the Justice and Community Safety Directorate budget. It is allocated at a whole-of-government level. Provision is made at a whole-of-government level.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hargreaves and then Mr Hanson.

MR HARGREAVES: I am fine, thanks very much, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: I am particularly interested in the measures that have been put in place to stem the levels of violence we are seeing in Civic on a Friday and Saturday night and, in particular, the 10 police that were allocated to licensing inspections—whether that has proven effective, whether it is actually having the results that we expect and whether it is an effective use of resources.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Thank you, Mr Hanson. The alcohol crime targeting team has been operational since 1 December—so in effect it has been in operation for just under six months. Our key planks, if you like, of that capability are engagement, education and enforcement. The preliminary phases of that team were focused very much on the engagement and education components—dealing with and meeting with licensees and licensee staff and getting them to understand what their obligations and responsibilities were under the new liquor laws. We got an extraordinarily good take-up and good levels of collegiality with the licensing industry.

I can report that in the four-month period since 1 December there has been a 26 per cent decrease in alcohol-related offences predominantly in the Civic area. Whilst that is an early indication, and I would not call it a trend at this stage, it is certainly a very positive indication that the work that we are doing with licensees, and enforcement more broadly, is actually having a positive impact.

Mr Corbell: There has also been a significant decrease in the number of intoxicated

persons being lodged in protective custody. During the same period that the Chief Police Officer refers to there has been a 35 per cent decrease in the number of intoxicated persons lodged in protective custody. For the period 1 December to the end of February this year, 259 people were lodged in protective custody for being intoxicated—400 in the same period in the previous year. As the CPO says, this is not yet a trend, but it is nevertheless very encouraging to see a reduction in the total number of alcohol-related matters, particularly in the city area.

THE CHAIR: All right. Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. I just wanted to come back to the police agreements. Separate from the five-year agreements are the yearly police agreements, where the amount paid to police is agreed and the services provided set. Last year the agreement was not signed until October 2010. There was quite a significant lag between the start of the financial year and the agreement being signed. What practically happens during that period where there is no agreement in place? Does the previous one simply carry over?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Is the time frame something that you are working to tighten up as part of the new five-year arrangement?

Mr Corbell: Yes, it is. It is something I am keen to see resolved more promptly. There can be a range of factors that lead to some delay in finalising the purchase agreement. They can relate to discussions between the government and ACT Policing about the nature of some of the measures and how they can be appropriately recorded and the data captured. That usually is a factor in seeing some lag in the time the purchase agreement can be finalised. But, nonetheless, I am pleased to advise you, Mr Rattenbury, that the prospective agreement for 2011-12 is in its final stages of completion. We are working with a view to having that agreement signed by 30 June.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. I wanted to follow up on some evidence given by the Director of Public Prosecutions to this committee on Friday. On page 261 of the budget papers against one of the performance indicators the problem was raised with court timetables being met with prosecution cases. One of the factors identified by the DPP was the delivery of briefs from the AFP. Whilst he did not seek to particularly sheet blame—and I am not suggesting that—I am just interested to explore why that is a problem and what is being done to address it.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. We have a key performance indicator in relation to the service of briefs of evidence. That KPI says that we need to deliver our briefs within the designated time period 75 per cent of the time. Our current performance against that KPI sits at slightly above 80 per cent. So we are well in advance of that particular KPI.

There have been some delays caused where the Director of Public Prosecutions has asked for further information or more detail to be added to the briefs. So I guess we are talking about quality of briefs now. This was an issue that was a problem for us about 12 months ago. We have worked very collaboratively with the DPP over the last

12 months to improve the relationship. I can report in no uncertain terms that our relationship with the DPP is very solid.

We are having the DPP involved in giving training to our officers, in terms of briefs, and we have also put mechanisms in place in our police stations where experienced sergeants actually quality control and vet the brief before they go through to the DPP. I think you will find that performance against time for briefs that were held against some of the KPIs will continue to be maintained and the quality of briefs will also continue to improve over the next while.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. The last thing I want to raise, just quickly, is this: during the previous 12 months there has been a review of taser use by ACT Policing. Can you give us an update on where that is up to and whether the report has been finalised?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: The review was finalised early this year. The review report made a number of recommendations which were considered by the AFP's operational safety committee. I took those endorsed recommendations to the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police. I had a conversation with him about those. We embarked on a process of consultation before we acted on that advice and those recommendations. That process of consultation is almost complete. We expect it to be finalised in the next two weeks. Once that is complete we will finalise our decision in relation to the recommendations.

MR RATTENBURY: And what are the next steps after that?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: That will depend a bit on the final decision we make. We have a plan in place. I do not want to pre-empt the outcome of the consultation phase and, therefore, I cannot give you a definitive answer to that at this point.

MR RATTENBURY: Will there be a discussion with the ACT minister?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: There have been a number of discussions with the ACT minister, and that is still part of the consultation phase.

Mr Corbell: A large part of the consultation process that the CPO is referring to is consultation with me, as the ACT minister, in relation to the recommendations of the review.

MR RATTENBURY: If the review does recommend a more substantial role there, what budget implications will that have for the ACT, minister?

Mr Corbell: There is no additional appropriation in relation to that. It will be met within the normal operational budget of ACT Policing.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: That is right. None of the models that we have looked at have any additional appropriation implications.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson and then Ms Hunter, and I will finish.

MR HANSON: Thanks. The authorised FTE—could you explain what that is in terms of the agreement and how we are tracking against that? Are we over or under, and are there any particular ranks where we are over or under?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: The current purchase agreement allows for an establishment of 926 full-time equivalent. We have traditionally run at a higher than established FTE as a result of a number of things. One is that we use a proportion of the supplier component of the budget to buy enabling services from AFP national, mainly forensic officers. The other is that, because we run at a certain experience level we are able to afford more staff. Currently we are running at 1,010 FTE. That is composed of 758 full-time sworn equivalents and 252 unsworn. As to the establishment for 2011-12, we are looking at probably 931, roughly, subject to negotiation, but again we will be running it around the 1,000 to 1,005 mark in reality.

MR HANSON: That tells me what I want to know. I have got another question, if I may, on a different issue. The Belconnen police station and the delays that we have experienced there: can you give me an update?

Mr Corbell: The government has increased the project budget for the Belconnen police station to deal with a number of factors. These include an increase in tender prices for brickwork, block work, the security drywall construction and electronics packages. There have also been delays in the project due to inclement weather. Again, as Mr Hammond referred to earlier, the significant rainfall event over the summer period has impacted on all of our construction projects. The Belconnen police station is amongst those. The targeted completion date for this project is now 30 November this year.

MR HANSON: And what is the additional cost?

Mr Corbell: \$5.362 million.

MR HANSON: Additional?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Hunter.

MS HUNTER: I just had a final question and it was around money that has been allocated in this budget. It is around training front-line workers and police officers in the area of mental health. Has any training been undertaken in the last financial year? What do you expect to be doing—or how many officers, rather, do you expect to be training up—in this coming financial year?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Thanks for that question. It is an extraordinarily important issue for ACT Policing. We conducted some analysis last year and we found that a significant proportion of our front-line resources do get consumed through attendances to mental health issues.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, if I may interrupt? What proportion of your resources are devoted to mental health issues?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Let me give you an example. During the course of April last year we had 60 escorts of persons from front-line disturbances taken to the Canberra Hospital for assessment. That is just an example across the course of a month. I cannot give you anything more empirical than that at this point. As a result of that analysis we decided we needed to do a little bit more holistic work around how we approach the issue of mental health.

Over the last 12 months we embarked on a program where we have now got a fairly robust mental health framework in place that includes the embedding of mental health clinicians in our operations centre. It includes the purchase of a mental health training package that we recently purchased from New South Wales Police. That package will be delivered to all sworn operational front-line police in the ACT.

The purpose of that is to better triage on the front line when we have manifestations in mental health. So where we can we divert mental health consumers into the health sector as opposed to the justice sector. There are other components of that as well. There is a psychologist that we have close liaison with in mental health. We are increasing the amount of mental health training modules that we actually have in our recruit training curriculum.

MS HUNTER: I was just wondering, when you said that during April you had 60 escorted off to the Canberra Hospital, how you interact with the crisis assessment team. Is there an interaction there?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: The crisis assessment team is now part of the front-end triaging. Let me step back a moment. If we give our front-line officers the tools to appropriately identify and deal with issues of mental health, early identification then helps us to triage them better through association and liaison with the CAT and mental health more broadly. Having the clinicians embedded in our operations centre allows us access to mental health databases so we can tell whether a particular person is currently the subject of a case management or currently subject to a particular medication or mental health orders. That enables us at the front end to make decisions about how that person ought to be dealt with.

The 60 I spoke about were escorts to the Canberra Hospital, 10 of which were admitted—the other 50 were not admitted—and this is the impact on resources. Because any one of those escorts could result in two front-line officers being off the road for anything up to the entirety of the shift. That is unusual—normally it is a few hours—but we think we can manage that a lot better, with better outcomes for the consumer and better resourcing back in Policing by having a holistic framework around dealing with mental health issues.

MS HUNTER: The professionals are over at the city police station, aren't they? You have them on shift. Is that the only place?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: They are in our operations centre at the

Winchester Police Centre and they are embedded in our operations cell.

MS HUNTER: Okay.

THE CHAIR: On notice, can you work out what percentage of your front-line time is spent on mental health issues?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: We can take it on notice. It will be a rough calculation. As I say, we did a litmus test for that month of April. I am not sure how much work is involved in actually interrogating the data to give you a holistic empirical answer. But certainly I will come back to you with more detail.

THE CHAIR: That is very kind. Members, we might break there, given there are other areas to get through. Minister, thank you for the attendance of staff and officers from ICRC, ESA and AFP. I remind you that you have five days in which to answer questions taken on notice. Members, I have no doubt there are further questions that will be placed on notice. You have four days to get them in.

Meeting adjourned from 10.44 to 11.02 am.

THE CHAIR: The minister has returned so we will recommence the hearings at this stage, moving to output class 2, corrections. Minister, you have already declined the invitation to make an opening statement so we will get right into it. There was an article on the front page of the *Canberra Times* on Saturday concerning the gentleman in charge of the prison. Could we please have an outline of the events and what is going on?

Mr Corbell: Mr Smyth, can I say at the outset that I am aware that this is a matter which the committee will want to ask me about today. But I have to make it very clear up-front that there are limits on what I and my officers can tell the committee at this stage. That is for two reasons. First of all, this is essentially a staffing matter which involves the personal particulars of a person seconded to ACT Corrective Services in a public service position and I am not going to ventilate the personal particulars of a staffing matter here in the committee. Secondly, a matter has been referred from the Human Rights Commission to ACT Policing for their consideration and I am certainly not in a position to comment on or to give any speculation on that matter either. That would be most inappropriate.

What I can advise the committee is that the acting superintendent of the Alexander Maconochie Centre has agreed to return to his substantive position in New South Wales Corrective Services and as a result ACT Corrective Services have appointed a member of their own staff to act as superintendent pending further arrangements being put in place.

MR HANSON: Mr Chair, I had a supplementary.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I am sure there might be a supplementary or two. I am happy to accept the notion that something that is referred to the AFP should be allowed to be investigated. But what I am particularly interested in is the way in which the events unfolded after the incident. So when did the incident occur?

Mr Corbell: December, I am advised, the matter about which allegations have been made occurred.

THE CHAIR: All right. And what has been the process since December in regard to the employment of Mr Buchanan?

Mr Corbell: I am advised that this alleged incident occurred in December. The matter was subsequently brought to the attention of the Human Rights Commission; it was not brought to the attention of ACT Corrective Services or the government. The Human Rights Commission subsequently advised Corrective Services that the allegation had been made to them and the Human Rights Commission subsequently took the decision to refer the matter to the police.

THE CHAIR: Right. So the Human Rights Commission was involved—on what date?

Mrs Mitcherson: I met with them on Wednesday.

Mr Corbell: What were you advised on Wednesday—

Mrs Mitcherson: I met with the human rights commissioner on Wednesday and she advised me that there had been an allegation which she was referring to the AFP.

THE CHAIR: All right. The *Canberra Times* article says the human rights commissioner was approached in March; is that correct?

Mr Corbell: You would have to ask the Human Rights Commission, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: All right. So since last Wednesday what has been the process inside the department?

Mr Corbell: Obviously, once the matter was drawn to ACT Corrective Services' attention the department engaged in a discussion with the acting superintendent and as a result of that discussion the acting superintendent has agreed to return to his substantive position in New South Wales Corrective Services.

THE CHAIR: So he has agreed; he has gone voluntarily?

Mr Corbell: He agreed to return to New South Wales, yes, so it was a matter that was dealt with with his agreement.

THE CHAIR: So he was not sacked.

Mr Corbell: He is on secondment. He is not a permanent public servant in the ACT public service.

THE CHAIR: So was his secondment terminated by the ACT or did he choose to go of his own accord?

Mr Corbell: He agreed to return to New South Wales Corrective Services.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, you indicated a supplementary.

MR HANSON: Yes, on that specific issue, Mr Smyth. There seems to be a contradiction between some of his statements and what you have said to us today and what you said in the paper. Apparently in the paper he describes himself as a “political fall guy” and has been “shattered” by his treatment. It would appear that he has been pushed. Is that the case?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR HANSON: All right. Was there any attempt at a negotiated settlement of any sort?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to go into the details of what is a private matter involving the personal particulars of an officer on secondment to the ACT from New South Wales, as I indicated in the beginning. I am not going to go into the personal particulars surrounding this matter. This is a sensitive matter and it would not be appropriate to ventilate the private employment arrangements of a person, who is on secondment to the ACT public service, before this committee.

MR HANSON: I think this committee deserves an answer on what is going on here. He is the superintendent of the Alexander Maconochie Centre—

Mr Corbell: I am doing my best to answer your questions. But this is not a statutory office. This is a public service position and it would be most unusual for this place to trawl through every personal detail of the circumstances surrounding a public servant’s decision to leave their position and to pursue alternative careers.

MR HANSON: So he made that decision voluntarily without being pressured in any way?

Mr Corbell: An agreement was reached between ACT Corrective Services and the acting superintendent about his return to New South Wales.

MR HANSON: And when were you briefed on this matter?

Mr Corbell: I was briefed on this matter late last night.

THE CHAIR: All right. Ms Bresnan had a supplementary and then I have a supplementary.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you. The issue I am interested in here is obviously with due process. What would typically be the process followed? As you said, the complaint went to the human rights commissioner—it did not come to Corrective Services—but then obviously, like you explained, there have been subsequent discussions between the acting super and Corrective Services. What is the normal due process to follow? I would imagine that an investigation would be allowed to follow through before this decision was made to move somebody on to another position.

Mr Corbell: The premise of your question, Ms Bresnan, is that this has occurred because a matter has been referred by the Human Rights Commission to ACT Policing—

MS BRESNAN: That just seems to be what has actually occurred.

Mr Corbell: I am not at liberty to disclose all of the particular matters at play in relation to this matter. But you should not accept the premise that this solely relates to issues arising as a result of the Human Rights Commission's referral.

MS BRESNAN: Okay. I do not want to actually find out the details but, if there was a complaint received by the Human Rights Commission which Corrective Services made, what is a typical process of investigating that?

Mr Corbell: If a matter is referred to the police the normal approach is for the police to conclude their own view on the issue prior to other investigations taking place.

MS BRESNAN: And would it be typical if it was made against a particular person that they would continue in their position before there was any decision made to—

Mr Corbell: These matters are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

MS BRESNAN: Okay. In the article—I know also through the Hamburger report—there has been acknowledgement that the superintendent has had a key role to play in terms of the cultural issues out there and has been a positive influence. I know he has been very highly regarded by community organisations as well that are involved with the AMC. I have met him myself; it was only for a couple of hours. I appreciate you cannot tell me the particulars but has that been taken into consideration?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to ventilate the details of the particular personal circumstances and the particular employment circumstances of the person who was acting as superintendent of the AMC. I am just not going to get into the detail about that. These are private, confidential matters between a public servant and their supervisors. It is not a statutory office. It is not a political appointment. It is a public service appointment and these matters are dealt with in accordance with the way we deal with all public service appointments.

MS HUNTER: So do you believe that the processes that have been undertaken will stand up to scrutiny?

Mr Corbell: I am confident that my officers have acted appropriately and with sensitivity at all times.

THE CHAIR: They will not stand up to scrutiny because they are not being allowed scrutiny. Minister, the individual—

Mr Corbell: I would challenge you, Mr Smyth—

THE CHAIR: No, sorry—

Mr Corbell: I have to respond to that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, in this hearing—

Mr Corbell: Are you going to let me answer your question or not?

MR HARGREAVES: Order, Mr Chairman, please.

THE CHAIR: Please be quiet.

Mr Corbell: You have made an allegation—

THE CHAIR: Order, minister!

Mr Corbell: and you are not allowing me to respond to it.

THE CHAIR: And I will finish—

Mr Corbell: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: before you speak, minister. You hide behind—you will not discuss the circumstances. The officer has gone public. It is not like he is being shy about this. He is an individual who claims more than 30 years of service in the corrections industry. This is an individual who is well regarded by the local community groups. He claims he has been denied due process. He claims to be shattered by his treatment. So the question is: what was the process and do you believe that due process was given?

Mr Corbell: I believe that my officers have operated fairly and sensitively on this matter at all times. Whatever is reported in the newspaper does not release my officers or me from our obligations to respect the confidentiality of employment arrangements that are in place.

THE CHAIR: If there is an injustice in your process arrangements, it is quite appropriate for it to be discussed here. How is it possible that somebody can be stood down on a Wednesday and then called in on a Thursday to have his career terminated?

Mr Corbell: The acting superintendent was not terminated. The acting superintendent agreed to return to his position in New South Wales Corrective Services.

THE CHAIR: So it was voluntary?

Mr Corbell: I have already answered that question.

THE CHAIR: I am asking again. Was it voluntary?

Mr Corbell: The acting superintendent agreed to return to his position in New South Wales Corrective Services—

THE CHAIR: He may have had no choice. Did he have a choice? Was he offered the

choice of remaining in the ACT in his position—

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Chairman, can we move on, please?

THE CHAIR: No; this—

MR HARGREAVES: This is a budget estimates committee hearing.

THE CHAIR: And this involves the expenditure of public moneys. We will get to a cost.

MR HARGREAVES: There is a heck of a lot more about it than just this particular episode—

THE CHAIR: There is indeed.

MR HARGREAVES: We need to move on, please.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Hargreaves. Was he offered the option of staying with the ACT?

Mr Corbell: His return to New South Wales is by agreement.

THE CHAIR: Was he offered the option of staying with the ACT correctional service?

Mr Corbell: His return to New South Wales was by agreement.

THE CHAIR: Which is not an answer to the question, minister. Was he offered the option—and I will remind you that you have been found in contempt of processes in estimates committees before—of remaining with the ACT?

Mr Corbell: He returned—he agreed to return to New South Wales. As I said to you before, he has returned to New South Wales—he has agreed to return to New South Wales Corrective Services.

THE CHAIR: Was he given any other option except to return to New South Wales?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to disclose private discussions about an individual public servant's employment.

THE CHAIR: I think the individual has waived that by going to the *Canberra Times*—

Mr Corbell: That does not release myself and my officers from our obligations in relation to the privacy of his employment arrangements.

THE CHAIR: So how does it work? All right. In terms of the process then, when a complaint is received—Mrs Mitcherson, what is the complaints process when a complaint is brought against a member of staff of ACT corrections?

Mrs Mitcherson: This particular complaint was not made to us; it was made to the Human Rights Commission. We did not become aware that there was a complaint, I think, until the second week of my appointment, which was, I think, some seven weeks ago. We provided them with the information that they asked for. I met with Helen Watchirs last Wednesday to discuss the complaint. It was at that point that Dr Watchirs disclosed the nature of the complaint and that she would be referring the matter to the police.

When a matter is referred to the police, in any jurisdiction that I am aware of, any other type of investigation, administrative or internal, would be on the backburner and anything referred to the police would take precedence. So it would be inappropriate to even comment or begin to investigate the circumstances surrounding the complaint—which we only became aware of last Wednesday at lunchtime.

THE CHAIR: So wouldn't you think that it was unusual then to call in that individual the day after you found out that a complaint has been referred to the police—the police have not even commenced their investigation, but an individual is called in to discuss the future of his career?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to tell my officers to disclose the specifics of their engagement with the individual, Mr Smyth, for the reasons I have cited earlier.

MR HARGREAVES: Supplementary, Mr Chairman, please.

THE CHAIR: All right. Ms Hunter has a supp and then Mr Hargreaves. And I will come back to it shortly. I think Mr Hanson has a supplementary as well.

MS HUNTER: Mrs Mitcherson, you were saying that—I think you just said that you first became aware some weeks ago about an issue but you did not actually have the meeting with the Human Rights Commission until last week. Is that right?

Mrs Mitcherson: No. I became aware, I think, during the second week of my employment. The Human Rights Commission had written to us asking for some information relating to an incident. That is not unusual. We often get requests—in New South Wales, where I worked, you would often get a request for information relating to an incident. We provided that information, and it is up to the Human Rights Commission to assess the information we provided them with.

I had an appointment with Helen Watchirs last week. I wanted to meet and greet her as well, as part of joining the ACT. We discussed that complaint. It was at that point that she advised me of the nature of the complaint and where it had come from. And while it is not appropriate for me to discuss it here, she did indicate that she was taking that to the AFP. So, as I said to Mr Smyth, that takes precedence in relation to any investigative process.

THE CHAIR: Right. Mr Hargreaves and Mr Hanson.

MR HARGREAVES: Minister, are you aware, or is it the case, that any disclosure about individuals' activities in any office of the public service may very well cause a

breach of the Privacy Act and a breach of the Public Sector Management Act?

Mr Corbell: I am obviously very aware of those considerations, Mr Hargreaves, which is why I am limited in what I can advise the committee. I appreciate you raising that, and I think it is important to remind everyone today that we are talking about a person in a public service position whose privacy must be protected because of the particular provisions and particular statutory framework in which these positions operate. This is not an appointment by the minister; this is not a statutory office-holder. This is a public servant, and in these circumstances a public servant who is on secondment from another public service in another state. Regardless of what claims are made or whatever is reported in a newspaper, the fact remains that that does not release me or my officials from our obligations to deal with this matter appropriately, respecting the confidentiality of employment arrangements.

MR HARGREAVES: Is it also the case that where a matter has been referred to the police, any expression of the details around a particular episode may very well have a detrimental effect on the activities of the police, and particularly have a detrimental effect on the person involved? Is it also not the case that any disclosure, inadvertent or advertent, may in fact infringe a particular individual's human rights and would be regarded dimly by the Human Rights Commission?

Mr Corbell: Obviously we are discussing matters that have the potential to adversely impact on a person's standing and reputation. It is appropriate that we are very circumspect about how we deal with those matters before conclusions are reached about particular matters that may be under investigation.

MR HARGREAVES: Is it not also the fact that this is not the first time the estimates committee has used its powers of investigation to sully the reputation of senior public servants?

Mr Corbell: I am not really going to enter into that, Mr Hargreaves.

THE CHAIR: I suggest that question—

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Chairman, I have asked the question. I am entitled to an answer.

THE CHAIR: You can ask the question. I would suggest that it is inappropriate given that the committee is different every year, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: I have asked the question—

Mr Corbell: I would simply make an observation, Mr Chairman, that public servants are entitled to have the particular circumstances of their employment protected and accorded due confidentiality, and this circumstance is no different from any other.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Thank you, Mr Chair. How long was the secondment for Mr Buchanan due to last for?

Mr Corbell: It was initially for three months, and it has been extended a number of times.

MR HANSON: In the last extension—when was that last extension due to expire?

Mrs Mitcherson: My understanding is that we requested an extension earlier in the year, I believe, but I am not sure of the timing of that. It comes up to 12 months at the beginning of June, which is usually the appropriate time for a secondment. It was originally extended, as the minister has said, beyond three months. The initial was for three months.

MR HANSON: Sure, but the question I am asking is: when was the latest renewal of that secondment due to terminate?

Mr Corbell: I am not able to provide you with that detail.

MR HANSON: Could you get that for the committee on notice, please?

Mr Corbell: I will take the question under some advice.

MR HANSON: Whose decision was it to end the secondment?

Mr Corbell: As I have previously indicated, it has been agreed that the acting superintendent will return to New South Wales.

MR HANSON: That is right, and whose decision was that?

Mr Corbell: I have already answered the question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Did you have any involvement in that decision, minister?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR HANSON: When did the police investigation commence?

Mr Corbell: You would have to ask the police.

MR HANSON: So you have not—your staff have not inquired? So the superintendent of the AMC is being investigated by police, and you are not aware of when that investigation commenced?

Mr Corbell: We were advised by the Human Rights Commission that they referred the matter to the police.

Mrs Mitcherson: They were referring the matter to police on the Wednesday afternoon after we had had our meeting.

MR HANSON: And when did that investigation commence? You are saying you have had no communication with the police. You say the superintendent of the AMC,

you have been told, is being investigated by the police.

Mr Corbell: Mr Hanson—

MR HANSON: You have had no communication with the police about that.

Mr Corbell: Mr Hanson, the chronology is this. The Human Rights Commission advised Corrective Services on Wednesday last week that they were referring the matter to the police for their consideration. As I understand it, the police are now pursuing the matter.

MR HANSON: In light of the comments in the *Canberra Times* made by Mr Buchanan, who allegedly has said that he is the political fall guy and made other comments, what process will you now follow to ensure that due process has actually occurred, minister?

Mr Corbell: As I have said to you, Mr Hanson, I am confident that at all times my office has operated in a fair and sensitive manner.

MR HANSON: So there will be no review of what has occurred in this case by an independent authority?

Mr Corbell: I am confident that the way my department has handled this matter has been both fair and sensitive to the concerns of the individual involved.

MR HANSON: How many superintendents have we had at the AMC?

Mr Corbell: We have had three. We have had one person in a substantive position and a number of people acting in the position.

THE CHAIR: So how many have been acting? How many different officers have acted in the role?

Mr Corbell: I would have to take that on notice, Mr Smyth.

MR HANSON: So you do not know how many superintendents we have had at the AMC? So you are telling me your staff do not know how many superintendents we have had at the AMC?

Mr Corbell: I am telling you that we do not have the information immediately available, but we are happy to answer the question on notice.

MR HANSON: Well, surely someone from Corrective Services knows how many superintendents there have been.

Mr Corbell: I have just—I have told you what my answer is, Mr Hanson.

THE CHAIR: But it cannot be too hard. It is not an unreasonable question. I mean, it has only been open two years. How many superintendents—

Mr Corbell: I have told you what my answer is.

THE CHAIR: So you just will not answer that question?

Mr Corbell: No, I will answer that question, and I will answer it on notice.

MR HANSON: Have all the superintendents prior to Mr Buchanan, either those substantively employed or on secondment or otherwise engaged, left voluntarily or have any others been encouraged to leave, if that is the case?

Mr Corbell: You know I am not going to—now you are asking me to revisit the employment histories—

MR HANSON: No, I am just asking a question.

Mr Corbell: of a whole range of people in public service positions, and I do not intend to do so.

MR HANSON: And was Mr Buchanan given the opportunity of remaining on secondment in the ACT at any stage during this process?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to disclose the particular discussions that took place between a public servant about their employment arrangements and—

MR HANSON: But you already have, minister. You are quoted as saying that he agreed.

Mr Corbell: My only comment in relation to the employment arrangements affecting the acting superintendent is that he has agreed to return to his substantive position in Corrective Services NSW.

MR HANSON: But the point is, minister, if he was not given any alternative options, then there is really no other option for him, is there? In that context, I think we should have a more frank—

Mr Corbell: You can speculate however you wish, and I know that this is both titillating and—

THE CHAIR: Well, no it is not. It is a very serious issue. A gentleman has made public his disappointment with what you are saying, and you should answer the question.

Mr Corbell: in some perverse way, some sort of ogling on the part of Mr Hanson, but the fact is that these are private arrangements between an individual and the ACT government in a public service position. They are not the appointment of the minister or the government; they are an appointment under the Public Sector Management Act, and appointments under the Public Sector Management Act are accorded appropriate privacy considerations, particularly when it comes to matters affecting individuals' decisions about their future employment. And I am not going to—

MR HANSON: I will make a final point.

Mr Corbell: I am not going to establish a precedent where the personal affairs of individual public servants and their reasons for choosing to change their employment arrangements become open to scrutiny or some sort of a perverse gazing or inquiry in this committee which serves no public purpose except to intrude into the privacy of those employment arrangements.

MR HANSON: I will make a final comment if I can, Mr Smyth, in response to what the minister said, because I find it deeply offensive for him to describe what we are doing here as titillating and ogling and perverse. I think when a superintendent of a facility such as the AMC has made the allegations that he has, describing himself as a political fall guy, shattered, I think this committee has every right to inquire into what has happened to the service of someone who has been seconded from New South Wales to run the AMC, who has been commended in the Hamburger report and who has a long history of employment within Corrective Services NSW. I just want to note on the record that your description of it as titillating, ogling and perverse is absolutely deeply offensive and I think is contrary to the intent of this committee.

Mr Corbell: And your questioning, Mr Hanson, is potentially contrary to the provisions of the Public Sector Management Act and other obligations that are imposed upon me, my director-general and my officials to respect the privacy of individual employment arrangements that exist within the public service.

THE CHAIR: Minister, just to close this area, did Mr Buchanan offer his resignation?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to disclose the individual circumstances of this discussion.

THE CHAIR: So that would be a no?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to disclose the individual circumstances affecting this matter.

THE CHAIR: When were you first told of the incident?

Mr Corbell: Late last week.

THE CHAIR: What day late last week?

Mr Corbell: Wednesday.

THE CHAIR: Wednesday. Was your permission sought to terminate Mr Buchanan's employment?

Mr Corbell: The acting superintendent's employment has not been terminated. The acting superintendent has agreed to return to Corrective Services NSW.

THE CHAIR: So you say. Was anything asked of you in the briefing from the department into the furtherance of this issue?

Mr Corbell: This is not a matter that I am required to or indeed did take a decision on. I was advised of the circumstances and what actions the directorate intended to take.

THE CHAIR: Right, in prisons—

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Chairman, can you give me an idea how long this is going to go on for? We have been on it for half an hour, and I want to have a budget question please. Half an hour is plenty enough for an examination.

THE CHAIR: It is about the conduct of events inside a facility for which there is an appropriation, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: We still have a multimillion-dollar facility out there we should be examining—

THE CHAIR: Yes, and—

MR HARGREAVES: So you just said you were going to have a final question.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and I am going to have the final question, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: We have had three final questions so far. How many finals does it have to be? Can we get to the grand final question, please?

THE CHAIR: Well, if you would stop interrupting, Mr Hargreaves, we might get there.

MR HARGREAVES: Yes, well, let us see if it is the grand final question. I will back Collingwood.

THE CHAIR: Minister, prisons being prisons, there are occasions that arise where force is used. Can you outline what the policy is on the use of force inside the Alexander Maconochie Centre?

Mr Corbell: Use of force is a serious matter. It is treated seriously, and all use-of-force incidents must be recorded and reported. There are a range of procedures that are in place to achieve that.

THE CHAIR: All right. How many incidents involving the use of force have occurred since the centre was opened?

Mr Corbell: I would have to take the question on notice.

THE CHAIR: All right. In regard to the actual use of force, what is allowed and what is not allowed in the policy and the standard operating procedures?

Mr Corbell: Maybe Mrs Mitcherson can give you a general outline. I am happy to provide you with more specific detail if you require it, but perhaps Mrs Mitcherson could give you a general outline of how use-of-force matters are dealt with.

Mrs Mitcherson: Thank you. I will give you a general outline in terms of my experience in New South Wales, which will be similar across jurisdictions. Any use of force is unfortunate in any correctional centre or any institution. So, the first port of call is to try and reduce the level of force that may be necessary to the lowest possible level. So I would expect staff to engage in quite a bit of discussion and communication in relation to minimising and de-escalating any use of force.

There may be occasions where it is spontaneous and it may not even be possible to record, but, generally, you know if someone is escalating or there is going to be an issue surrounding the use of force. In that case I would expect, as would happen in New South Wales, that you would plan for that in the way that would have minimum impact on other detainees and staff. For example, if you had to move someone from one unit to another, you would do it at a time when the units were locked down and it was not going to cause disruption to other people around. So it would depend on the circumstances, but in all cases you should reduce it to the lowest possible level.

There have been occasions in my career where I had to authorise, for example, the use of restraints if someone is really unwell or hurting themselves, and I have worked in institutions where we have mental health units and, unfortunately, that does happen. Even in those circumstances, you would still try and engage in discussion to try and de-escalate. But if someone was hurting themselves, for example, you would then plan a movement, and in that case I mean really plan it. So you would have an officer in charge, someone that would be allocated a video, someone may be scribing, depending on what the issue was. If you were worried about the health, you may have health people with you as well, depending on the circumstances. And if, for example, someone was continually scratching at themselves or banging their head, you might need to put on a restraint. Each officer would then be allocated a role. For example, what they would do and what part of the body they would go to and what they would do. Only one person would speak. So it should be very planned. It should be the absolute minimum necessary and it should be done to minimise any risk to the detainee, staff and other detainees.

THE CHAIR: That is an incident. You are describing an incident where a prisoner might be self-harming. If a prisoner was attacking another prisoner, what would be the expectation for the use of force to stop that incident?

Mrs Mitcherson: If you were, for example, managing a group of detainees and one attacked another one you would definitely intervene and pull them away. Sometimes things happen spontaneously, particularly when you have got 240-odd people living in an involuntary setting and who probably would not choose to live together. So often there are issues around living together and occasionally they do have fights. Sometimes, my experience is that they will break up very quickly as soon as someone does try to intervene, because it is often about a community living issue. If they were assaulting another detainee, you absolutely intervene straightaway. You would not be waiting for videotaping; you would pull them off.

THE CHAIR: All right. And they might be then held against a wall or held on the ground until assistance arrived, if required?

Mrs Mitcherson: It would depend on the circumstances and who was there. You would certainly want to make sure other detainees were moved out of the way. So people would be trained in responding in different ways.

THE CHAIR: And if, for instance, a detainee was enacting violence against a custodial officer, what rights have they to defend themselves and, indeed, what training have they been given to defend themselves?

Mrs Mitcherson: I cannot speak in detail about the training for AMC, but I can speak about New South Wales training, which is very similar. Staff are trained in New South Wales in how to respond to an incident of force, whether it is against themselves or someone else. Their response for themselves, for their own protection, again, is to be the minimum—the minimal force necessary to stop the attack against you. So, again, it is not a carte blanche to attack back; it is about minimum force to ensure that you are not being hurt but the detainee is contained. Very often officers are not on their own, so there is usually someone else there. In my experience, other detainees generally move away and do not want to be involved.

THE CHAIR: Okay. A new question, Ms Hunter?

THE CHAIR: All right. Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: The sentencing act states under clauses 96(1)(c) and 133Q(c) that courts cannot sentence a person to education and training or to rehabilitation if such a program is unavailable or full. So my question is: is it ever the case that the rehab program is full and, as such, such a person then becomes a sentenced prisoner because they cannot be engaged in a rehab program out in the community? I am talking about why we are getting the prisoners.

Mr Corbell: Generally speaking, and I am happy to take some advice on this, I do not envisage that the courts would impose a condition on someone's sentence without being aware as to whether or not the program was available.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is really the point, yes.

Mr Corbell: In practice I think it is highly unusual for the courts to say, "You need to go and do X program, but it is not available." I think this was raised in the motion that Ms Bresnan succeeded in having the Assembly agree to earlier this year about—or it might have been Mr Rattenbury. I am sorry; I cannot recall. I beg your pardon, Ms Bresnan; I stand corrected. The government is going to provide some further details on these types of issues when we respond to the requests in that motion.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. Finally on this subject do you have an idea of how much money will be spent in 2011-12 for community corrections and for people who have been sentenced to things like good behaviour orders and rehab programs as distinct from the AMC?

Mr Corbell: We can certainly provide that. I doubt whether we can provide that today but we can certainly provide you with a reconciliation in that regard.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: A new question from Mr Hargreaves, then Mr Hanson, then Mr Rattenbury.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I have got a couple of questions on the dollar figures, so if you need a finance expert now is the time to get the cavalry—or not. This in a way follows on a bit from Ms Le Couteur's question about the funding of community corrections. I am curious to know, if you can give this, maybe on notice, the split of costing between the AMC periodic detention and community corrections so I can get a perspective on that. Do you have it broken down to that?

Mr Corbell: Again, I would take that question on notice, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you very much. We look at the rollovers and I notice that there is a rollover of \$2 million at the AMC. I wondered if you could let us know what that is all about.

Mr Corbell: That rollover, if I recall correctly, relates to outstanding matters in relation to the completion of the project. We are still in lengthy negotiations about disputes over liability for delay in completing the project. That money will be held until that dispute is resolved.

MR HARGREAVES: In BP3 on page 99 you indicate an increase of \$1,234,000. It indicates that the initiative increases funding to the AMC which will assist in addressing resource issues identified in the recent independent review. What I would be interested in knowing is how those funds are going to be applied and in what areas.

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Mr Hargreaves. A number of budget pressures have been identified in Mr Hamburger's review. This funding will assist in addressing some of the issues that he has identified.

First of all, there is funding to assist with some issues with staff overtime and to address some of the cost pressures associated there; also issues to do with building maintenance costs and making sure that they are appropriately provided for; costs for detainees, additional cost pressures for matters such as food, bedding, detainee remuneration and educational costs. There is a significant component to deal with an increase in workers compensation premium that has been experienced and, finally, there is a significant amount of money for managing the utilities costs at the facility.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you. I am aware that the AMC is very much still in its infancy in terms of building infrastructure. I was wanting to know what the period for building warranty might be in the contract. My memory is very fuzzy with regard to that part.

Mr Corbell: I would have to take some advice on the nature of the contract, Mr Hargreaves, but I am happy to answer that.

MR HARGREAVES: Thanks, minister. While you are at it, I am aware that once a

building is built you get a lot of the defects, things which are not contained in the contract, actually picked up by the builder's warranty and that will go on for quite some time. What I am not aware of is whether provision has been made for ongoing maintenance beyond that period of time because that is when you would expect to see it take an upsurge and I wonder whether there is something in the outyears or in the base to cover that. I do not know. I would imagine so, but on notice, quite clearly—

Mr Corbell: Again, we have made provision for building maintenance costs and additional costs associated with building maintenance in this appropriation, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Okay. Thank you very much for that.

MS HUNTER: You also have an increase in the security and system upgrades of \$1.4 million. What will that be spent on?

MR HARGREAVES: That is page 270 of BP4.

MS HUNTER: Thank you, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HANSON: Or BP3 page 172.

THE CHAIR: Goodness me, all these numerically literate committee members.

MR HARGREAVES: The chairman has set the high jump bar very high in being able to tell us the page number and paragraph numbers and we are all trying to chase him.

Mr Corbell: A range of enhancements to the security regime at the prison have been identified. These are not measures designed to rectify faults in the existing security system, contrary to the assertions made by some. They are instead enhancements identified as desirable by Mr Hamburger to maintain an appropriate level of security at the facility. These include the installation of a human presence heartbeat detection system—that is for vehicles, isn't it—

Mrs Mitcherson: Vehicles in and out.

Mr Corbell: to scan vehicles that leave and enter the facility, to prevent a human presence in those vehicles and to help prevent any attempt at escape or indeed infiltration of the facility. Also it has been decided to relocate the existing canine unit from Symonston to the AMC and make provision for specialist equipment and canine facilities at the AMC. This will allow us to better utilise the services of the canine unit, who are responsible for some of the search capacity at the jail. Currently, they have to return to their kennels for necessary care and attention to the animals, which necessitates some travel time and some down time effectively in the use of that resource. There is an upgrade to the Keywatcher system to upgrade the existing software. So those are the key enhancements in relation to security for the facility.

MS HUNTER: That canine unit is a search unit? It is not used in any—

Mr Corbell: It is not guard dogs. They are sniffer dogs, used to search both prisoners and visitors to the facility for contraband.

THE CHAIR: A new question from Mr Hanson and then Ms Bresnan.

MR HANSON: I am interested in the status of a number of projects: the chapel and quiet place and the gymnasium, which have both previously been promised. I am just wondering what the status of those is.

Mr Corbell: We have made provision for a temporary gymnasium facility within the AMC and that has proven to be very useful and popular with prisoners. The government did make provision for a chapel and quiet place but, as I have previously advised committees of this place and the Assembly, the costs associated, the tenders that were provided for that project, were well above those that the government had budgeted for—

MR HANSON: So there is no update on where that is at?

Mr Corbell: and therefore the funding for the chapel and the quiet place has been returned to budget at my direction this financial year and will now be considered in future budgets.

MR HANSON: And the status of the RFID? Is that operational?

Mrs Mitcherson: Since I have started in the ACT I have been briefed in relation to the RFID. We are currently trialling 50 new tags, which have been on trial for just over three weeks, I think. We are still looking at making sure about issues in relation to battery life and other areas where the Exciters are attached in terms of movement. My advice is that those 50 are doing well and I think we should have some more to install in the next week or so. We are still assessing the RFID.

MS BRESNAN: Can I just ask on the chapel, just to follow up something: one of the standards and guidelines contained in *National standard guidelines for corrections in Australia—2004* is that, if a priest or whoever is going to conduct a service, there needs to be a space for them to do that. In the absence of a chapel, where will they be able to conduct those services?

Mrs Mitcherson: We have a chaplaincy service and he coordinates chaplains from different faiths to come along and we currently do services in the visits area, I believe, and possibly the programs; I will have to check on that one. But we do have services and we have a very good pastoral care process.

MS BRESNAN: And, for example, for other faiths or even Aboriginal elders who might want to come out or have a quiet space where they can go and practise, where are they able to do that now?

Mrs Mitcherson: My understanding in relation to the chaplaincy services and a religious service is it would be visits through a program area, but I will have to take on notice the detail of the question. But we would certainly find space in the AMC, whether it be a quiet room, a programs room, where we would be able to book time

for different faiths.

MS BRESNAN: And have any other faiths or Aboriginals had any contact with you about the quiet space?

Mrs Mitcherson: It has not been raised with me personally, no.

MS BRESNAN: On a new question, if I can, minister, about the women's part of the prison, I notice some groups have felt that the Hamburger report did not really look into some of the issues as they particularly relate to women. Is this something you have identified as an issue and what do you see as being the key concerns around services that are particularly provided to women at the AMC?

Mr Corbell: Mr Hamburger did look closely at the service provision for women detainees. He observed overall that the level of service provision in terms of facilities and accommodation was of a very high standard for women detainees, as indeed it is for male detainees. He did not identify any specific significant issues to be addressed but we are very happy to keep these matters under review and if there are concerns about programs or facilities for women we are very happy to engage in that discussion and identify what steps can be taken to address any problems that arise.

MS BRESNAN: I think some groups have expressed—obviously because it is a matter of scale, because they are a smaller number there and it is a smaller area—that it is difficult to provide, for example, the therapeutic community obviously—

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS BRESNAN: although there have been issues raised around that. What sort of activities and programs do women have access to during weekdays and on weekends?

Mrs Mitcherson: It is early days in terms of my appointment but I have had some discussions with the manager of program services, Mark Bartlett, in relation to the provision of services and programs for women. I am also in discussion with Mark and Karralika in relation to looking at some programs. I agree that it is difficult to have a therapeutic community, but we could still be a bit more creative about how we can manage such a small number. So I am very interested to progress that area and I have a few ideas that I want to take forward over the next 12 months.

The numbers are small. I think today there are 16 women. That is the most there has been in the last seven weeks I have been here. I check every day. It has been around 12 or 13. So the numbers are small and within that small number you have subgroups again in terms of where people are at in terms of their readiness, in terms of impacting on programs. So we need to be a little bit more creative. We are ensuring that there are educational opportunities and vocational opportunities now, but we are looking at that into the future.

I am also co-chairing a through-care committee with the Chief Minister and we are also looking at through-care in relation to women and men generally to really enhance what we are doing now to impact on their release so that they do not come back to us, which is the most important thing.

MS BRESNAN: Do lockdowns ever have an impact on the availability of programs in the women's prison?

Mr Corbell: Any lockdown can have an impact.

MS BRESNAN: Obviously; yes. Is it possible to say how many lockdowns there have been in the women's prison, say over the last three to six months?

Mr Corbell: We can take the question on notice and try to provide an answer.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Hunter has a supplementary in this area, and then Mr Hanson has one as well.

MS HUNTER: I just want to pick up that issue of through-care and after-care. You were just saying that you were co-chairing some sort of committee looking at it. Is this committee looking at new models or how to enhance current models?

Mrs Mitcherson: A bit of both. I have only been to one meeting, and I actually left the meeting very excited about the opportunities, because the ACT is so small and there is such an engaged and committed group of community organisations that want to work with us. I think the opportunity for us to develop a model that would perhaps be copied by others is fantastic. And we now have two years worth of data, nearly, so we know that the average length of stay is six months or less so we only have a very short time to have an impact. So the preparation of the pathway for release is really very important if we want to stop someone coming back into custody. It is even more critical in the AMC, because of the small sentences.

I am quite excited about those opportunities. We are already providing a suite of programs that have been acknowledged as being very good. We need to add to those programs, making sure they target the right areas. But definitely the post release is important—absolutely—as is the programming for those who come in contact with community offender services so that they do not get to the AMC in the first place. I see them both as being really critical.

MS HUNTER: There were supposed to be regular meetings with non-government agencies to discuss matters about through-care and after-care. Have they been happening and is it your intention that they will regularly occur?

Mrs Mitcherson: I have been invited to one meeting that James was co-chairing before me, and there was a suite of organisations that represent peak groups that were at that meeting. So there is great engagement and I think there is great opportunity for future engagement.

THE CHAIR: All right. A supplementary from Mr Hanson and then we might move on to—

MR HANSON: I have got a new question.

THE CHAIR: All right; a new question.

MR HANSON: It is on the cost of prisoners per day. Before the jail was built, we were advised by the government that this would be no more than it was to send prisoners to New South Wales, which was \$263 a day. The budget is telling us that it is \$440 a day. I would like to know why it is that expensive—that is the first question. And secondly, I would like to know whether the opportunity cost of building the jail at \$130 million is factored into that price as well. Obviously the interest on that sort of money would be in the order of \$10 million a year. I want to know whether that is factored into the cost per prisoner per day as well.

Mr Corbell: Mr Hanson, we have already seen that the ACT prison is being recognised as a leader in terms of its level of service provision and opportunities for rehabilitation. Of course, that was, from the outset, the government's objective. I note the comments, most recently in the papers over the weekend, from the Australian Institute of Criminology, that commended the government, and indeed the AMC, for being a leader in the area of corrections management.

MR HANSON: Sorry, minister. I appreciate all that, but can you get to the point of costs please?

Mr Corbell: This is directly at the heart of costs, because of course—

MR HANSON: Because we were advised by the government that it would cost us less.

Mr Corbell: Mr Chairman, Mr Hanson is quite happy to raise the issue about costs where there are sub-optimal outcomes—where we are paying more and we are not getting good outcomes—but he is clearly not interested in circumstances where the government is paying more but we are at the same time delivering above best practice or best practice outcomes. So let us look at some of the outcomes in terms of performance. Prisoner—

MR HANSON: Mr Chair, my question is specifically: why are we paying more than we were advised by the government?

Mr Corbell: This is all about costs. This is all about what you get for what you are paying for, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: If you would come to the point of the question.

MR HANSON: What has changed?

Mr Corbell: What we are looking at is, for example, prisoner education enrolment. We have a high rate—92 per cent—of our prisoner population enrolled in some form of education. The national average is 34 per cent. We have 92 per cent of ACT prisoners employed; the national average is 76 per cent. Time out of cells—the ACT average is 14.1 hours per day, compared with the national average of 11.4 hours. So we compare very favourably on those key indicators about opportunities for

employment within the prison, opportunities for education within the prison and opportunities for time out of cells within the prison. These are good outcomes that all contribute to a better, more rehabilitative regime that helps address issues around reoffending.

Costs are high, and that is due to the fact that this is a multiprisoner category facility. We have to accept all classifications of prisoners. We have to accept remand; we have to accept high security classifications, lower security classifications and men and women. These all are accommodated within the one facility. That, combined with the focus on education and rehabilitation programs, is leading to higher operational costs. But I would argue that that is beneficial. If we can have better educational opportunities and if we have better rehabilitation opportunities, that is a good thing, and that is the whole objective of establishing this facility.

MR HANSON: Why were we advised, minister, that it would cost us less than New South Wales if it clearly is not?

MR HARGREAVES: Never said that.

Mr Corbell: I note Mr Hargreaves's comments there; he was the responsible minister at the time, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: I can show you the recordings from the previous Chief Minister, if you want.

Mr Corbell: Mr Hanson, I think I have answered your question as to what impacts on the cost structure and what opportunities we are seeing from the level of investment our community is putting into this facility.

MR HARGREAVES: Supplementary?

THE CHAIR: We will have a supplementary by Mr Hargreaves very quickly to wrap this up. And then Ms Hunter to close this area.

MR HARGREAVES: Yes, a real quick one. In terms of the cost to the ACT for AMC activities, has there been any factoring in of the return to the ACT community of the moneys that we are paying for the AMC as opposed to losing to New South Wales when we were sending our prisoners to New South Wales? I have forgotten the actual number of millions of dollars that were going to the New South Wales economy; now this money is going into the ACT economy. Has there been any factoring in of that particular issue?

Mr Corbell: That analysis was certainly done when the decisions about the prison were being made—about its establishment and construction. It is the case, of course, that previously these were payments that just left our economy and went over the border to Junee or somewhere else in New South Wales. Now that investment, in terms of the provision of food, products and services that comes from the private sector, goes straight into the ACT economy, largely, and that is a good thing for our economy and for the businesses that rely on it.

MR HARGREAVES: All right. So we should factor that in when we are talking about the cost per prisoner to the ACT?

MR HANSON: I am done, chair. I am not going to get a straight answer from this minister.

Mr Corbell: I think it is a sensible observation, Mr Hargreaves, that there are a variety of costs and benefits associated with having a corrections facility here in the ACT, and that is definitely a benefit.

THE CHAIR: All right. Ms Hunter to close this section; then we will move on to courts.

MS HUNTER: You mentioned just then something around outcomes. Last year's estimates committee recommended that recidivism rates relating to AMC be included in future budgets, and the government said they would try and do this. It has also been something that has been requested of the government since the AMC opened. Are you collecting that data at the moment?

Mrs Mitcherson: Thank you. I think by next month we will have two years of data to interrogate. The model for measuring recidivism is someone returning to custody within a two-year period. It is the same measure that is used for someone who may come back into contact with community-based services as well; they may have been on a bond and not come back for two years. We will be able to interrogate that data, and then we will be able to look at that in terms of—interrogate it even further in terms of both how we compare nationally and what we need to do to improve on that figure in relation to the targeting of programs to make sure that the targets are programmed to the right need, if you know what I mean. There is a lot of evidence in relation to making sure that you have a client doing the right program for where they are in the life cycle.

MS HUNTER: I guess the final two then would be these. One is to the minister. Minister, because we are now at that stage where we have this information, is it your intention to include it in next year's budget papers?

Mr Corbell: I would like to see a measure included in the accountability documents, whether it is the budget papers or the annual report, as soon as is feasible. As Mrs Mitcherson has indicated, we have needed to develop a model and make sure we have got reasonably robust data to use. It has been a priority for me, and I am pleased that we are now getting to a point where we have something to report against. So yes, I would anticipate having it reported through one of those accountability avenues, whether it is the budget, the annual report or both. That is something yet to be determined, but that is certainly very much the overall intention.

MS HUNTER: And Mrs Mitcherson, you were just saying that you now have the data and you are going to go ahead and do that interrogation of that data. What is the time line on that?

Mrs Mitcherson: I will have to take that on notice. I do not know our system well enough yet. In New South Wales I could probably tell you, but I would have to have

that on notice.

THE CHAIR: All right. Thank you, minister. We will move on to class 3, courts and tribunals. Minister, on page 267 there is \$100,000 for the single court study. Where is that project at?

Mr Corbell: Budget paper 4, was it?

THE CHAIR: Budget paper 4, page 267—seven lines down.

MRS DUNNE: What do you mean by a single court study? It was an election policy commitment.

THE CHAIR: Indeed. It seems that we have flummoxed the minister. Has the study started? If no, when will it start? If it has been started, when will it be completed and when will it be made public? If it will not be made public, why not?

MRS DUNNE: Don't you remember the election commitment, minister?

THE CHAIR: And the answer is?

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Now I have refreshed my memory. Mr Chairman, the 2009-10 budget did allocate funding of \$125,000 for a senior policy officer and a part-time supervisor to commence a study to examine options for a more streamlined court structure, including consideration of a single court for the territory. A range of this policy work was overtaken by the government's need to consider options to streamline the ACT court system and to reduce the workload of the ACT Supreme Court. As a result, an initial focus of this study was to provide inputs to the access to justice initiative, which I released in last year's budget, looking at opportunities to reduce the Supreme Court backlog and create a new streamlined court system with the establishment of an intermediate tier or a district court, with judicial officers holding dual commissions in the ACT. As members would be aware, the district court proposal was not supported by the Assembly, and following—

MRS DUNNE: Or anybody else.

Mr Corbell: Well, it was supported by a range of stakeholders, Mrs Dunne, as you would be aware. In relation to what is occurring now, following the passage of the Courts Legislation Amendment Act this year, the directorate is now preparing a second paper on options for streamlining the ACT courts administration and jurisdiction, and I anticipate releasing that paper for community comment later this year.

THE CHAIR: Okay. That does not answer the question. Has the single court study commenced?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay. And when will it be completed?

Mr Corbell: As I said, I anticipate the paper will be released for community comment later this year.

THE CHAIR: All right. Members have indicated they are happy to go straight to the shadows, unless Mr Hargreaves has a question?

MR HARGREAVES: I will just see how we travel.

THE CHAIR: All right. We might go to Mr Rattenbury and then Mrs Dunne.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, I wanted to ask about judge numbers at the top of page 265 of budget paper 4. I would like to just explore the figures, if we could, minister. We have obviously had visiting judges or acting judges in recent times. Could you just take us through the decline in figures through the budget papers, particularly noting that the 2009-10 outcome was 4.9.

Mr Corbell: Sorry, page 265 was it, Mr Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, the very top line.

Mr Corbell: Yes. There is a note that addresses that issue, Mr Rattenbury. It reflects the impact of judicial officers on long service leave during the year.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes.

Mr Corbell: And the downward revision in the allocation of the court registrar's time on judicial functions compared to the original target.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, and the next sentence gets particularly Orwellian where it says that the target for 2011-12 has been reduced to reflect the expected number of judicial officers. I guess the question I would like to ask is: what is the expected number of judicial officers? I can read the table, but what is going on? And particularly, how does this relate to the time of Justice Malcolm Gray?

Mr Corbell: The higher number in the 2010-11 target factors in the provision of acting judges—

MRS DUNNE: Yes, but you did not achieve that.

Mr Corbell: and we are now resuming to a more normal level following the ceasing of the period of acting judges.

MR RATTENBURY: So the acting judges will wrap up the budget funding for those, but only for this financial year, I believe?

Mr Corbell: It concludes, that is correct.

MR RATTENBURY: So next year, the 2011-12 target is 3.5?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Where does the retirement of Justice Gray fit into that? Does that include his retirement or not?

Mr Corbell: We do not anticipate that will impact in any significant way. The government expects to have a replacement for Justice Gray announced before he retires.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. And will there be a gap between the retirement of Justice Gray and the commencement of a new judicial officer?

Mr Corbell: It will depend on who is appointed, but obviously the government will be seeking to minimise any gap, should it exist.

MR RATTENBURY: And I wanted to just ask about another of the accountability figures on that page. I welcome the list of figures. It is very transparent on behalf of the courts. But measure d does particularly strike me, as does e to a lesser extent—they indicate a reasonable cost of criminal cases being 266 per cent of the national average with a target of 115. Last year's budget papers reported a similar situation, but a footnote made the point that it is because of the economies of scale for the ACT. That footnote is not there this year. Has the situation changed?

Ms Purvis: The question, as I understand it, relates to d and e, the efficiency performance indicators. No, that situation has not changed. It is still an issue of economies of scale in the ACT. We have fixed prices that we still have to pay for things like our rent and those sorts of things that do not change depending on the number of matters that come before the court, and that has a bearing on the outcome of that figure.

MR RATTENBURY: I note the 2009-10 outcome was 205 per cent and the 2010-11 outcome is 266 per cent. Why has that gone up so substantially?

Ms Purvis: It is a relationship performance indicator, so it is compared against ROGS statistics from the year previous to these figures coming out, so there will always be that relationship also.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, Ms Purvis, could you actually expand a little on what are the factors that are taken into consideration in that measure?

Ms Purvis: The reasonable cost efficiency is a measure in the ROGS report. There are some guidelines that are put out by the Productivity Commission that set out the amounts and costs that we have to include in that measure.

MRS DUNNE: So what are the costs that you have to include in that measure?

Ms Purvis: I would have to probably take that on notice—

MRS DUNNE: Okay, thanks.

Ms Purvis: but it includes things like rent, all the costs involved in running the courts,

the costs of staff. All those things get included in calculating that measure across the country.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. Perhaps an analysis of that on notice would be handy.

Mr Corbell: Happy to take that on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: One last comment on that, Mrs Dunne. I note that you have then set a goal of 115 per cent again for next year. Why do we keep setting it—

Mr Corbell: I am sorry, Mr Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY: I am just saying that I note the goal for next year is again 115 per cent but we are at 266 per cent and going north. Why are we setting what appear to be unattainable goals, and what steps are being taken to get us closer to the goal?

Mr Corbell: There are a number of factors that are within our control and a number of factors that are not. One that is not within our control, for example, is that the territory does not own the Magistrates Court building. The previous Liberal government sold the Magistrates Court building and we now pay rent to occupy a building that we built and paid for, Mr Rattenbury. But I will leave the wisdom of that decision for members to reflect on.

Nevertheless, there are a range of factors which we do have control over, and one which we are devoting a large amount of time to at the moment is the work that is occurring in relation to listing practice in the ACT Supreme Court. There are, we believe, a range of opportunities available to improve the productivity of the court and therefore also the cost effectiveness of how the court does its work by improving its listing practice for matters. My director-general and Justice Penfold, on behalf of the Supreme Court, have been working very closely on opportunities to do that, and I am looking forward to seeing the outcomes of that work in due course.

So there are things within our control, there are things that are not within our control, but we certainly are devoting a large amount of effort to those where we believe we can get improvements in productivity and efficiency within our courts.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, when was it decided to appoint two special magistrates, and what process did you go through to decide on (a) appointing two special magistrates and (b) selecting the people whom you appointed?

Mr Corbell: I sought expressions of interest by public advertisement in May last year—

MRS DUNNE: May last year?

Mr Corbell: In May last year for people interested in either nominating for the position of a special magistrate or, indeed, asking others to suggest people for

nomination to the role of special magistrate. There has been a lag between seeking expressions of interest and the appointment, but the exercise was advertised within the past 12 months, and I believe that it remains sufficiently current to permit me to make appointments based on that process.

The Chief Magistrate advised me earlier this year that there would be a number of magistrates taking extended periods of leave this year and, therefore, it would be desirable for him to have special magistrates available to manage lists during the absence of resident magistrates, and I appointed the special magistrates I have announced on that basis.

MRS DUNNE: Did you consult with anyone other than the Chief Magistrate about those appointments?

Mr Corbell: They are cabinet appointments, so I obviously sought the agreement of my cabinet colleagues. So I wrote—and I sought the views of relevant professional bodies on people suitable for appointment in May last year.

MRS DUNNE: So you sought advice in May last year?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: What was the delay? Why did you delay it until May this year?

Mr Corbell: There were a range of considerations, in particular, a number of candidates who were deemed suitable subsequently were unavailable for appointment. Ms Leigh also reminds me that initially we had anticipated that a district court would be established, which had an impact on the number and availability of resident magistrates. With that not occurring, circumstances and, therefore, demand for special magistrates changed.

MRS DUNNE: So between May last year and May this year, did you consult with or even alert the legal community to the fact that you were going to make appointments? Because my understanding is that most of them thought that this whole notion of appointing visiting magistrates had fallen off the government's agenda.

Mr Corbell: They were aware that the government was seeking expressions of interest.

MRS DUNNE: Last year, but you did nothing for a year?

Mr Corbell: Yes, that is correct. I did not see the need to go back to stakeholders during that time. I believe the government needs to remain to be in a position to respond to the needs of the court as and when these matters arise. Following receipt of advice from the Chief Magistrate earlier this year about periods of leave of resident magistrates, I felt it was appropriate to address that.

MRS DUNNE: When did you hear from the Chief Magistrate about periods of leave?

Mr Corbell: I would have to take that on notice, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Rattenbury, last question, and then Mrs Dunne, last question, and we will call it quits for the morning.

MR RATTENBURY: I just wanted to briefly ask about the review of case management, which you touched on briefly already.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Can we get an update on how it is progressing and what the next steps are?

Mr Corbell: I might ask Ms Leigh to give you some advice on that.

Ms Leigh: Thank you. Justice Penfold and I have conducted a number of consultations with key judicial figures throughout Australia on approaches they have taken to handling case management in their courts, and we have also formed a reference group of all the key stakeholders—the DPP, Legal Aid, the Bar Association, the Law Society. We have had a meeting with that reference group, and we are currently finalising a discussion paper to put out to provide concrete proposals and to seek comments on them.

MR RATTENBURY: And when will that be issued?

Ms Leigh: Shortly.

MR RATTENBURY: And can we expect to see any case management strategies, improved ones, implemented in the coming financial year?

Ms Leigh: Of course, it is always a matter for the court what case management strategies the court puts in place. But I believe that we will have a number of concrete proposals in the discussion paper and, subject to any feedback we get that might further alter our views so far on those, I think we would be identifying a number of practical steps that could be taken.

THE CHAIR: All right.

MRS DUNNE: One supplementary on that, if I could, Mr Chair?

THE CHAIR: Supplementary, and then a final question, please.

MRS DUNNE: The DPP is doing work on upgrading its case management system. What are we doing to ensure that public money spent in one place will not be made redundant by changes elsewhere?

Ms Leigh: I think that is a very important point, Mrs Dunne, because one of the issues, of course, with case management is that it does not just impact on the court's resources; it also impacts on the public funding that goes to the DPP and, indeed,

Legal Aid and, of course, the costs that private litigants bear. One of the issues that we are looking at quite closely in the case management review is the issue of when cases might be settled. So if a civil case is settled or a plea is entered in relation to criminal cases, if that happens at the door of the court—that is to say, once the case is already listed and either on the day it is actually supposed to be heard or shortly before—then there is (1) no capacity to relist another case and (2) the resources that go into funding the DPP for the preparation of that case could have been better spent on another case that was actually going to go to hearing.

One of the important things we are looking at in this review is when it might be appropriate for cases to settle earlier and whether there are any mechanisms currently in place that dissuade cases from settling earlier that might appropriately settle early, just to make sure we do not have any counter-incentives in the arrangements at the moment to that. And that would make a significant difference to the resourcing not only of the courts but also of the DPP and, of course, Legal Aid.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. I—

THE CHAIR: All right, members. We might call it quits there for the morning session. Minister, all the questions taken on notice this morning have five days for answering. Members, you have four days in which to give further questions on notice in the areas of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission and Justice and Community Safety output class 4, Emergency Services, ACT Policing, Corrective Services, and Courts and Tribunals. Minister, thank you to you and your officials for your attendance this morning.

Mr Corbell: Thank you.

Meeting adjourned from 12.37 to 2.01pm.

Appearances:

Burch, Ms Joy, Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Women and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Community Services Directorate

Hehir, Mr Martin, Director-General

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

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Director, Finance and Budget

Ford, Ms Lois, Executive Director, Disability ACT

Hayes, Ms Roslyn, Senior Manager, Therapy ACT

Starick, Ms Kate, Director, Disability ACT

Kenney, Mr Austin, Director, Policy Planning and Business Support, Disability ACT

THE CHAIR: There being enough members here for the taking of evidence, we shall commence the afternoon session of the public hearings of the committee for estimates for the 2011-12 budget. Minister, this afternoon we are looking at output class 1, disability and therapy services. Can I remind the minister and officials of the particular obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege. I draw your attention to the yellow card on the table before you and ask: have you read the card and do you understand its provisions?

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. Can I remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and are being webstreamed and broadcast live. We have also been trialling Committees on Demand, so you can go and look at yourself every night until 30 June. Are you happy to proceed?

Ms Burch: Do you supply the chips, Mr Chair?

THE CHAIR: No chips; they are not good for your health. We have got a great deal to get through. I would simply ask members that you put your questions directly and succinctly and that the answers be concise and directly relevant. Before we proceed to questions from the committee, minister, would you like to make a statement?

Ms Burch: Yes, please, just a brief one, Mr Chair, if I may?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Burch: I would like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to discuss the measures and the initiatives in the 2011-12 budget related to the areas of disability and therapy services. These two areas are often very delicate and complex front-line services that this government, or indeed any government, provides. I am pleased to say that the 2011-12 budget reflects the growing demands on these services, both today and those predicted into the future, with substantially increased funding. It delivers almost an additional \$14 million over four years for the sector. Mr Chair, this

means that, since we have come into government, the disability program budget has surged from \$41.5 million in 2002 to \$83.6 million in 2012-11. This is an increase of 101.4 per cent.

I would like to go now to some of the main components of this year's budget for therapy and disability services. The budget provides an increase of \$10.3 million over four years for additional supports and services to people with disabilities. This should be seen in the context of changes to key fundamentals that will mean an increased demand for services. For example, we estimate that over the next 10 years 26 per cent of carers in the ACT will look to move away from primary caring roles because of their age and capacity. To this end, this budget has allocated an additional \$5.78 million over four years to enable sustainable community-based accommodation and support arrangements to be developed for people in emergency need.

In addition, Mr Chair, to support young families and younger people there is \$1.7 million over four years to develop after-school and vacation programs for children and young people with a disability. The scoping study into this work has commenced and the final program will provide specialist services, specialist help, that will enable these young people to be more independent later in life. The budget also allocates \$2.8 million over four years to expand the support available to school leavers with high and complex needs. This money will facilitate an expansion of the existing program and provide at least an additional 15 places each year over the coming two years. It is clear to see from these examples, which provide just a snapshot of the total service provision through Disability ACT, that this budget contains not only more money for disability but continues the process of better targeting of the funding.

We will also be talking this afternoon about therapy services. I would like to begin by saying that Therapy ACT has continued to provide a service which is both very much in demand and highly appreciated by those using it. A recent satisfaction survey showed that 95 per cent of clients were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service that they had received.

One area where we received feedback on the need to improve services is within the school setting. So I am very pleased that in this year's budget there is funding of \$647,000 for a pilot therapy assistance program in schools. This pilot will provide support for students with a disability in schools and deliver tailored therapy programs that have been developed by allied health professionals. The program will provide about 6.5 full-time equivalent positions within Therapy ACT for in-school program implementation that will complement existing services.

Another boost for therapy services has been, in this year's budget, 396 over two years for the children and young people's equipment loan scheme to repair, replace and refresh the loan pool. Over the last 12 months, this service has provided more than 800 loans of specialist equipment to children, families and clinicians to help with developmental delays and disabilities. I think I will leave it there, Mr Chair. We are certainly happy—and the officials here are ready and waiting—to respond to the queries and questions you may have.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. I might start on page 347, the second dot point,

which says that one of the purposes of the directorate is to engage and involve clients. I then noted in the third paragraph on page 349 of budget paper 4 that the directorate is committed to working in a partnership with community organisations and maintaining a person-centred approach. How do you actually do that? What are some of the consultations that you undertake? How do you ensure that it is ongoing and you are getting a real feel for what the people want?

Ms Burch: Just very briefly, it is a true and serious partnership across a number of key stakeholders. When we developed our strategic plan “future directions: towards challenge 2014” there were a series of workshops that helped us redefine and concentrate the effort within that strategic plan. We also have a strategic governance group with key stakeholders. We talk regularly with BLITS and just on a day-to-day basis we talk regularly with our service providers. It is an ongoing, open communication.

As I said at the beginning, delivering disability services is a complex environment where the demand is always high and the service provision is always being stretched. It is about ensuring that whatever service provision we are putting out there is targeted to get the best result that we can. I am happy to hand over to Lois Ford or Martin Hehir to talk more on that day-to-day process.

Mr Hehir: Thanks, minister; that would be good. The minister has already outlined that we have a strategic governance group for disability. That is actually very unusual in the Australian context. That strategic governance group, which until the last meeting I have been a member of for many years, is designed specifically to give the chief executive advice on how to move forward in disability services. It has cross-government representation. It also has community sector representation; indeed, it is co-chaired by a member of the community. In the past that has been a family member of a person with an intellectual disability. Currently it is someone who has had extensive experience in the disability sector.

That process, while it has taken a number of years to really get going, has been very effective. I think we can see that in the release of “future directions: towards challenge 2014” that document was seen as fundamentally turning some of the language around. I do not know if you remember the previous strategic planning document. While the policy was right, the language was—I will not say “very”—slightly bureaucratic. In this document we turned it around to be the language expressed by the person with a disability or their family member. That was very well received by the community. The language is important in so many ways but, as a planning document, it helps us understand really what it is we are seeking to deliver and to make sure that we do keep the client at the centre of our practice.

That was a very important mechanism. I might pass to Lois in a second. The other thing that we do is meet regularly with the sector. There are two forums a year, which I chair, just working with the sector, often around quite specific subject matters, to discuss issues that they have raised with us and talk as a whole sector, given that we are actually a large service provider in the sector ourselves. I might hand over to Lois now.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I just ask a question? When you say you meet with the sector,

can you tell me the organisations and individuals who are in the sector?

Mr Hehir: I can probably get you a list, but it is quite extensive. There are a large number of people who come along. They are often service providers. That is what I would describe as the “sector”. But it includes advocates and individuals as well. We try and keep it broad, recognising that we are part of the service delivery system. We need to make sure that the other part of the service delivery system is there, but we also need to make sure that the voice of the client is well and truly part of those conversations. Advocacy for Inclusion, ADACAS and Carers ACT are at all of those meetings to make sure that we hear very clearly—as well as some actual clients who use our service as well.

We try to make sure that in all our work and all our consultation we get that balance right. I think it is fair to say that it can be difficult; it can be challenging. For example, on the minister’s advisory committee we always make sure that some of the people who are on that committee have a disability. In fact, I think for the last four years we have had quite a number of people. We have worked with people who have an intellectual disability to make sure they can contribute fully to that input to the minister. We try to be quite broad in who we talk to. We also make sure that we think our way through in terms of how we take the messages in.

MR DOSZPOT: My question was: how would individuals who are not really part of a lobby group or representative group be notified that these meetings are taking place?

Mr Hehir: I can probably talk more broadly. The SGG, which is the group that advises me as the chief executive, and the DAC are both publicly advertised. They actually put out expressions of interest to see who would like to participate. Not only do we spread that in the normal media but also we make sure that we use our contact networks. If they have put an expression of interest in or we know about them then there is every capacity for them to have heard about it and to make sure they can participate. For the other meetings where we have a formal agenda, we try to make sure we get a broad cross-section for those. It is not an open invitation; it is more of a broad invitation.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

Ms Ford: Just to enlarge, I think what you are asking is: how can individuals access information and influence policy, I guess, and also bring what they want to bring to the table? Apart from the ones that Mr Hehir has referred to, there are a number of other ways in which we connect with the sector. For example, with the post-schools option area, particularly when we are looking at families, people and points of transition, we are in the schools, the specialist schools, and we also have the post-schools option expo every year which Disability ACT obviously supports. It has a stall there, as do many other providers. That is a forum where people can approach us directly.

We have an open door policy. Whenever we put out information in a general sense more often than not we will put an email address directly to me or whoever the person is to contact. We advertise our disability information line and through that disability information line people will often access me or my team directly. We have our client

feedback system through the internet. As soon as you go onto our website you will see complaint and feedback mechanisms there and that takes you directly down to the disability one. People feed in through that and, in fact, they use that quite robustly to give us compliments and also complain about services.

Through our future directions, obviously we held a wide range of consultations. If there are any particular issues where we are going to be looking at a change or at developing a service then we have a series of consultations. A case in point would be the respite feasibility study. The four stakeholder workshops for that have been widely publicised, with a very good response.

In addition to that, for most significant pieces of policy we try to ensure that policy is influenced outside the traditional lobby groups—so people have good access and feel confident about presenting and advocating for themselves or their family members. We try to make sure that when we are doing a new piece of policy work we have a reference group that is representative of our community. We tend to go reasonably vertically by personally asking people if they would like to be involved, alongside an invitation generally to groups to be represented. So there is a range.

MR DOSZPOT: The reason I ask is that there is, I guess, a growing number of people coming to me with concerns that they are having problems with communicating. I can understand that you cannot meet with every individual, but if there is a forum available, as you are suggesting, obviously it would be good for me to be able to let these people know about it. So if you could—

Ms Burch: We are quite happy to forward you some of that information so you can forward that on to them.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps to the committee and we will forward it to Mr Doszpot.

Ms Burch: Absolutely, Mr Chair.

THE CHAIR: It might be a more appropriate manner.

MR DOSZPOT: Do these meetings have formalised minutes?

Ms Ford: Some meetings are minuted. If they are formal stakeholder group meetings, yes, they are minuted, usually on an action item outcome. But one of the things that I would like to encourage is for people to access the strategic governance group on the website and give their feedback or be involved. If you go into the website the strategic governance group has got a button all of its own with all of the members on it. It is far more empowering for people to be able to access that group, which is having overall governance over the implementation but also the policy direction of the future directions, because it is their future. It is not our future directions; it is their future directions we are trying to articulate and we would really like to encourage people to make contact with the members of the strategic governance group.

We had a series of roundtables last year and indeed another big series of roundtables this year on looking at accessibility through looking at the proposition for a BLITS tick. We have a wide range of people feeding in so obviously the information does get

out to people. But I absolutely understand that, for some people, trying to communicate with the bureaucracy is incredibly difficult for a whole range of reasons. So we try to encourage people to have some channels, like through the Disability Advisory Council, which is on the website with the members' names and contact details, and the strategic governance group. These are groups that have got community participants, carers and individuals with disability on them. They can also go through Advocacy for Inclusion, People with Disability, deafness resource—those areas as well—to get a little bit of extra support to assist them to come to government, because it is difficult. It is a difficult thing for people to do, particularly where they feel they may be compromised by raising an issue. When they are dependent on funding they may feel they are compromised, so they can have a third party do it for them. Those are the areas that I would suggest you would really encourage people to—

Mr Hehir: We can certainly provide to the committee some of those details.

THE CHAIR: Ms Hunter, a new question.

MS HUNTER: Thank you, chair. I did want to go back to your opening statement, minister. You spoke about the new funding that had been put into the 2011-12 budget. There is, as you said, between \$2 million and \$3 million per annum under the banner of addressing demand for disability services. I would request that you provide a breakdown of that \$2 million to \$3 million in those years and where that money will actually be going to because I do not think I want to take up the time right now on the list. But I would very much appreciate the committee having that list.

Ms Ford: Yes, I can do that, absolutely.

MS HUNTER: The other thing that I would like to have detailed on that list is how much will be going to government service delivery and how much will be going to community service delivery. Or could you tell us now whether it is all going to government service delivery?

Ms Ford: At this point in time we would anticipate the majority of it will be in community providers. Since 2003 there has been an increase in funding to community providers by about 150 per cent and we will continue along those lines. Obviously for some of the demand management it will be through an individual support package and those individual support packages—

MS HUNTER: They will decide where they spend—

Ms Ford: Generally those individual support packages are expended in the community unless there are extraordinary circumstances for why government would provide a response.

MS HUNTER: So, Ms Ford, does that mean that there has been an increase in the number of ISPs that you can offer?

Ms Ford: Yes, there has been an increase.

MS HUNTER: And what has that increase been?

Ms Ford: There has been a question on notice on that with the increases detailed in it. At the moment we have 133 ISPs. That figure does go up and down and I think it was from about 90; I cannot quote it but it is in the question on notice.

MS HUNTER: Has that question been answered?

Ms Ford: Yes, it has—quite some time ago.

MS HUNTER: It has been. Sorry.

Ms Ford: That is okay, but there has been an increase in ISPs. It is the preferred method of funding for most individuals and also—

THE CHAIR: Can I just interrupt you? That is a question that is actually not available to this committee.

Ms Ford: We can provide you with that.

Mr Hehir: We can provide you with a copy of our answers.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps if we could just have the detail of the question and the answer.

MS HUNTER: Thank you for that list; that will be very useful. But obviously within that addressing demand we do have the transition from school to adult life. There are a few things in there and I did just want to explore a couple of those. The first one is the post-school options and obviously this has been rather a large issue. It is a large issue for families and particularly for some of those families where the school age was dropped back at Black Mountain and therefore decisions and having to explore futures came earlier than they had expected. I would just like to ask how many hours a week of support is going to be provided for severely disabled children.

Ms Ford: I will hand over to Mr Kenney.

Mr Kenney: The picture there with the transition to work from school is that we are still maintaining the guarantee of 12 hours but this increase gives us significant flexibility to look at that case by case. The 12 hours was never, for the vast majority of people, the ultimate picture because that is combined with other things; for example, HACC funding and case management and behavioural work as well as vocational training. So we are looking at that money maintaining the 12-hour guarantee with greater flexibility now and able to absorb the extra numbers coming through but also combining it with those other sources.

MS HUNTER: One thing that some parents have certainly raised with my office is that they compare that guaranteed 12 hours with, say, New South Wales where you get up to 30 hours. But, Mr Kenney, what you are saying is that there is a minimum guaranteed of 12, and for most people you are saying that they combine it with other things?

Mr Kenney: For most people it is significantly more, yes, because of the way it combines with those other sources.

MS HUNTER: How long would that work take? Will you be working with individual families, particularly those who may not have access to other sources of funding?

Mr Kenney: We have already started that. On our behalf Education writes to all the families in the year leading up to the school-leaving, and we have already engaged with them. We have been doing that work and families will get written confirmation of the arrangements by the end of July, ready for December leaving.

In addition to that we are already working with next year's leavers. We should be able to give them some fairly concrete information by about October. So we are trying to give people as much advance notice, and involve them in the detailed planning from, as early as possible. As Ms Ford was saying earlier, that does involve meetings at schools as well as a lot of individual work.

Ms Burch: And that transitions over a period of three years until you move into a more stable and adult life—connections to community supported vocational activity or a community at-home support program.

MS HUNTER: How many young people is the money expected to cater for?

Mr Kenney: We will have the final numbers by July. At the moment this year I think we are looking at 13 but—

Ms Ford: Just in terms of the numbers, 99 students with a disability for years 11, 12 and 13 have registered. But that does not necessarily mean that they will all require support. The majority of them will not. This year there have been 26 responses to the expression of interest. Of those 26 responses, 13 of those young people will require transitional support to assist them into supported or full-time employment through the transitional service and 13 will require at this point in time a sustained response.

We are anticipating as families gear up a little more towards the end of the year that there will be more applications. So we do not close it off. It depends entirely on where families are at their point in time. But one of the things I did want to say is that of the 23 school leavers in the two years 2009 and 2010 over 20 have started with their basic 12 hours plus their additional support and the majority of those families—up to 20 of them—now have support three-plus days a week alongside their respite and other initiatives that they have.

So the idea is not just to say it is 12 hours and that is it. We need to build that so that as we are moving through that transition we are making sure the support is appropriate to the need and the future aspirations of that young person as opposed to just saying that everybody is pretty homogenous so we will just give you all these hours and then you can go over there and get it.

MS HUNTER: Obviously it has been a stress on some families, a financial stress too, because of having to give up work or go part time.

Ms Ford: We do really try to reassure families that we will work with them on a case-by-case basis, and we have done that. The satisfaction with the level of support in those 23 families was very high.

MS HUNTER: I have one more before we go to some supps, and that is about post-school options and employment options. Are you engaging with the Social Enterprise Hub and also how is it fitting in with the ACT government's own policy around employing people with disabilities?

Ms Burch: Lois will talk to that but certainly the social enterprise hubs are a key component and a very well supported component in order for young people with disability to look creatively. We have all been to various functions where there are some of those disabilities. The recently released ACT public service employment strategy talks about employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, migrants and people with a disability and it is certainly something that this department will look at and see how flexible we can be about that. Certainly from a number of conversations I have had with people with a disability it is about flexible employment arrangements as well. It is about thinking across a whole range of aspects and how innovative we can be to support people who have a capacity for employment in a whole range of environments.

THE CHAIR: Before you answer, Ms Porter has a supplementary, then Mr Doszpot and Ms Bresnan and then I have one on this general area.

MS BRESNAN: I have one on social procurement as well.

Ms Ford: I will just respond to this one and that might cover a few. Apart from actually putting funding into Social Ventures we also provide in-kind support through one of our very senior policy officers, who is the chair of Social Ventures ACT. We work closely with Social Ventures on any proposals they bring forward to us, in particular where those proposals are building employment for people with disability.

Alongside that, we have used some of the community access dollars—that is the support that people get to develop social, recreational and vocational support—to enable individuals to purchase some of those services from social enterprises so that they can use that as an introduction to developing their vocational future with the hope that people may then move into either work experience or to supported employment in areas that families and some providers never thought they would. We have had some good success with that.

We are also supporting any small initiative that looks like it would provide employment to connecting back into social enterprise or to Social Ventures so that they get the benefit of the support that Social Ventures get.

On the procurement side we have been working closely with Procurement Solutions to ensure that they can start understanding, working with and incorporating social procurement into the aspects of their procurement. I think it is on 8 June that there is quite an extensive presentation to community providers so that they can understand how they can incorporate social enterprises into their business.

So we are very open door on this. We want people to come and talk to us about their ideas and looking at how those ideas will fit into any of the funded programs but also how we can link them more proactively to move people into areas of particularly the social enterprise because that is a strong platform and vehicle for employment of people with disability who will probably not move into formal employment or supported employment.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I just ask you what you mean by community providers in your briefing.

Ms Ford: Sorry?

MS LE COUTEUR: You said that you were briefing community providers on 8 June. Who do you mean by that?

Ms Ford: Sorry, the community providers across home and community care and DHCS community providers have been invited to, I think it is, a two or three-hour seminar being hosted by Procurement Solutions in which Social Ventures' Kevin Robbie and Mandy Richards are coming in to do a presentation on that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I am more interested in who you are talking to.

MS HUNTER: So Procurement Solutions are listening and have understood?

Ms Ford: Yes, absolutely. They have actually been quite proactive.

MS BRESNAN: I have a question about Social Ventures. I think the minister and I spoke at the same forum. It was over a year ago. There was an announcement made about Social Ventures. How is it actually translating into government services and what they are doing? We asked Health the same question and they said that they were working on it. We know there have been a couple of instances over the past year where there have been businesses that could have been supported but have not actually been within government. What are you actually doing, I guess, to not just tell community orgs about it but actually do it as a matter of practice—not just saying, “Here are some guidelines,” but making sure it actually happens?

Ms Ford: Yes, absolutely.

MS BRESNAN: What is the department actually doing to meet that?

Ms Ford: We are working—because it is new, it is like every new thing. It takes up—

MS BRESNAN: It is not that new.

Ms Ford: No, but it does take time for people to remember when they are doing their procurement that this may or may not apply. So there is a bit of education going on there. I understand that Procurement Solutions have met with government agencies to talk to them about thinking about this and giving them ideas of areas where social procurement would work well in their business. We will continue to build on that.

Also, the policy around the social procurement has been widely distributed. I understand that Social Ventures are keeping a very close eye as well on what is going out in terms of procurement. They have been quite challenging if they find that those areas are not being addressed.

MS BRESNAN: Like I said, we are aware of one in particular. I know that policy is there but are people made aware of it? It does not seem to be translating to the actual procurement of services.

Ms Ford: Yes.

MS BRESNAN: Other jurisdictions have been doing this for some time; so it is actually not a new thing as such.

Ms Burch: Look, I will say no. I remember that forum and I think it is something that we need to do better and get into our basic day-to-day functions. Sometimes it is simple things, small things—for example, catering. Using a particular caterer provides social enterprise. I know this is not in disability, but in Housing ACT, in our total facilities maintenance, our existing tender and contract has an element of it. That will be strengthened within the next tender. So we are, as we can, in the department doing what we can to make it part and parcel of procurement.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter was next.

MR DOSZPOT: I have got one regarding this procurement.

MS PORTER: Let him ask his question.

MR DOSZPOT: You have sort of broadened the procurement discussion; so I would like to ask: what is the situation in relation to giving preference to Canberra-based companies for some of the procurement of products for people provided with wheelchairs?

Ms Burch: Have you got an example?

MR DOSZPOT: People are provided with wheelchairs through the department. If there is an issue with these wheelchairs they have to be taken to Sydney or the people have to wait for someone from Sydney to come down to carry out a repair, which takes quite a number of days.

MR HARGREAVES: Do you have any exemption to provisions in the procurement act to allow that to happen?

Mr Hehir: Sorry, I think we may have talked about this last year, Mr Doszpot; so I—

MR DOSZPOT: I do not think we had any satisfactory outcome of it.

Mr Hehir: I must admit that I am not sure who owns the wheelchairs but if it is their wheelchair we would not be involved in the procurement of the—

MR DOSZPOT: No, it is not an individual's wheelchair. It is something that is on—it is a definite government contract because the people who have been—

Mr Hehir: Is that a Health contract?

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry?

Mr Hehir: Is that an ACT Health contract?

Ms Ford: Through the equipment services, Health equipment services.

Mr Hehir: Sorry, that might be where the disconnect is. We had the children and young people's equipment loan scheme, ACT Health had the adult loan scheme for equipment. I am not sure if that is what you are referring to, but I assume Ros might know.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, let me ask you this—

MR HARGREAVES: It may be a better idea to put it on notice and then both sides of the question can get answered for you.

MR DOSZPOT: Sure, but maybe you can give me some satisfaction on this one. If you are saying that the children's equipment is through you, what is the situation there? If there is a problem with the children's equipment that is supplied, is that all handled locally or do they still have to have the interstate people come to fix the problems that occur?

THE CHAIR: Sorry, this is a slightly different question to what was asked. Just put a peg in that and hold it because we are talking about the provision of after-school care and support for kids with disabilities.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, I thought the discussion went in that direction.

MS PORTER: Can I ask my supplementary then?

THE CHAIR: Yes, a supplementary from Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, my supplementary is this: in the rest of that text below what we were talking about before, where we were talking about transitioning from school to adult life—

Ms Burch: Yes.

MS PORTER: it goes on to talk about specialist after-school care and holiday support for young people with complex behaviour et cetera. I was wanting to know a bit more about that part of it.

Ms Burch: We currently provide after-school care programs in the north and the south. There is a specialist—I think there is a wheelie program at Black Mountain school. But certainly a number of people in this room would have been approached by

families who were seeking more opportunities for after-school care programs.

So we commissioned—we put in place a piece of work with Copland to look at after-school and vacation care services. That work has been commissioned by Courage Partners. They are doing that work and we expect that to be finished at the end of June or thereabouts. That is to look at teenagers with very complex and challenging behaviours—it is predominantly attached to challenging behaviour, whether that is through autism or development delays.

We will look at the mainstream settings because a number of families have said that regardless of whether their child is in a mainstream or special school, they want broader opportunities. But I have also been approached by families with children in a special school that want the after-school provision in a special school.

What this piece of work is looking at is what is best practice, what is the existing demand, how is that being met and how can we enhance the program and improve those opportunities, whether it is a new service, an expansion of service or some finetuning of existing providers? Certainly, part and parcel of it goes to probably one of the first questions about how we talk with the sector. The respite steering group is certainly part of that deliberation and part of that conversation as well.

The respite houses are traditionally overnight stays in blocks of time. But can that model be where the place is familiar to the children? Can it be used for other opportunities as well? So it is a piece of work; there is some money in this budget. I am looking forward to it and I have made a commitment in the Assembly that from the first term next year we will certainly look to having that in place.

MS BRESNAN: Is there anything in the national disability agreement around, I guess, a consistency of the number of hours that are provided or how things should be provided? Is that relevant at all?

Ms Burch: No.

MS BRESNAN: So there is nothing in there?

Ms Burch: No, other than being as flexible in providing those opportunities as you can. Some of the nuance we need to work through is what is it, what does this look like, is it in a special school or mainstream and how can we accommodate those families that have a desire for both? Both absolutely should be considered and provided an opportunity.

Can I just make one more comment too on education—employment, rather? We spoke in the main around post-school options and social enterprise. Also, what we have brought into the quality of life grants is a line of \$20,000 to provide retraining or educational opportunities. You could have been, for example, a mechanic or a trades-based person and then have a disability where you lose physical functions. So this is providing support to re-skill and retrain to find alternative careers and life choices as well. That will be included within the next round of the quality of life grants.

We have got some numbers on the ISP, Ms Hunter, if you would like those. In 2006-

07 the number of ISPs were 99 at a value of \$6 million. In 2010-11, that has grown to 133 at \$8.3 million. So this investment may increase that again. This relates to the question on notice. We are quite happy to leave this with the secretariat.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a supplementary on the original question.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, the question that Ms Hunter asked regarding the number of support hours each week. Ms Ford, you elaborated and provided quite a bit of detail. You mentioned that there is a group of around 20 that has approximately three days. Is that correct?

Ms Ford: Three days plus.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Ford: Including other—

MR DOSZPOT: My question is a simple one: those three days equate to how many hours?

Ms Ford: It is on an individual basis so I would have to break that down for you. I am sorry; I have not got those in front of me. They would be up to—no, I will not even make a conjecture on it. The information we got back was three days plus, but we went and re-interviewed those families, re-met with them, because we made a commitment as they were coming through that we would go back and see whether they had the supports they needed. In going back and meeting that commitment, that was when we talked to them about what they had. I can let you know a breakdown of that.

MR DOSZPOT: I am just asking to make sure that we can compare those. So yes, I would appreciate that; thank you.

Ms Ford: Yes; certainly.

Ms Burch: This is our second year, going into our third year, of the change from year 14 to year 12 or 20 to 18 years. We understand that that transition has been of concern for those parents and families that were in those special schools that had an expectation that had changed midstream, so to speak, but those that enter in to enrol in Black Mountain now know that the year is year 12 and 18. We will continue to provide this level of post-school options for them.

MR DOSZPOT: Just on that, these three that we are talking about belong to that transitional group?

Ms Ford: That was the families and individuals who were transitioning in 2009 and 2010.

THE CHAIR: So if we go to page 357—

Ms Ford: I think it might have been 2008-09. I will just need to clarify—2008-09.

MR DOSZPOT: If you are going to get back with those other figures, perhaps you can include that as well.

Ms Burch: Yes, certainly; I will clarify that.

THE CHAIR: If we go to page 357 of budget paper 4, the accountability indicators for this output class, and we go to the accountability indicator c, which we have been discussing, the hours, it has gone from 200,000 hours to 204,000 hours. That covers the period when the decision was made to reduce—school leavers dropped from 20 to 18 years of age.

Mr Hehir: The community access hours—200,000, 204,000, is actually the target to the estimated outcome. That is all done within the same year.

THE CHAIR: Same year, yes. But this covers the period when the school leavers—when the age was reduced. And this year, the coming year, it is going to 233,000 hours. Is that not a reflection that perhaps the policy was not as well thought out as it could have been? There is a huge gap there: 29,000 hours is a significant number of extra hours.

Ms Burch: I think Mr Hehir and Mr Kenney could provide some comment on that.

Mr Hehir: I think that the decision was made the previous year. I think Lois was talking about the 2008, 2009 and 2010 school leavers. We will check that, but I think this reflects the continued growth in the budget. The minister has, at the start, in her speech, reflected that, over the last eight to 10 years, there has been a 100 per cent increase in the dollars within disability services. This reflects further dollars coming in, both through the specific funding identified within this budget paper and also in part through an increase in funding that was negotiated a number of years ago from the Australian government.

So in actual fact we talk about an increase of just over \$2 million this year. In reality, if you have a look at the figures you will see an increase of 9.7 million from one year to the next. That is made up of a large number of factors, but one of the key elements there is \$2½ million additional funding from the Australian government—which was in the forward estimates, so it is not an increase in the forward estimates, but it is an increase from year to year.

What we have been able to do is actually plan. I think we signed that agreement five years ago. We have talked about this before, but they gave us a lump sum, which the Australian government likes to do, and they expected us just to spread it evenly across the five years. We went back to them and said: “Hang on. That does not work for us. We cannot get all the infrastructure and everything else we want in place at the start. Why don’t we start very low and ramp it up at the end?” That is why you see quite large jumps in the level of funding in the last two to three years. We also did that because the Australian government tends to carry on from the final year. We did not want to have a low base; we wanted a high base for them to carry on from. That has enabled us to plan a significant increase in service delivery over quite some period of time. The main areas where we tend to focus that are accommodation support,

community support and community access hours. I think you will see that there is a large growth in most of those elements.

So I do not think it reflects a lack of planning. I think that what it reflects is a continued increase in the budget. I think—from memory; I hope I do not get this too wrong—that the average growth in our budget over the last seven or eight years has been in the order of nine to 11 per cent. It varies a little bit from year to year. This year's growth is very similar to that. It has been about continually looking at the services, continuing to think about how those services are provided and then having a look at what else we need to add and how we can do it better. For example, look at the respite centre base. Those numbers, at d, tend to remain relatively static, but the figure below that, for respite in own home, you will see, has grown dramatically year on year on year. Again, that is about providing flexibility for what the client actually wants, where they are most comfortable and how families feel. We try to grow that sort of stuff on that sort of basis.

I do not know whether Lois wants to correct me on anything.

THE CHAIR: Before you go, the note for the previous year, in the 2010-11 budget, says that the increase was associated with new funding through the national disability agreement. It does not say in the previous year's budget that it was targeted for particularly the kids leaving school. So the question is this: did we make adequate allowance in these years for the kids transitioning from school? We dropped the age and put the pressure back on the families to provide alternative resources for their students. But at the same time I note in your note 3 that it is also for other activities.

So what is the split on the 29,000 hours? Let us call it 30,000 hours. If there are 20 kids, that is 1,500 hours each; that is 30 hours a week. As we would all know, I am sure it helps but it does not necessarily cover everything that has now been put back on the families for those additional two years. And it does not address the extra need in the community for those others that are seeking, as the minister said, to realise their potential and to have that assistance. What is the split on the 29,000 hours? What assessment have you done on the effectiveness of the delivery of these hours? And what is the unmet need and have we made adequate provision for it into the future?

Ms Burch: Can I just make a comment on planning and our growth; then I will probably go to Martin Hehir, Ms Ford and Mr Kenney. As Mr Hehir has said, we have had around nine per cent growth in each and every budget. That shows that we plan to meet, as we can, a growing demand. We would not be the only jurisdiction to say that the demand is high. On community access hours, we have increased provision by 106 per cent; on community supports, it is a 132 per cent increase; and the flexible respite has increased by 96 per cent.

The officials can talk on the detail underneath here, but we are showing a budget. We are showing a response to our disability sector and to those families and individuals with a disability of over 100 per cent. That reflects planning. That reflects the discussion with my colleagues and how we provide or improve the provision of services to these families and individuals. And that is not government services alone. Increasingly we go to the community sector to provide these services as well, but Disability ACT is always the service provider. When all other services fail, people

will come to Disability ACT.

Mr Hehir: I am sorry if I gave the impression that this was not about doing that, because it is about that. But, as I said, we have had an increase in funding over quite a number of years. And I think that the policy decision was not made this year; it was made the year before. That was the point I was trying to make. We can certainly give you a split in the dollars.

THE CHAIR: The dollars and the hours, please?

Mr Hehir: Yes. Dollars and hours?

THE CHAIR: Yes. Anybody can say, “We have increased it by nine per cent.” But is it nine per cent more effective? Do you get a nine per cent better outcome? The answers are often remarkably different.

Mr Hehir: No.

Ms Ford: Can I just address some of the planning issues? Sorry, Martin.

Mr Hehir: No; absolutely. Indeed, that particular service measure is an hours of service measure. So it is a 15 per cent increase effectively—14; 15 if you do not want to go too tight on the percentage points. It is in that order, which we think is again quite a significant increase for that particular service.

THE CHAIR: Of that increase, how much has gone to addressing service disabilities?

Mr Hehir: We will give you that. I will have to take that one on notice.

THE CHAIR: If there are some for the school leavers and some for others, perhaps you are getting the balance right. If it is all going to look after the school leavers, it would indicate to me that you did not get the policy right in the implementation.

Mr Hehir: That is right.

Ms Ford: School leavers is definitely not.

Mr Hehir: We will get you the split so that you can have a look at that.

MS HUNTER: And also in the note I notice that it does talk about holiday and after-school care. Could we also have figures on that, thanks.

Mr Hehir: In terms of effectiveness, that is something we do try and routinely look at. Again you will see that there are some areas where, in particular—say, respite—it is relatively static, but other areas that we tend to grow because that is where people tell us they want the service. We do respond to that to make sure that we are able to provide a response. But we do also regularly have a spot audit program around how people are delivering the service, the governance of that service and also the effectiveness of it.

In terms of unmet need, I think we have said here in previous years that there is more demand and there is more need. There is the known amount, but there is also an unknown amount that we cannot quantify in terms of unmet needs. There will be a number of families and parents who are supporting a person with a disability. There will be individuals who are choosing not to access services who are not regularly in contact with us. What we do know is that there is an unmet need in terms of expressed demand and there is also likely to be an additional element over that of unknown unmet need.

That is not unique in Australia; in fact, it is common in Australia. If you have had the opportunity to have a read of the national disability insurance scheme draft proposal from the Productivity Commission, it absolutely acknowledges that; in fact, its level of increase proposed through the NDIS alone is in the order of \$6 billion. It is either just over or just under. Against an annual budget in the order of \$6.2 billion or \$6.3 billion, that says that across Australia we are about halfway in terms of being able to meet the need that is actually in the community. But we can also see that that number, split across the jurisdictions, is an enormous number.

Certainly while the government has significant increased disability funding, we would absolutely have to acknowledge that it will not meet all our unmet need. What we are seeking to do, as with all rationed systems, is try to deal with the highest level of demand—deal with crisis in large part. We are certainly looking forward to having the opportunity to read the Australian government's response to the Productivity Commission paper, certainly a worthwhile piece of—

MS HUNTER: I will just add that Victoria has offered to trial the NDIS. Is that the case?

Mr Hehir: I think there will be a long queue of people offering to trial the NDIS. We do not have a decision from the Australian government at this point. What we have is a draft discussion paper from the Productivity Commission. There are some interesting elements to that discussion paper on which I think all jurisdictions are providing their input to the Productivity Commission. And it is not just all jurisdictions; many sector groups and individuals will provide their response back into the Productivity Commission. But I do not know how many states have offered themselves for that one.

MS HUNTER: Has the ACT offered itself up?

Mr Hehir: I do not know whether we have formally offered ourselves.

THE CHAIR: We are drifting here from the original question. We will get an answer; then we will go to Ms Le Couteur for a supplementary and then go to the next question.

Mr Hehir: I do not know whether we have formally offered ourselves. We are probably waiting to see where the Australian government goes with it. Asking for an additional \$6 billion per year is a big ask, and how the Australian government will respond is an unknown at this point. We will just have to wait and see. Certainly we

would be interested. I think we would be very interested in it. It would be fantastic to have an outcome here in the ACT where they were trialling it. Were they trialling years 13 to 14 or 14 to 15?

THE CHAIR: We will move away. Ms Le Couteur with a supplementary; then we will go to a new question, which would fall to Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. Minister, you mentioned quite a few sentences ago now that in the last couple of years there was a nine per cent increase in voted funds for the disability area, which led quite nicely into this. The Treasurer and health minister talked a few times about the possibility of some sort of growth formula for this area. Are you looking at that? Is there a specific formula that has been used in this budget or was it just good advocacy on your part? Was there something more organised?

Ms Burch: Good advocacy. We know that you could have a built-in growth factor, because we know our demographic data, and our known demand has that. We have not secured a built-in growth, but what we have done is to secure the growth by putting forward solid arguments that demonstrate what we can do with our targeted initiatives. In particular, I think there are a few targeted initiatives in this program. But if Mr Hehir wants to wax lyrical on this—

Mr Hehir: I just think—

THE CHAIR: No, he will not wax lyrical. We have done two questions in one hour. At this rate we will be here at 11 o'clock tonight.

Mr Hehir: I suppose the only bit that I would add to the minister's answer is this. I think all jurisdictions are going to have a look at what the NDIS does, because that is exactly what is proposed. It is about making sure that it is an entitlement as opposed to a ration system. I suppose it was a difficult ask—given that that paper came out during the budget development, when it has very clearly got that proposal within it—for the government then to pre-empt the outcome of that and actually have a look at it. That was certainly one of the interesting aspects of the budget paper.

THE CHAIR: Because I am a nice fellow, the smallest of supplementaries from Ms Bresnan.

MS BRESNAN: I will be very quick. In the last estimates, I think there was some discussion about work being done with Treasury. Is that still—

Ms Burch: It is an ongoing discussion. Yes, it is an ongoing discussion.

Mr Hehir: We had the data up on our website in terms of our analysis. As I said, the release of that Productivity Commission draft report—

MS BRESNAN: It is impacting on everything else.

Mr Hehir: It is the most forward-thinking piece of policy development in this context in Australia that I have ever seen, really. It is the equivalent of Medicare, in a sense.

Ms Burch: And it certainly helped us when we formulated our response to the national disability insurance. Would we like to host it? Yes and no. It is always a challenge hosting something like that. It is a fantastic conversation—the NDIS—but there are some challenges in there and there are still some unanswered questions.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. I would like to ask about WATs.

THE CHAIR: What's on first or who's on second?

MS LE COUTEUR: What's on first? Wheelchair accessible taxis.

Ms Burch: Don't sit next to Mr Hargreaves.

MS LE COUTEUR: There is a what and a why. Is it possible—you may need to take this on notice—to get an estimate, on a whole-of-government basis, on what is actually being spent on wheelchair accessible taxis? There is going to be a new centralised booking system, there are taxi subsidy benefits and there is the implicit subsidy of the taxi licences. And I believe there are some—yes. Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: It is 333, 108—

MS LE COUTEUR: My question actually is a whole-of-government question, which is why I am assuming you may have to take it on notice.

Ms Burch: I am quite happy to take it—

MS LE COUTEUR: My supplementary to this is—

Ms Burch: Yes.

MR HARGREAVES: Just answer the first bit.

MS LE COUTEUR: When I can get a word in.

MR HARGREAVES: Are you a clairvoyant?

THE CHAIR: Members, one speaker at a time.

MR HARGREAVES: You have been reading the tea leaves.

MS HUNTER: Just to clarify there, it is about getting, right across government, how much we are spending on wheelchair accessible taxis.

Ms Burch: There are a number of initiatives through TAMS around the secretariat and centralised booking system so there are some budget lines in there.

MS LE COUTEUR: And you have put in the subsidies.

Ms Burch: And then we have put in the additional subsidy scheme. But that is not just for wheelchairs. We needed to clarify this. I went over the budget paper and I said: “Wheelchairs. I think in editing this they dropped out a few words.” So it is broader. This is taxi concessions, broadly.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Hehir: And the majority of use is actually outside the WATs.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Just to give you that bit on the taxi subsidy scheme initiative, we gave a 32 per cent increase for both—as the minister said, both across the wheelchair and the non-wheelchair component. We have 338 people who are in wheelchairs in the scheme who receive a 75 per cent subsidy; the increase of that in the budget has meant that the subsidy amount has gone from \$17 to \$22. And then for the 2,700—

Mr Hehir: Sorry, Bronwen; that is for the 50 per cent, not the 75 per cent.

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is for the 75 per cent—sorry; the other way around, yes. That is the increase from \$26 to \$34 for the wheelchair number. For the non-wheelchair number, which is 2,724 participants, or numbers who are in the scheme, the increase has gone from \$17 to \$22. But that is just for that initiative.

Ms Burch: The other part of that is moving from a paper base into a card base. That is in response to what people have said to us. Managing a paper-based system, as with all paper-based systems, Ms Le Couteur, as you would understand, is inherently cumbersome.

MS LE COUTEUR: A few million years ago when I was working in what became InTACT, one of my systems was a very early version of this voucher scheme. But moving that along, looking at the smart cards, how much are you spending on scoping that and who is doing it? Will it be in relationship to what you are doing with MyWay? Are you using the same as other parts of the government—MyWay?

Ms Overton-Clarke: There is \$300,000 in the budget to scope it. We have not worked through the details of that yet, but we absolutely will be working with both ACTION and the taxis to identify the broadest possible scope. So yes: particularly the taxi industry, but also with ACTION.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is just one long surprise. I am discovering that you really only deal with people under 65—but you deal with over-65 people, or will, for the taxi scheme. Is that right?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes.

Ms Burch: Taxi concessions.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that the only thing you deal with for over-65s?

Ms Burch: Taxi concessions are those people with—

Mr Hehir: General concessions as well.

Ms Burch: Yes. Those with the taxi concessions, it is my understanding, are people with a long-term disability or a medical condition that is long term and then there are some temporary taxi concessions available for people who—

MS LE COUTEUR: People who have accidents?

Ms Burch: That is right.

Mr Hehir: To answer the question in terms of people over the age of 65, our concessions program would have a large component. The electricity and water concessions program we have would have a large component there. And they are in the same area; they are in the territorial part of the budget.

MS LE COUTEUR: I guess I should get back to the smart cards. What is your time line for the scheme?

Ms Burch: We will look at this work over this coming 12 months.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that just for the scoping or for the actual introduction?

Ms Overton-Clarke: No, for the scoping.

MS LE COUTEUR: When do you think it is likely that the actual scheme will start?

Ms Overton-Clarke: We would have to identify whether we want to identify something in next year's budget process, so we would need to—

Ms Burch: The logic is that we will do it this coming financial year, for implementation, all things being fair and straightforward, in the next financial year. But until you start these pieces of work—sometimes you do not quite know.

MR HARGREAVES: I have got a new question now.

THE CHAIR: I see that you have a question, Mr Hargreaves. Do not waste it.

MR HARGREAVES: An hour at a time. I have grown noticeably older waiting for this. Mr Chair, minister, friends, colleagues, Romans—lend me your ears. Can I talk to you about the item in BP4, page 347, please. There are bits and pieces scattered throughout this massive tome for the budget, but I refer to the future models of respite care. It talks about future models of centre-based respite care being subject to a feasibility study. I would like to know how the study is going and what the sector's view on it is. There was another question, but I might come to it later.

Ms Burch: I will go to Mr Kenney on this but respite is something where we have children, teens and adult respite houses. Some of those properties, whilst they have been renovated and improved, are not purpose built. This study will look at the

physical form but also the model of care—looking at how we provide that flexibility for individuals and families and whether respite is in a block of one or two weeks or over the weekend or shorter term. We have a steering group with people and families that are using the respite services, so people who are well versed in what it looks like now and would have a clear view about what they consider it may look like. But as far as where the progress is at is concerned, I am quite happy to hand over to Austin.

Mr Kenney: Thank you. The feasibility study is progressing on schedule and should be reporting to us in July—reporting to the department at that stage. What the consultants are doing is looking at the things that have just been described to you in terms of the built form and the different ways that that can operate. But also they are looking at demographic modelling, trying to project into future need and looking at good practice models in other jurisdictions and in other parts of the world.

MR HARGREAVES: For example? Which other jurisdictions are we looking at—just Australian ones or overseas ones?

Mr Kenney: Both. For example, some areas have a holiday-based model; others have very flexible models close to the child's home—that sort of thing. At this stage, we are looking primarily at centres based within Canberra. What we are trying to do is extend our thinking, through our stakeholder reference group and through some workshops that we ran last week. We had four half-day workshops on Thursday and Friday of last week, looking at a range of issues, including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the context of respite, after-school care and vacation care and a workshop on innovative models. What we are trying to do is really get the benefit of a range of experiences and outlooks on this.

One of the things that we are finding in talking to the people is that everyone does have a different take on what they need. For some people, the stability and security of a regular slot a week on a predictable cycle when their loved one will be in respite care is very special to them because it gives them a block of time. For other people, much more flexible responses are important, maybe around behavioural crises, particular points in the week or particular points in the school term, to help them sustain an ongoing pattern. Different people value different things.

Equally, in the built environment we are looking at some quite interesting architectural ideas in terms of how we balance the requirements to make the environment a safe and comfortable one. You might think about lifting issues or bathing issues, those sorts of things, where there are health and safety requirements and issues of dignity and so on in client care. But also it is about how that looks like something homely and whether there are going to be differences for different age groups in terms of what is visually appealing. You might explore whether an older age group would like a particular look and a younger age group might like something quite different. We even tested that amongst ourselves as to what sorts of things are appealing and what is acceptable, even down to—

MR HARGREAVES: That is a pretty scary thing to tell me.

Mr Kenney: Well, quite interesting conversations about whether rooms need windows, and my instant reaction is, yes, they do, and then someone else is saying,

“Well actually, in terms of managing sensory stimulus, there will be some people where maybe you would think twice and you might have some—

MR HARGREAVES: You could paint one on the walls.

Mr Kenney: You might have various options like that. There is some quite exciting technology available as well when you start to look at what the home of the future will look like. We need to consider how much of that we want to embrace at this stage or are we running too far ahead of ourselves and will that create an alien or a clinical environment. So there is some very interesting work happening there.

MR HARGREAVES: At the conclusion of this, that will result in additional capital works going forward I would imagine, would it not?

Mr Kenney: At this stage we are asking the consultants to advise us on the likely future need and what that would look like in terms of build provision, and that will include some architectural works. So, from that, we will be able to give advice on what we think costs would be if we did move forward at a particular pace.

MR HARGREAVES: When do you reckon that will be ready to go to the minister for progression to cabinet?

Mr Kenney: We will be getting the report in July, and I think August or September. Yes, August.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you. I only have two questions: the second one is very brief.

Ms Burch: Sorry, can I just add to that if I can, if you are going to something outside respite?

MR HARGREAVES: This has to do with respite.

Ms Burch: Okay.

MR HARGREAVES: Knock yourself out; I am not the judge.

Ms Burch: It is just something I have been pleased to see, and we are talking about government provision of respite services. Recently a number of us were down in the beautiful Murrumbidgee area of Kambah where Tandem looked at establishing a respite house down there.

MR HARGREAVES: Yes.

Ms Burch: So it is good to see that the community sector, the non-government provider, is also stepping into this space. And that will also inform. I think, as a society, it needs a government and non-government response to this.

MR HARGREAVES: The reason why we provide respite care is because the carers are absolutely knackered and absolutely blown away. They just cannot cope, so we try

to give them some relief. What sort of provision of assistance and support for those carers do you provide along the way to stop them getting to that point?

Ms Burch: Our flexible respite hours have increased by 90-plus per cent. So that is around responding to in-home respite, and also those community support access hours have increased. And it is respite in a place. The young person or child or person with a disability goes to a place for respite. But it could be an afternoon off with a community access activity. It is about respite effect. In last year's budget we continued on the older carers' respite. I think it is two weeks in a year that we provide respite care for older carers. But Austin Kenney or Lois Ford can talk about that carer support arrangement.

MR HARGREAVES: When you do, where I was headed—and I can conclude at this point on that second-last question—was about how you know that the carers have got to the stage where they need it rather than want it.

Ms Burch: Yes, that is more nuanced. Some of the carers are so committed, as they are, to their loved ones and families that often it needs someone to remind them of the need for respite. That often goes to communication, whether they are under the service provision of government or a service provision with a community provider. But it is inherently important that this stuff is planned. And we have spoken about transition from school. We also have put in strong futures planning, and part and parcel of that is not only what the life looks like for the person with a disability but what the life looks like for their families and carers. Certainly, built into that is not only the community access, employment opportunities or activities but those support structures that are so critical and vital for the carer.

As I said earlier, we are looking at a significant number of carers that will age and will not be primary carers for a range of reasons, which is why we have got to build up our response. And whilst it could be seen as an emergency response when that household breaks down, we need to get in early and that is why the growth and the support around community support and access and planning for futures is so vitally important.

Mr Kenney: Increasingly, we are using the language of early intervention—meaning, really, any of our services or strategies which promote a positive outcome and reduce the likelihood of a poor outcome. And the front line of that would be the work we are doing to develop the availability of information to people through our information service and our website. And we are working with some non-government organisations around creating a hub that will include local area coordination as well as our own information service.

I think that all the work we have been doing on flexible respite, which creates opportunities throughout people's day-to-day lives as opposed to blocks of time when the person with a disability goes away, has been an important development. And the increase of that has been described already.

The work on post-school transitions is very important, because that does create the prospect of a pressure point in a family's life where there is a change in the balance of where time is spent and where the responsibilities lie. So a lot of effort goes into

working with families through that process.

The crux of this—and it is in the national disability strategy and it is mirrored in our own future directions policy framework—really is individualised planning and models like family governance, so really working with people to understand what is most helpful to them rather than assuming automatic policy settings—that there is a series of services we funnel people into.

So a great deal of effort goes into the individualised work. To support that, we are funding local area coordination. We are also case coordinating in the region of 40 people who are on our register of interests. Backing all that up, we have got advocacy and carers' advocacy in order to make sure the voices that do not get to us directly get to us by some other route. So I think that would sum up our early intervention program.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you. A very brief last question: if you are feeling left out, Kate, just pass me a question and I will get it asked.

Ms Starick: No, I am okay.

THE CHAIR: She is in line for an award for her behaviour at this stage. Ms Porter had a supplementary to Mr Hargreaves's question, then Mr Hanson has a new question.

MS BRESNAN: I have got a new question, too.

THE CHAIR: Well, we will work our way through the new questions.

MS PORTER: Thank you, chair. You mentioned several times, minister, in the answer to that previous question about respite from Mr Hargreaves about the older people as they age. My supplementary is really about accommodation services generally for those kinds of people, because it is mentioned on 357 that there is additional money for accommodation services. I wondered whether this is in response to what you raised in your opening remarks about the need to reflect that increase in the number of older people that are looking after older people in their care.

Ms Burch: We know that the demand for accommodation services will increase. I do not think there is anyone who will talk to an ageing carer that would not appreciate that that is their primary concern: how do they secure accommodation and support structures for their children? Whether their child is 14 or 64, it is still at the forefront of their minds. So some of the growth in here is about those support structures around accommodation.

The built form in many ways is the easy part of it. You can build a house and you can have it purpose built to age in place and have it strong enough to have the therapy and lifts and all that attached to it. But it is the support component that is significant to go in there. We have made an increase over the last number of years of this, but we will continue to make an increase in that. And in some ways the—well, it is not in some ways—intentional communities are part of that new form, that new model of accommodation arrangement that supports young people, that is driven by people, the

getting a life program.

Parents are ageing, and they want to secure accommodation for their young people. So it was early in the year that we made the announcement of a complex at Mawson. I think it is about 25. The final design is yet to be confirmed, but it is about 25 units which will accommodate Housing tenants and up to five young people with a disability. And by name and by nature, an intentional community is that the rest of the tenancies will move there with a clear intention of being a supportive, informal arrangement that enhances the other formal arrangements that are in place for those young people. But on accommodation growth, Mr Kenney or Ms Ford may have some comments.

Mr Kenney: We have got a reasonably accurate projection, I think, of the situation in relation to ageing carers, looking to the future. The biggest single group of carers are between 25 and 44, and there are just under 1,700 of those. And most of those are the parents of children and younger children. When we start to get to the more mature age, there are over 500 in the 45 to 64 bracket and then just over 200 over 65. Our experience is that something like—well, the language, the phrase, we use is “natural support failure”. And we will have in the region—

MS PORTER: Sorry, I did not quite catch that.

Mr Kenney: “Natural support failure”. That refers to where a situation that is underpinned by informal carers cannot continue.

MS PORTER: Right.

Mr Kenney: We have an estimate of natural support failure which would be in the low 20s per year, not quite half of whom—maybe 11 of whom if we average it—will need some sort of accommodation response. With the line that we have for increasing supported accommodation, we are looking at something like 16 additional places in supported accommodation this year. So that is really where we are thinking of those people. And these are people we already know and are already working with.

So it is quite important as well that, even though we are recognising and we are coming to a point of significant difficulty for many people, we are already engaged with them and working with them on a plan that includes supported accommodation and in the meantime offering the other supports that I was referring to earlier.

MS PORTER: So given the ageing of the population, are we expecting that this growth will continue exponentially?

Mr Kenney: I think at the moment there is a bulge, which I have described, and that will move through. The population of Canberra is quite a dynamic thing and it is difficult to look too many years ahead. But certainly we have got a handle on who is coming through at the moment.

Ms Burch: Just to recap a comment I made in my opening statement, over the next 10 years 26 per cent of carers will look to move away from being a primary carer.

MS PORTER: Yes.

Ms Burch: So we know that we need to factor in that growth and respond in the physical form but—

MS PORTER: I should have written that down when you were commenting, sorry.

Ms Burch: also in the support form.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan has a supplementary to this, as does Mr Doszpot, and then we will go to Mr Hanson.

MS BRESNAN: Obviously you have mentioned the intentional community. We know there is also the Community Living Project so—

Ms Burch: That is right.

MS BRESNAN: I am just wondering where the government sits on these. They are different but similar models. Parents and families will see different ideas and different approaches as being suitable for them. How are you incorporating that in terms of future thinking on these issues so you are not just looking at one model but at different ones?

Ms Burch: I have met regularly with the Community Living Project, and we talk quite frankly about the model of care. Their primary concern is around securing supported accommodation and arrangements for their children to be secure as they age. And the intentional community is a model that we were able to put in place. The CLP—Community Living Project—is a different model, and I do not think this is the place to discuss the merits or not of the different models.

But part of the accommodation support structures, along with the respite, is: how do we start to think outside the traditional square, so to speak, in responding to this? As I said, 26 per cent of carers coming online needing some accommodation support over the next 10 years is a task that we need to think about, and bricks and mortar and an ISP may not be the answer to all of that. We talk to CLP. They are very passionate women that are very committed to their cause. So whilst I—

MS BRESNAN: But a lot of families, too.

Ms Burch: Yes. So whilst I have a personal view and I share that with the key proponents of CLP, we will do as we can to respond to the need. But Mr Hehir may have a comment.

Mr Hehir: I think it is important to recognise that at this point, unless they have moved it forward in the last few weeks since I saw two of the key proponents of the CLP, they are still doing their business case, and that business case will actually have a large look at that model. I did have the opportunity to meet with the consultant doing that. Again, as with the NDIS, the question I ask is: how much of that model

and that philosophy was actually driven by their view that that was the only way they could get a service, as opposed to what their ideal service would be?

I think that is a question that they still need to explore in terms of what it is that they are trying to achieve and what the parameters look like if we do have an NDIS as opposed to what the parameters look like in a highly rationed scheme. So I look forward to seeing that business case, and I look forward to seeing how they think their way through those particular issues.

I think there is no doubt that all the families that we work with are very keen to make sure that their children are safe, that they are able to participate in the community and have their friends with them. There are different models about how people think that can be done best, and I know we do not want to talk about it again too much, but I think that if the Australian government does move on the NDIS it provides a different opportunity and a different set of parameters that will, I think, open up some more ideas and encourage people to think about what is the ideal rather than, “What do I ask for in a rationed system?”

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a supplementary. Ms Hunter would like a supplementary on the original question, and then Mr Hanson. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, further to Ms Porter’s questions on accountability indicators on page 357, can you tell us a little bit about indicator f, client satisfaction survey as measured by annual surveying? You seem to be content with having a 75 per cent satisfaction target. That is what you are expecting as an outcome and that is what you are expecting as a target for the following year as well. Can you elaborate on that for us?

Ms Burch: I am happy for Lois Ford to talk about the accountability indicators—the satisfaction survey.

Ms Ford: That is an estimate of what we would expect and would actually totally expect in a demand-driven prioritised system. We would not expect people to be satisfied with the level of response that they get. It is as simple as that. In actual fact, a 75 per cent—when we break down the figures, depending on what area it is of dissatisfaction, it is usually higher than that. So that is a reasonable indication—

MR DOSZPOT: So it is higher than 75 per cent?

Ms Ford: In some areas; for satisfaction with staff or satisfaction with the way in which we interface with the community, the average overall satisfaction rate is 75. The way it is broken down can be quite different. But we would expect that to be absolutely reasonable in a demand-driven, prioritised system where people have to be eligible to get their funding, their resources and their support—particularly in some areas of our business where people have to comply with certain aspects of care that they may not agree with.

MR DOSZPOT: But surely the purpose of a satisfaction survey is to find out what is not going right and try and improve on that. So you are saying that you cannot really improve on the services you are providing?

Ms Burch: No, no.

Ms Ford: No, we are definitely not saying we cannot improve on the services. We have a continuous quality improvement program and are continually working on improving our responses, our communication, the way in which we provide different ranges of service to meet different people's needs. What I am saying in terms of an average level of satisfaction is that we are working in an environment where people do have to apply for and are prioritised for resources. When they are not able to get the things that they would want to have or what they have applied for, they will not be satisfied and I would not expect them to be satisfied.

MR DOSZPOT: So what you are saying is that this is as good as it gets?

Ms Ford: No, what I am saying is that that is an average overall of people's levels of satisfaction. On a whole lot of different quantum, that levels out at about 75 per cent. But in a resource-restricted or prioritised environment, we would not expect to see higher levels of satisfaction. One of the areas, for example, that we know people are not satisfied with is when we ask them that question about their needs—have they got what they want? Usually the—

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. Can you tell us some of the figures for the last three-year period perhaps as to—

Ms Ford: I do not have that breakdown but I am happy to do that for you.

Mr Hehir: We can do it.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. Would it be possible to see it? And do—

Ms Ford: Yes, absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Take it on notice. Thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: I am trying to be fair in the question, but I would like to know how, if we look at a broader selection of accountability indicators—could we have a look at how that measures out to see whether the averages have remained the same or—

Ms Ford: Yes, absolutely.

MR DOSZPOT: We would like to see those.

Ms Ford: Absolutely; happy to do that.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary here, which I am sure will be quick, and then Mr Hanson.

MS HUNTER: Yes, I am not quite sure after all of this whether it is a supplementary

any more, but let's just go ahead.

THE CHAIR: Well, I am sure it will be.

MS LE COUTEUR: It will be supplementary to something, Ms Hunter.

MS HUNTER: It would have to be.

MR DOSZPOT: As long as you use the same judgement, Mr Chair, that I have been the subject of.

MS HUNTER: I refer to budget paper No 4, page 364 and the commonwealth grant for disability services for under-65s in residential aged care. We have talked about respite housing; we have talked about the Community Living Project, so—

THE CHAIR: It sounds like a new question to me.

MS HUNTER: It is housing.

THE CHAIR: No, but we did not start on housing. We might go to Mr Hanson. That can be your new question.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Mr Chair.

MS HUNTER: We did start.

Ms Burch: I think we were talking about accommodation. I am with you, Ms Hunter.

MS HUNTER: It is accommodation.

Ms Burch: I am quite happy to talk on—

MR HANSON: We know that you are with the Greens but—

MS PORTER: Chair, I am having difficulty hearing the question. I just cannot hear what is going on.

MS HUNTER: It is about accommodation, Ms Porter, and it was that—

THE CHAIR: No, I think it is a new question. We will go to Mr Hanson. That can be your next new question.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Mr Chair. My question relates to page 350 of budget paper 4 where it talks about staffing levels. There is an intended increase of about 27 people, from last year's budget estimates, for 2011-12. That growth in services that is anticipated—

Ms Burch: Your page—you are on staffing—

MR HANSON: Staffing, yes, at the top there. I just want to get an idea about that

staff increase within the context of an efficiency dividend which I assume this department is having imposed on it. If you are increasing staff in one area—

Ms Burch: How we are—

MR HANSON: how are you going to then meet the efficiency dividend that you are required to meet? Does that mean that you are going to be cutting staff in other areas or that you will be rationalising elsewhere? How are you going to meet all that?

Ms Burch: Well, just broadly, this—

THE CHAIR: Come on, Mr Hubbard. Join the table, Mr Hubbard.

Ms Burch: Look, do not worry. By the end of the afternoon he will not be able to help himself, Mr Chair; he will be here. This is a global, across the community services directorate. Mr Hubbard is teasing out some disability workforce numbers. Yes, every directorate will need to look at the efficiency but this budget does grow overall public service numbers and it is around redirecting and targeting. Just in disability, we have got, I think, 66.5—you have to imagine the 0.5 of a full-time staff member—for the therapy assistance program. So there is some growth but they are in targeted areas. That is what a government that responds to a changing need does. But you have probably got Mr Hubbard's table there.

Mr Hehir: I do have the table. As the minister has said, there actually are a number of initiatives which have staffing increases outlined in the budget; so they are incorporated. We are subject to the efficiency review program, the same as all the other departments are. We have got a targeted number for that and we are working through our strategies to deliver that aspect of it. I also think it is important to acknowledge that in this year's budget and the next year's budget we have had our one per cent refunded. So there was a recognition that a service delivery area under a degree of pressure in terms of demand for its services could have some of that. Notwithstanding that, we do have an efficiency review program that we need to deliver.

MR HANSON: What is the quantum of that? How much money have you got to find?

Mr Hehir: Sorry, Ian; is it \$560,000 or—

Ms Burch: That is on another piece of paper.

Mr Hehir: That is on a different piece of paper. I should know that figure off the top of my head but—

THE CHAIR: It might be more appropriate for you to sit and answer the question, Mr Hubbard.

Mr Hehir: Yes, we will take it—

Mr Hubbard: Do you want me to answer that?

Mr Hehir: Yes.

Mr Hubbard: Your question was what quantum do we need to realise this year in efficiency dividends—

MR HANSON: Yes, that is right and ongoing. Is that a stable amount? Does it increase or does it—

Mr Hehir: Ian is going to give the total.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, page 364 has the savings initiative under the bottom of the 2011-12 budget policy adjustments, which is \$1.755 million growing to \$2.183 million, \$2.202 million, \$2.222 million.

MR HANSON: Right, and—

MR HARGREAVES: Jeez, that was quick, Ian.

MR HANSON: where does that money come from?

MR DOSZPOT: Without even moving his lips.

MR HARGREAVES: I did not even see your lips moving.

MR HANSON: Where does that money come from?

Ms Burch: They are a good team.

Mr Hubbard: Sorry, where is the money coming from?

MR HANSON: Yes, where are you going to target? Where are you going to get that money from?

Mr Hubbard: We will do it as we did in previous savings initiatives. We will get together as a department, have a look at the resources that are available, see what flexibility we do have, and come up with a solution during this year and put some strategies in place.

MR HANSON: With the one per cent efficiency dividend, you were not asked to do that or you could not do it?

Mr Hehir: We identified that we had significant growth in some areas and so the government agreed that for the next two years we could have that refunded because—

MR HANSON: I suppose my point then is that what we are seeing is growth in the 30-odd positions. We know that this is an expanding area of need and demand. You failed to find that money last time. You are now saying that you are going to find nearly \$7 million or \$8 million over the forward estimates. What makes it different this time?

Mr Hehir: I suppose the difference is that we are not having to find that plus the \$1.4 million that was refunded. Rather than having a \$3.1 million savings target this year, we have got a \$1.75 million savings target. We do need to have a think about where and how that is done. My executive directors are in that process right now in terms of doing that. There are some things the government has clearly identified that they want us to have a look at. I think they have been very public around those. We know how much we do around printing and publishing, how much we do around travel, the fleet—are we being as efficient as we can? Also, having a look at where we can be more efficient with our staff and what options we have got there. We will go through that exercise and do that.

MR HANSON: And what is the time line for that?

Mr Hehir: There is a four-year savings measure, so it needs to be in place pretty close to the start of the year.

MR HANSON: In terms of those savings measures, will you identify them incrementally as you go, budget by budget—so you have got to find 1.7 out of this year and then 1.8 out of next year—or do you need to address where that entire amount is coming from by a certain time?

Mr Hubbard: That is cumulative.

Mr Hehir: That is cumulative, yes; it is 1.7 so—

MR HANSON: Do you do that as an annual process or are you going to find it all up front?

Mr Hubbard: I think we will have a look at it up front rather than doing it over the year. It is 1.75 and then it goes to 2.183; I think that is with growth of 400,000 for the second year, so we will have a look at that. And then it is just indexed out.

Ms Burch: And as they plan through their business over this year and the outyears you find different opportunities in different years in different sites.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary to that question, from Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what disability services do you intend cutting to find the efficiency dividend?

Ms Burch: What you will see in this budget is that we are actually growing disability services. We are clearly investing in accommodation and support. We are clearly investing in after-school care. We are clearly investing in post-school options. And we are bringing on innovative lines such as therapy assistance. So in this budget nothing we have said indicates a cut to any services.

MR DOSZPOT: We will keep you to that.

THE CHAIR: All right. Mr Doszpot, a new question; then Ms Porter, then

Ms Bresnan and then afternoon tea.

MS HUNTER: Your question, Mary.

THE CHAIR: No; it is Mr Doszpot with the new question. That was a supplementary. A new question, Mr Doszpot; then Mary.

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, the new question.

THE CHAIR: Then a new question, Ms Porter; then a new question, Ms Bresnan.

MR HARGREAVES: It is a bit late in the afternoon.

MR DOSZPOT: At the beginning of the session, some time ago, you referred in your preamble to one of Mr Smyth's questions about BLITS. You were talking about how you consulted with BLITS to engage with the community. Can you just elaborate a little bit on how BLITS is operating at the moment, how many members it has got, et cetera?

Ms Burch: Ms Ford can talk to that but BLITS is a very active group and I have been to it at—

MR HARGREAVES: Excuse me, minister. Could you, for the record, define BLITS? Ms Le Couteur has not—

Ms Burch: BLITS is Business Leaders and Innovation—

Ms Ford: Business Leaders Innovative Thoughts and Solutions.

Ms Burch: It is the world we live in with acronyms when you end up just understanding the acronyms. There some projects that Ms Ford can talk about. Recently they have done two major campaigns. There is the BLITS tick, which is around organisations that get the tick for being supportive of people with disability. And there is also some work on a two-inch lip, which is around access. Two inches is not anything for us to step over, and half of us do not even see it on the stairs as we go through a door. But for someone in a wheelchair or with other disabilities, a two-inch lip is an absolute barrier to access. They cover a range of things. They can have a focus on arts; they can have a focus on sports; they can have a focus on access, as in these two programs. The absolute membership make-up—Lois Ford, who is involved and part of the BLITS team, can talk about that.

THE CHAIR: Concisely.

Ms Ford: Really?

THE CHAIR: Moving right along—come on.

MR HARGREAVES: Don't listen to him.

Ms Ford: Just briefly, it is made up of people from business boards now. There is a

small membership committee, which is led by the deputy chair of BLITS, who is Kate Pickering at this point in time. They bring forward names, and you yourself have put forward some names. They assess the potential candidates for BLITS and then, through that, an invitation goes to whoever has been identified. We do make the decision based on what particular skill or leverage we might be looking for at the time. That is your membership and that is how it is made up.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I get an indication of the members' names? Who are the members?

Ms Ford: The members' names? Certainly. There is Cindy Young, who is the chief executive of the conference centre, and Harriet Elvin, from arts. Just moving around the table, there is Joseph Griffiths from tourism and southern cross hospitality; Paul Donohoe from BDW events; and Glenn Keys, who is a parent of a child with a disability and is also the general manager of Aspen Medical and on the Business Council round table. There is Craig Wallace, who works for Nican—and who, more recently, I might add, is doing some work for Disability ACT on direct funding. He is a strong advocate in the community and has a very strong background in advocacy. There is Cheryl Patrick, who is a parent of a young man with a disability. And more recently we have Nola Shoring, who has a strong interest in youth employment and who is connected to the chamber of commerce. There is Kate Pickering, who works with DSP employment, which is a mainstream recruitment company for employment.

MR DOSZPOT: Who is the chair?

Ms Ford: The chair is me, and the executive officer is Mr Frank Crews. There is one departmental policy support person, who is Fiona McIntosh, who is ex officio; and we provide secretarial or minute-taking support from the department as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Last year you may recall that I was quite critical of the membership—not so much of the members; they are all very credible people.

Ms Ford: Sorry, there is one more member: Gavin MacDonald, from the Australian Sports Commission.

MR DOSZPOT: It was not so much the quality of the people; they are all excellent people. But I made the criticism that there were no people with disability on there. I notice that Mr Wallace obviously would fill that position. How long is it since he was appointed?

Ms Ford: He was appointed last year, I think. There were about three new members appointed in November when current members vacated their positions.

MR DOSZPOT: I have looked at the membership on the website, and probably a good half of the ones you have mentioned are not on there.

Ms Ford: On the BLITS website? I will check. Usually the executive officer is quite assiduous about updating us.

MR DOSZPOT: In fact, the people who are still on it are Colin Adrian and—

Ms Ford: Those are champions. There is a difference between people who are on the board and the champions. The champions are specifically chosen as people who are not involved in the disability industry but who are in the business, sports and arts community.

MR DOSZPOT: In that case my criticism may have to be tempered.

MR HARGREAVES: Did you get that, Hansard?

THE CHAIR: Go back to sleep, Mr Hargreaves.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you just check that. I have one final question. Frank Crews is the executive officer, you said?

Ms Ford: He is the executive officer, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: He does not live in Canberra, does he?

Ms Ford: He does not. He was living in Canberra when he first took on the role, but he has since moved to Sydney. He spends about three days a week here on average.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you know people locally who could fill the position?

Ms Ford: He actually has a contract, which was an open tender process. When that comes up, we will go out to tender again for that position.

MR DOSZPOT: Doesn't the contract specify his role to be here in Canberra?

Ms Ford: Not necessarily, no. When he first took up that contract, he was living here. He has a very strong connection to the business community here—and the arts community as well. His status as a non-resident of the ACT has not in any way been an obstruction to the business of BLITS. In fact, his role is enhanced in many ways because he is very much connected across the business sector.

MR DOSZPOT: Is it a part-time role?

Ms Ford: It is one day a week.

MR DOSZPOT: One day a week?

Ms Ford: When I say one day a week, it actually comes to much more than that, because he does a considerable amount of additional work for BLITS within his contract.

MR DOSZPOT: But you mentioned that he is here three days a week?

Ms Ford: He has other work that he does in the ACT which is not connected to BLITS. It is not just exclusively with BLITS. He has other work here.

THE CHAIR: A new question from Ms Porter and a new question for Ms Bresnan; then we will go for afternoon tea.

MS PORTER: I want to clarify something about the loan service. Is it okay to ask about that now?

THE CHAIR: In this area you may ask about that.

MS PORTER: It is therapy. I need to wait until afterwards. Sorry.

MS BRESNAN: Just a couple of issues in relation to funding for certain areas. There is no funding that I could find in there for advocacy, yet this has been identified as a clear priority in the national disability strategy. Is there anything that I may have missed that is in the budget on this?

Ms Ford: You mean funding this year for advocacy? There is not any line item for that, but we are putting an additional—I think it is about 120,000 into advocacy services.

MS BRESNAN: So there is additional funding?

Ms Ford: There will be.

MS BRESNAN: Is that for a particular service?

Ms Ford: That will be for Women with Disabilities, to enable them to engage a full-time policy position, and also Advocacy for Inclusion, in relation to self-advocacy, which has been one of the areas that have been highlighted.

MS BRESNAN: And the 120,000 is split between those two organisations?

Ms Ford: Women with Disability will be in the range of about—70,000, I think, is what they have asked for, which we are agreeing to. The self-advocacy is in the range of—50,000 for self-advocacy.

MS BRESNAN: Did you say that was Advocacy for Inclusion?

Ms Ford: At the moment we are looking at Advocacy for Inclusion because they came together from Advocacy for Action and People First. People First was specifically the only advocacy group that was for people with intellectual disability, and the self-advocacy work that has been identified, particularly through consultation, is assisting people with intellectual disability to engage.

MS BRESNAN: So it has not been actually allocated to a particular organisation, has it?

Ms Ford: Yes—

MS BRESNAN: It has?

Ms Ford: we are hoping to allocate that to advocacy for—

MS BRESNAN: Sorry, how much was that amount again?

Ms Ford: I think it is \$50,000.

MS BRESNAN: And also, sorry, just quickly, too, one of the issues that has come up from various organisations or NGOs, small NGOs in particular, is around admin costs and how that is an important part of what they do but they typically cannot get funding for it. Is there anything in the budget, again, around providing that sort of support for organisations rather than just one-off project support?

Mr Hehir: There is general indexation that is incorporated in the budget for the community sector—the WCI2, I think it is—which has a component for salaries and a component for admin costs. So that is done annually. I think there was a project done by NDS which actually had a look at how some of the smaller organisations might share some back of house.

MS BRESNAN: What was that, sorry?

Mr Hehir: There was a project, I think—

Ms Ford: Strengthening the sector.

Mr Hehir: Yes, strengthening the sector. That had a look at how some of the smaller organisations might share some back-of-house functions to make it more efficient for them.

MS BRESNAN: That is in this budget, did you say?

Mr Hehir: No, no, that was a piece of policy work. So it is not a budget adjustment; it is a question of how do small organisations get together to see whether, rather than each employing 0.6 or 0.7 of a person, they might be able to employ two people across seven organisations and still get the same work.

MS BRESNAN: Will there be funding allocated to that?

Mr Hehir: No, it would be seen that the organisation would be able to do that from within their existing budget and probably make a saving on it.

MS HUNTER: Is that linking into the work that was done on that shared services stuff by ACTCOSS?

Mr Hehir: It was done quite concurrently.

Ms Ford: Yes, concurrently with it, and launched at the same time.

Ms Burch: We can give you a copy of that work if you like.

MS HUNTER: Yes.

MS BRESNAN: That will obviously assist in that sort of policy. But you mentioned the indexation and that they have already got funding. But small organisations rely on the grant funding, if it comes along, but they do not get those admin costs often included in them.

Mr Hehir: We normally tend to purchase through the SFAs rather than through grants. So, typically, our grants program would not allow a huge amount for back office.

MS BRESNAN: Yes.

Mr Hehir: But most of it is done through actual funding agreements which do allow that component.

MS BRESNAN: And just quickly, with BLITS, are you working with Greatvenue at all?

Ms Ford: We are keeping pace with Greatvenue because BLITS is actually looking at an accreditation system for the business, sports and arts community in whatever form that might take. So we are aware that Greatvenue—and we have met with Huy on many occasions—are more interested in the social venues. So at some point we have agreed we will come together so that we are not duplicating in any way and have formed a very close contact with them.

Ms Burch: But he is doing fantastic work, because it is about young people going out—

MS BRESNAN: He is doing a great job, yes.

Ms Burch: Yes.

Ms Ford: And we have been very supportive of the work that they have done.

THE CHAIR: All right. Minister, on page 376 of budget paper 4 from the estimated outcome of \$85 million, you have got \$96 million this year, an increase of 13 per cent in the disability and therapy services operating statement. I notice in the notes on page 379 that the increase of \$11 million is mainly due to additional commonwealth funding. What is the split? How much is commonwealth and how much is additional ACT government money?

Ms Burch: I think Martin Hehir spoke to that a little bit in the beginning, where we back ended the income from the commonwealth. So, Martin, do you want to talk to this?

Mr Hehir: There are two major components of commonwealth funding from my memory. There is the \$2.5 million that I spoke about earlier, which was already in the forward estimates.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Hehir: And then there is \$3.2 million for the transfer of responsibility for young people in residential care. So this is the health reform split—above 65, below 65. So I think that adds up to date at about \$5.7 million, \$5.8 million. Sorry, we do have it. We can give you the detail, but I think that is largely it. So the ACT government is \$2.2 million. The final year of the national disability agreement was the \$2.5 million I talked about. There is a HACC adjustment of \$3.2 million, which is that split. There is additional funding through the SPP—the specific purpose payment—of 0.3. We do not call it that anymore but that is how I remember it. And then the indexation weight is \$1.5 million.

THE CHAIR: So the split is roughly \$6 million from the federal government, \$5 million from the ACT government.

Mr Hehir: Yes, roughly.

THE CHAIR: The SPPs and the national disability agreement money, where else would it appear in the statements, or does it all go into this output class?

Mr Hehir: There is 9.7 into this output class, and I think the remainder goes into therapy.

THE CHAIR: Well, if—no, we are on the disability and therapy services?

Mr Hehir: Yes, so we sub split it as well, sorry. We do output 1.1 and output 1.2.

THE CHAIR: Okay. So where does output 1.2 appear in the operating statements?

Mr Hehir: That is Therapy ACT.

THE CHAIR: Yes, but in the operating statements, is this not output 1.1 and 1.2?

Mr Hehir: We do both, sorry. If you—

THE CHAIR: So there is a separate therapy output statement?

Mr Hehir: So if you have a look at page 354, you can see the disability and therapy services, the \$11 million increase, and that is broken down underneath that at output 1.1 of 73 right through to 83 for disability. And then underneath that you have got the therapy services side of it.

THE CHAIR: Okay, I do get that. But are they not combined into this output?

Mr Hehir: Yes, that is right, they are, which is the figure above.

THE CHAIR: Into this operating statement?

Mr Hehir: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So they are both in the operating statement?

Mr Hehir: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So the increase is \$11 million, of which six is federal money and five would appear to be ACT money. So where else would federal government grants come into these operating statements for disability payments?

Mr Hehir: They generally come in through this? I am not quite sure if there is anything specific you are looking for?

THE CHAIR: If you go to page 65 of the federal budget paper 3—which I am sure you have got to hand—it actually says that the payment for the ACT in 2011-12 is \$17.9 million. So can you explain the difference between the \$6 million that you have just spoken of and the 17.9 that the federal government gives it here?

Mr Hehir: Sorry, is that the increase in payments?

THE CHAIR: No, this is the national disability SPPs.

Mr Kenney: So the six refers to the disability assistance package.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Kenney: And the rest is the commonwealth base funding.

Mr Hehir: So this is the increase.

THE CHAIR: So where does that appear in these statements then? Where does the rest appear in the statements? I just asked did it appear in disability, and you said yes. I do not find it now.

Mr Hehir: Sorry, I do not have the commonwealth papers in front of me, so is that the base funding or is that the increase, the 17 million?

THE CHAIR: My understanding is it is the total, 17.9.

Mr Hehir: So half of that would already be in the base.

THE CHAIR: Okay, where does the base appear? That is in the 96 million there?

Mr Hehir: It should be, yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Hehir: We can check that for you and get back to you, but that is what it should be, yes.

THE CHAIR: All right, that is fine. Ms Hunter has a supplementary on that question, then we will go to afternoon tea.

MS HUNTER: Back to what I believe was still a supplementary but from before.

THE CHAIR: It is a supplementary to this supplementary—

MS HUNTER: That is okay, chair. It is a supplementary now. The commonwealth grant, it is disability services for under-65s in residential aged care, and there is quite a bit of money and you have just spoken about it. It is listed on page 365 of budget paper 4. So I guess what I wanted to know is what exactly is the money going to be used for? I am assuming it is about moving—

Mr Hehir: I cannot see it on 365. Can you show me which line, sorry?

MS HUNTER: 364.

Mr Hehir: Sorry, that is why I cannot find it.

MS HUNTER: The page before, it is about two-thirds of the way down under the 2011-12 budget technical adjustments.

Mr Hehir: Yes.

MS HUNTER: So some million dollars coming in over the—

Mr Hehir: That is the commonwealth grant. That is 3.179?

MS HUNTER: That is exactly right, yes.

Mr Hehir: Yes, that is the 3.2 I was talking about earlier, yes.

MS HUNTER: So, I am assuming this is about moving people under the age of 65 out of nursing homes?

Mr Hehir: No.

MS HUNTER: Okay, so can you explain what it is going to be spent on, what it is about and who we are talking about?

Mr Hehir: Yes, I might start and then pass over to Austin. As part of the health agreement there was a split agreed between the state and territory governments largely and the Australian government around where responsibility would occur for HACC. So the states and territories, the signatories to the agreement, agreed that they will take the under 65 disability aspects of the HACC payment and the Australian government said that it will take everyone over the age of 65, and I think over 55 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. So there are some different aspects there.

This payment reflects the younger people—the people under the age of 65—who are in residential aged care. The previous program, young people in residential aged care, was about trying to assist some people out of residential aged care and also prevent people from going into residential aged care. What this funding recognises is that there are a number of young people but people below the age of 65 who are actually in aged care facilities, and this represents that level of funding for those places.

I am not sure that it has a specific component about trying to remove or support those people to move out. I am pretty sure it does not have that component. There is the general principle that we try not to have people below the age of 65 in aged care facilities, but as was found nationally as well as locally, some of the people who are in residential aged care facilities who are below the age of 65 are very happy there or their carers are happy for them to be there and there was no significant interest in disrupting their accommodation. So this is really a transfer of the responsibility in the funding identified with that.

MS HUNTER: I had an interest because I was engaged with the COOL project 13 years ago or so. Does that still exist? Is that still one of the options?

Ms Ford: The what project?

Mr Hehir: COOL.

Ms Ford: No.

MS HUNTER: Right, so I am just wondering what the options are?

THE CHAIR: It is no longer cool, apparently.

MS HUNTER: Yes.

Ms Ford: The options for people who are exiting resident or people who are over—

MS HUNTER: Younger people who need to get out of nursing homes.

Ms Ford: This goes back to the very first question that Mr Smyth asked about—person-centred practice. We do prioritise people. Part of the prioritisation is people who are in residential aged care or who are likely to enter into residential aged care pre-emptively. Part of that is the assessment. The work that we do in looking at alternative accommodation support arrangements can be as long as a piece of string. It may well be that a person has additional support in their own home. It may well be respite. It could be community access. It may just be a better case management approach to the support they are already having either through getting funding through an individual support package or looking at their future accommodation—

MS HUNTER: So it does not these days involve that sort of shared accommodation?

Ms Ford: It can involve that shared accommodation.

MS HUNTER: It can, because you have got a house in Narrabundah, haven't you?

Ms Ford: It can involve shared accommodation arrangements. It can involve shifting into a current accommodation arrangement. It can involve moving into a link program through CatholicCare where a person lives in a community. There are an enormous range of options that are available now. The COOL was a group home congruent living approach for a particular group of people at a particular point in time, I

understand, 13 years ago. Several of those people continue to be supported by Koomarri and one of those people continues to be supported by Disability ACT. As I understand it, certainly the person that has been continued to be supported by Disability ACT is over the age of 65.

MS HUNTER: At this point. What happened to those properties?

Ms Ford: Those properties are still the same properties. It is just the service provider and the service delivery model changed. I think they were called the Macquarie houses, if I remember rightly.

MS HUNTER: Yes, they were.

Ms Ford: I was not around in that time, but I do remember the history.

MS HUNTER: Macquarie houses, yes.

Ms Ford: They are actually with Koomarri. Koomarri is the service provider.

MS HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms Burch: But the property at Narrabundah, I think, has got five residents at the moment; is that right?

Mr Hehir: Four, I think.

MS HUNTER: Yes, there are four there.

Meeting adjourned from 4.05 to 4.22 pm.

THE CHAIR: Recommencing the session—we have enough committee members here—we will move on to output class 1.2, therapy services. Ms Hunter is going to have the first question.

MS HUNTER: I wanted to go to page 354 of budget paper No 4. The question is around the current waiting list for children and young people—so those 18 years and under—for various services that are provided by Therapy ACT. Can you give us a bit of detail around that?

Ms Burch: Yes, we would be happy to take that.

Ms Hayes: You would like some detail around waiting lists?

MS HUNTER: That is right—wait times, particularly for those 18 years and under and what they are waiting for. I would like some idea of waiting times and the type of therapy they are waiting for.

Ms Hayes: I will start broadly and get more specific. For everyone who is waiting for a service we prioritise all of the people who are referred to us as priority 1, 2, 3 or 4, with priority 1 being the highest. Most of our priority 1 referrals happen in the area of

speech pathology and most of those are related to feeding concerns, either for young babies or for people with a disability who have difficulty swallowing or who are aspirating when they are swallowing food. Those urgent referrals are seen within 48 hours, so there is virtually no waiting time for those people. The priority 2s, 3s and 4s—priority 2 then becomes the highest priority of the remaining.

There are waiting lists across all of the professions that we have, so that is speech pathology, occupational therapy, psychology, physio and social work. The longest waiting periods are in speech pathology and occupational therapy. In fact, occupational therapy now has longer waiting lists than speech pathology. For a child with a priority 2 in speech pathology they would be waiting about 20 weeks for an individual service. Having said that, we do not let people just languish on a waiting list. We have a policy of actively managing our waiting lists.

Most people who go on to that waiting list have come to us either through a drop-in clinic or they have phoned our intake service and had a discussion with one of our staff. So we know a fair bit about them. If they have gone to a drop-in clinic they have had a 40-minute consultation with a speech pathologist or a physio—if they are going to a physio one—and in that time the therapist will have been able to do an assessment and provide some initial strategies for managing whatever the issue might be and point the family to other information and resources that they might use.

For many of the most common issues that people have, which may well be around language or communication delay with young children, we run parent information sessions. Within a month of them coming to a drop-in clinic they can go to a series of workshop sessions and they can learn a great deal about whatever the issue is and what they can be doing at home.

From there, if there are people who have additional concerns they can phone the team leader and talk to them about why they are particularly worried and, if necessary, we can increase people's priority from there. It is an active process of them being in contact with us and us in discussion with them whilst they are on a waiting list.

MS HUNTER: Could the committee be provided with the average waiting time across the categories?

Ms Hayes: I can give those to you.

MS HUNTER: Could we be provided with them on paper, rather than going through each of those at the moment. As I said, my particular interest is those 18 years and under.

Ms Burch: Can we provide those in age chunks? I am not quite sure how refined we can be with that, but we will provide what we can.

Ms Hayes: Our usual chunking of that would be what we call our early childhood services, which is basically six and under, and then six to 18, and then 18 and over, which is the adult services.

MS HUNTER: That would be great. You were saying that OT has the longest waiting

time and speech therapy comes in second. I think it was a couple of budgets ago that there was more money put in for a speech therapist because we did have an issue. That issue has continued, obviously, if we still have it. I understand what you were saying, Ms Hayes, around actively managing the waiting list and other options being available in the meantime, but we still have with category 2, as I understand what you said, a 20-week wait. What is going on there? Is it because we still have a churn in the workforce or is it just that there are more children who are being identified and sent to the service?

Ms Hayes: There are probably two main factors. The biggest factor is an increase in referrals. In the last 12 months there has been a significant increase in referrals. In 2009-10 there were 885 new referrals for speech therapy services. This year there are 845 to date. We still have several months to run and we will be over that. So the average number of referrals has jumped from around 73 referrals a month to close to 90 referrals a month. Even with additional resources, we cannot manage that level of increased demand with our waiting lists. The other thing that has happened is—

MS HUNTER: Or increasing your workforce?

Ms Hayes: Yes. The other thing that has happened is that last year we had a particularly good year for babies in Therapy. We had six speech pathologists who went on maternity leave. They are now coming back. The first one has come back and I have got two more coming back in the next couple of months.

While they are away we are able to temporarily backfill behind them, or at least the unpaid portion of leave that they are taking, but it is more difficult to attract temporary staff than permanent staff. We actually made a decision to overfill, so we created an additional couple of permanent positions to deal with that churn factor, which is around maternity leave. It is not around people staying with us; it is around them having their own families. That has helped us deal a little bit with that issue. But the reality is that, although we can replace them, it is more difficult and you are usually replacing them with brand new graduates who require some training. They cannot take on the case load of a more experienced practitioner. That creates a bit of difficulty.

MS HUNTER: And they may also end up going on maternity leave at some point.

Ms Hayes: A feminised workforce.

MS HUNTER: A feminised workplace. As far as staff in those other areas—IT, psychology, social work and so forth—are concerned, the positions are filled?

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MS HUNTER: You have got a full staff complement?

Ms Hayes: Yes, we are 100 per cent filled with permanent staff. We have some temporary vacancies around maternity leave and a couple of people on higher duties in other places. So there is that little bit of vacancy. That just happens. We have got a workforce of 120 people so at any time there are a few people moving about. But as to

our permanent staff, we have 100 per cent staff.

MS HUNTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Right. A new question, Ms Le Couteur, and then Mr Hargreaves.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is not a very new question, really. We have been talking about the therapy in schools project. My question really was: are parents involved in this? Are you planning to involve parents in this, particularly in the areas of behaviour management?

Ms Hayes: We will involve parents in it. Primarily it will be school based. The issue has been that we have been unable to provide therapy in schools, which has been something that parents have long asked us to do—and schools for that matter. This is definitely a school-based program. We see that the children that we will be working with will be children who are existing clients of ours, or many of them will be. Then they will have a service that could be both home and school based or home, clinic and school based—depending on the individual.

We probably do not see this program as having a strong behaviour management component. The focus will be on speech pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, rather than psychology, social work and behaviour management. There is always a component of things, of course. Part of the program will obviously involve parents. We do not provide any therapy services without engaging a parent in the process.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary, Ms Hunter, and then Mr Doszpot and Ms Porter.

Ms Burch: Can I just make a comment that I am quite excited about this, because I have a strong belief in the benefit of therapy assistance. This is a therapy program within a school environment; it is not supporting the upskilling of teachers. It is a direct provision of therapy assistance under a care plan of the relevant health professional. I am quite excited about it. We will build into it from the get-go a strong evaluation process, because you will note there is one year—it is a pilot—and we are bringing on six to seven staff. At the very beginning we will start tracking the impact of this so we can validate it.

MS LE COUTEUR: What are going to be the criteria to meet for the pilot to be no longer a pilot but an ongoing scheme?

Ms Burch: The outstanding success of the program will be a key indicator.

THE CHAIR: Ms Hunter with a supplementary, Mr Doszpot and then Ms Porter conditional on the other two.

MS HUNTER: I was very pleased to see this in the budget because it is something that I believe should have been in place. I think I have raised it a couple of times before. Ms Hayes probably knows that—

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MS HUNTER: Ms Hayes, you just said, or the minister may have said, that it is about the therapists going into school and working with those children. But what sort of interaction will happen with teachers? Ms Le Couteur has touched on parents, but can we go to teachers? Sometimes it is about some sort of ongoing technique, strategies or whatever that needs to be delivered or to ensure that they keep on top of in the classroom. It could be simply around a piece of equipment or whatever that the teacher needs to understand how it is used, particularly communication devices.

Ms Hayes: Yes. There are a number of things to that. Because it is a pilot I cannot be completely explicit about how this will work but I can explain how we envisage it working and the early discussions that we have had with our colleagues in education about how it will work. There will actually be a few different options. Some children may actually be withdrawn from their main class for a session with the therapy assistant if they are particularly practising a particular skill or for an exercise program or something that requires them to actually exit the class to do that.

But a lot of the work will actually be done in the classroom and we hope that a lot of it will then model the kinds of things that teachers could integrate into their curriculum on a daily basis. We already do a fair bit of professional development with teachers and we hope that they will take up that option of actually doing that as well. But at least on the ground, in the classroom, they will be able to see the therapy strategies being put into place and actioned with particular children.

The example that we had last year when we had a very small program operating at Malkara was that that was very successful. After about a term, for some of those strategies teachers could say, "No, it is all right. You need not come in and do it. I can do that now." So they were picking up on some of those things. We hope that more of that will happen. If we can get the professional development and that happening, then I think we will really have made that leap between incorporating the therapy goals into the curriculum goals, which is what we want to do.

MS HUNTER: The minister for education last week was very welcoming of this pilot as well. Are you going to be evaluating it from the beginning?

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MS HUNTER: Minister, if that is a positive evaluation, is there a commitment to continue funding?

Ms Burch: There is a commitment that I will certainly go back and have it as a continued program, yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a supplementary?

MR DOSZPOT: How many schools are included in this pilot program?

Ms Hayes: We have not finally decided on the list yet. We are working with people in education and in Catholic education about that, but six is about the number. That will—

MR DOSZPOT: Six in total?

Ms Hayes: Yes. We are looking to have a range across the specialist schools—schools with a learning support unit, an autism and learning support unit, a mainstream school and a Catholic school. But we are also looking to see if we can have as one of the pilot sites a school where there are quite a number of children with disadvantage, because that is another group that is a target group of Therapy ACT—children with developmental delay.

We know that it is very hard to engage some of those children in therapy. These are not the parents who ring up and ask for therapy services or bring children along to clinics. This is a way that we may be able to actually improve the access to therapy for a group of vulnerable children who will benefit a lot from an early intervention therapy approach in their kinder and first year at school without the parent having to do that.

We are particularly looking at refugee families, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We will be trying to find one of the target sites where there will also be the opportunity to trial the program for those families.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned six schools in total and you are looking at all the parameters that you have just mentioned. Do you have any feel for how many government and how many non-government schools?

Ms Hayes: Yes, as I say, I think there will just be the one Catholic education—

MR DOSZPOT: So five government and one non-government.

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Have these schools been selected or are you still in the process of selecting them?

Ms Hayes: We are still in the process of that—

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

Ms Hayes: and we are having discussions with education about that.

MR DOSZPOT: Did you hold any consultations with anybody else apart from the schools? You are talking to parents and that has been brought up a few times—that the parents will be involved—but are parents being consulted in this process?

Ms Hayes: In the—

Ms Burch: In the selection of schools?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Hayes: No. No, they have not been. We could be fairly sure that if we asked any of the parents who bring their children to therapy whether they would like to be involved, they would say “Yes.” So we would have 120 sites instantly, I think. The feedback that we get from families in relation to therapy is that they want more therapy more often and more conveniently located to them. That is the feedback we get from families.

MR DOSZPOT: I guess there is a little bit of a danger in presupposing that you know what the parents are going to say in a consultation process and it is a very important area from everyone’s point of view. So shouldn’t parents get some look in on the way that this is being developed?

Ms Hayes: They will. They certainly will, but we have not started to pilot yet. But in the two pieces of preceding work—one is certainly through the work that Professor Shaddock did in looking at disability education—this is one of the ideas that was canvassed both by him and by families. I think it had a great deal of support from people.

Then at Malkara school last year, the school itself undertook a small pilot project and certainly consulted with families as part of that project. So there has been that initial feed-in from families about what they want and part of the evaluation of the pilot will certainly include the views of families.

MR DOSZPOT: And the actual pilot program, how long is it going to carry on for?

Ms Hayes: It is a 12-month pilot program.

MR DOSZPOT: Just a 12 month program?

Ms Burch: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, and—

THE CHAIR: Yes, a supplementary—

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, I have a couple more questions there. What performance measures will be used to determine the program’s success?

Ms Hayes: We are looking at a range of performance measures. Obviously, the most important of those is the outcomes for children. So depending on what the particular program is, there is a range of measures that is used by each of the professions to measure that. We would be looking at pre and post-testing using standardised instruments to measure the gains that children make.

In some instances, that will simply be a standardised test. But for others, where we have a program that is operating, there are a couple of techniques. One is called gold attainment scaling, which you utilise to actually measure the difference that a program has made to the therapy goals. We will be using both standardised tests and that kind of goal attainment scaling. That is in terms of the outcomes. We will also be talking

with families in terms of getting some qualitative evaluation measures of how families, teachers and therapists feel about the program.

MR DOSZPOT: How many assistants will be involved in the program?

Ms Hayes: The funding is for four therapy assistants but—

MR DOSZPOT: Four across six schools?

Ms Hayes: Yes. There are a couple of health professionals in it as well. Yes, but that is four full-time equivalents. If we look at using those people in school hours and not over school holidays we think we can get five or six out of four.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, we have got therapy assistants. Was there any discussion about actually having therapists take part in this pilot?

Ms Hayes: There are two therapist positions as well. There are four therapy assistants and two therapists.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

Ms Hayes: That is the six staff.

MR DOSZPOT: And the qualification for the therapist assistants—what sort of minimum qualifications are you looking for?

Ms Hayes: We probably will be looking at a cert IV qualification. CIT run an allied health assistants program, which is a certificate IV qualification. We are very involved with that program and in the teaching of that program. We know what is in it. We see that as a source. But the other option is that some existing learning support assistants in schools may take up the option of being involved in this project for 12 months.

MR DOSZPOT: And do you see any—

THE CHAIR: We need to move on. Last one, then a supplementary from Ms Porter—

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, the last one.

THE CHAIR: and a new supplementary from Ms Bresnan and then Mr Hargreaves has the next question.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you foresee any additional training being provided for these therapy assistants?

Ms Hayes: Absolutely. Where we are at is that the advertisements for the positions will be in this coming weekend's paper. We are hoping to have them recruited by the start of July. They will do a month's training and then they will start in the next term in August. But they will work under the close supervision of a professional. The assessments will be done by the professional. The program will be developed by the

health professional. The therapy assistants will be trained in how to deliver the program and then they will be monitored in that. So it is a very close relationship between the therapist and the therapy assistant. They are not out there on their own.

Ms Burch: And a therapy assistant model is—

MR DOSZPOT: I better give somebody else a go.

THE CHAIR: Meredith?

Ms Burch: Can I just add that it is an established program. It is about multiplying new workforce capacity in many ways. I understand Canberra Hospital has physio assistants. It is about how we increase the capacity in response to, in this case, the young kids with a disability at school and therapy assistants are a sensible and accepted way of doing that.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MS PORTER: Originally my question was around the relationship with teachers, which has been answered, but when you were talking about the schools, you mentioned that you would be going to some schools where there were disadvantaged children where parents do not necessarily come forward and get engaged with therapy services. How are you going to engage those parents? Will you go into the schools and then engage them in that way—get involved with those parents in that way—

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MS PORTER: who are not already engaged with you?

Ms Hayes: As far as possible, yes. The minimal involvement from the parent is to give their consent to us providing a service. The service can be provided at the school. For some families, that is the best you can do. We do that already for some families where they will not bring children to a clinic; they are not interested in therapy services; they have too many other things happening in their lives for that to get priority. So it does provide an opportunity to do that. Obviously we are encouraging families to be engaged in the whole program. But that does not always happen.

MS PORTER: Okay, thank you.

Ms Burch: But it may be an opportunity for enhanced engagement with those families.

MS PORTER: Yes, of course.

THE CHAIR: Ms Bresnan, a supplementary, and then Mr Hargreaves for a new question.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you, chair. Obviously you have selected the six schools to be part of this pilot?

Ms Burch: Not quite, no. We are narrowing it down.

Ms Hayes: We have got a short list we are talking about, yes.

MS BRESNAN: You are in the process of doing that. What is going to be the forward planning process so that once, hopefully, the pilot is successful, other schools will then be involved in it?

Ms Burch: I am happy to take the first bit and then Ros can go to the detail. I see this as growing. The evaluation will give us the evidence that it works. And it has the capacity to improve outcomes for these young people. The next step is: how do we grow that? In any program there is often incremental growth to respond to the capacity of the workforce and the school as well.

Going back to Mr Doszpot's questions on Catholic schools or non-government schools, the incremental program will roll out across government and non-government schools. That is my view from here, sitting on this side of the pilot program and the evaluation of it. That is certainly my view. That is how I would like to see it applied.

MS BRESNAN: Has that already been built into the forward thinking on this?

Ms Burch: No, that is all part of the evidence base that would build up the proposal. It is one year, but good programs are based on good evidence and I am quietly comfortable that this program will provide the good evidence and I will go back through the process to seek funding for growth across that.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary on that. Will this be funded totally by the department or will non-government schools have to provide funding towards it?

Ms Hayes: Certainly the way that we are talking with Catholic education at the moment is that we will provide the therapy assistants into their schools. They are very open and pleased about the program. Our therapists will provide the support to their teaching staff, as they already do, to support the program. So, no, there will not be.

THE CHAIR: A new question. Mr Hargreaves has deferred so Mr Hanson has the call.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Mr Chair. I thought we would go to budget paper 2. We have not done that yet, have we?

THE CHAIR: No, not at all.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you sure there really is one?

MR HANSON: There really is a budget paper 2. It is a very simple one. You may not need to refer to it. But it does talk—

MS LE COUTEUR: What page is it?

MR HANSON: On page 16 of budget paper 2.

Ms Burch: Good to see that you read a lot, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: I do. It talks about 66,400 hours of therapy services. I am wondering what that actually means in terms of unmet demand or met demand. What is the need for therapy services in the ACT? Have we mapped that? What does 66,000 hours constitute? Does that meet 100 per cent or 80 per cent of demand? What does it meet?

Ms Burch: Ms Hayes can talk to that but I think it is also reflected in BP4 at page 358, just to extend your reading, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: This is like a game of poker, isn't it? I raise your BP4; I bet you I've got a BP3 I can come back with!

Ms Burch: Ms Hayes?

Ms Hayes: These are the hours of direct service delivery provided by therapists. The increase from this year's 63,000 to 66,400 is the additional hours that will be provided by the therapy assistants. In relation to whether that meets need, the unmet need is contained in the waiting list and waiting time. So this represents the capacity of our existing staff to provide direct service delivery.

MR HANSON: I love waiting lists and waiting times. It is a particular passion of mine. Where do I find those waiting lists and waiting times?

Ms Hayes: Ms Hunter has already asked us to provide them.

MS BRESNAN: Meredith asked that question.

MS HUNTER: I asked it.

MR HANSON: Did you?

MS HUNTER: It was my first question.

MR HANSON: I was away for that bit.

MR HARGREAVES: Detained, were you?

MR HANSON: I was detained.

MR HARGREAVES: Were you a detainee?

MR HANSON: I was.

MR HANSON: All right, I will read the *Hansard* and get the details of that.

MS HUNTER: We will be provided with the document.

Ms Hayes: We will provide you with the details.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question?

MR DOSZPOT: I have a couple of supplementaries. I was a bit late coming in, so I hope I am not going to ask the same question that Ms Hunter has asked. How does the department allow for the individual therapy needs of children with a disability?

Ms Burch: How do we respond to their individual needs? Through individual assessment and care, I imagine.

Ms Hayes: We work with both the client and the family. Depending on the age of the child or young person, there would be more or less emphasis on their and the family's view. We have a process where we work with families on the goals that they want to work on in therapy. Often people come with a fairly wide range of issues and concerns that they have and our staff will spend some time working through with them as to what the key issues are and what of those issues we can respond to.

We work on an evidence-based practice, so unless we actually know there is a legitimate therapy intervention that has been shown to be effective in providing outcomes, we do not engage in that. Families often come with unrealistic expectations; they think that a child who has a particular disability will be able to do something which they are not going to be able to do. So part of what we have to do is work with families around what is a realistic expectation for their particular child.

Often families have, as I say, a kind of universal issue. Everything is a problem. But you cannot work on everything, so we work through a process of helping them to refine that down. We have got a couple of tools that we use to help families do that. The most useful of those for families is to look at their daily life. We go through and say: "What happens when you wake up? What is it like? What happens at breakfast, toileting, getting ready for school and so on?" That is so you can actually pinpoint where the particular concerns are.

We then ask people to prioritise, because families with a child with a disability cannot actually work on six or seven therapy goals simultaneously. The research shows that most cannot work on more than two. So we make it a maximum of three—set three goals with us and we will then develop a program around those particular things. We will work on those for six months, we then do a review and then, if we need to, we can move on to something else, change or whatever happens from there. Does that answer the question?

MR DOSZPOT: Sort of.

Ms Hayes: Okay.

MR DOSZPOT: Professor Shaddock, if I recall correctly, when he gave his report on the disability review, mentioned that the first point is that we have to more accurately define disability. I am using my own words here, but that is the rough thrust of his statement—that we have to get a better definition of disability. Do parents get caught up in the way that you have just described between the different disability aspects that Professor Shaddock was talking about?

Ms Hayes: No, they do not. For us, we have a wide definition of disability which is functional. If the disability causes a functional loss that requires support, then that is a disability for us. For children under the age of eight, it does not matter whether it is classified as a disability or a developmental delay; we do not even ask for a formal diagnosis for the younger children. So the issues around what is in the various definitions of disability at a national level have not been a concern for therapy.

MR DOSZPOT: Finally, how is the unmet need divided between these different types of interventions that you talked about? What defines what will get more attention as opposed to something else?

Ms Hayes: It is really around two things. One is the need—things that are a risk to people's health and safety that you need to address first. Then the next level of need is really around what is effective and whether there is a window of opportunity around effectiveness—so an early intervention program that is shown to be most effective if you can do it within a certain age range or within a certain time of the disability developing gives a higher priority for us in looking at who waits most for services.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

Ms Burch: There were some earlier comments in response to a question from Ms Hunter on that.

MR DOSZPOT: I will look at that.

THE CHAIR: All right. That was a supplementary to Mr Hanson's question. A new question from Mr Doszpot, then Ms Porter and then Ms Bresnan.

MR DOSZPOT: The DHCS annual report for 2009 at page 122 says that the average cost per hour of therapy to an individual group for Therapy ACT was \$189.92. Noting your figures here, what is the average cost per hour of therapy through Therapy ACT for an individual group, and has this escalated over the last five years?

Ms Burch: The earlier figure—you are talking from an earlier budget paper?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

MR HARGREAVES: This one is on 358 of budget paper 4.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes; I am looking at 358 now.

MR HARGREAVES: Does that answer your question—what is on BP4?

MR DOSZPOT: I guess it does partly, but the other question I wanted to go to is this. I am advised that services provided through the helping children with autism provider panel are cheaper than those provided through Therapy ACT. Is that the case?

Ms Hayes: I could not tell you.

Ms Burch: Provided by who?

MR DOSZPOT: The helping children with autism provider panel.

Ms Hayes: They are services that are provided by private service providers. They, by and large, do not publish their hourly rates for service. And it is very variable—

Ms Burch: This is all therapy. And also, Mr Doszpot, this is all therapy costs. You are talking a particular—

MR DOSZPOT: I am talking specifically about autism.

Ms Burch: This is a therapy cost, so you are comparing apples and oranges, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. Moving on to autism specific is what I am wanting to do, not comparing apples and oranges. Families engaged in therapy services for their autistic children have suggested that families have to access both federal and territory multiple service providers, because neither service on its own provides for all their needs. Would you agree with that?

Ms Hayes: Families certainly do access services from both, but not all families do. Quite a number of families choose not to take the commonwealth funding option, simply because of the logistical difficulties it creates for them in accessing private service providers for a maximum of two years and for a maximum of \$12,000 whereas the service that they receive from us is ongoing, it is free and basically it is available to them. I am not saying that we do not have waiting lists—we do—but it is a much easier service for people to access. Many families, because they feel a strong need to access as much therapy as they can, access both sorts of funding. And we certainly try to work very hard with those private providers to coordinate the services and make sure that we are all working together. It is very variable across families. I would not say that all families need both in order to have enough; families work out for themselves whether they want to do that or not.

Ms Burch: And it is a federal initiative, so it is across all states and territories, not just here.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that. Following on from that, the question is: can the ACT government change its service model so that families can access a single service funded by both the commonwealth and the territory?

Ms Burch: You are asking the commonwealth to change its model of arrangements as well, Mr Doszpot.

Mr Hehir: The Australian government does not allow for the funding through its program to be utilised by Therapy ACT.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: Thank you. This is that equipment one I was talking about before, chair, if it is okay to go to that.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS PORTER: Through you, minister, I note that in budget paper No 3 at page 106 there is new funding for a Children and Young People Equipment Loan Service.

Ms Burch: That is right.

MS PORTER: For maintaining and replacing items. What types of items do you currently loan, how many families currently use the service and is there a demand for new types of items?

Ms Burch: It is a very useful service; I think it is only a couple of years old and it has proven very successful. Some of the equipment is very simple. It can be a product made by a local group—TADACT. It could be anything from a sitting frame or a support frame to very complex, high-end mobility tools. But as far as the number of families is concerned, Ms Hayes can talk about that.

Ms Hayes: In the last 12 months, the service has made 814 loans of equipment to children and young people. We loan equipment for a number of reasons. All the equipment that we loan has to have been prescribed by a therapist; it is not like the Equipment Loan Service that Health runs, where basically you can get crutches, simple wheelchairs and so on.

MS PORTER: I know; I have used it just recently.

Ms Burch: You were well served, I imagine, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: I was too.

Ms Hayes: Most of the equipment that we are talking about has to be prescribed by an occupational therapist or a physio or speech pathologist. Part of the reason for doing the loan is to enable an assessment of whether that is the right piece of equipment for that child and that family. Sometimes it can be the right piece of equipment from a kind of assessment of disability point of view, but the family will not use it, for whatever reason. The most common thing that it happens with is hoists. Where people should be using a hoist to transfer a person with a disability from one place to another, we can prescribe the best hoist for the purpose but if it is not going to be used it is useless. So you have to assess both the equipment and the environment in which the equipment is going to be.

Because we have a range of equipment, therapists can trial a number of different types before the application then goes to the ACT equipment service, ACTES, for the funding to purchase the equipment. So we are closely involved with ACTES; we sit on the ACTES panel for making the decisions about equipment and our therapists' reports are the crucial recommendation to ACTES about what should be purchased. With this loan service, we have a much greater level of certainty that we have

prescribed the right thing and that the right thing is going to be bought and used. Previously it just had to be prescribed basically from a catalogue and you had to hope that it was going to be the right thing and be used.

That is one great use of it. Another is that for some items of equipment that children grow out of very quickly we just loan them the equipment until they get to the next stage and they do not need it. We also loan equipment to the paediatric wards at the hospital for children being discharged for rehabilitation purposes; they are not children with disability, but they need equipment during their rehabilitation phase. We loan equipment there. And obviously for some other children, like children in palliative care, we loan the equipment for as long as they are going to require it.

So there are all sorts of different reasons why we make the loans. It is a service that is highly valued by the children and young people. I think the communication devices have been something that young people with a disability have particularly found have made a real difference to their lives. There is now a range of communication devices that allow people who did not previously have a voice to have a voice.

MS PORTER: It sounds as though the equipment is loaned for different, varying types of circumstances but also varying times. Some of it is quite time limited because they grow out of it or whatever, or it is rehab, and some of them would be quite lengthy periods of loan?

Ms Hayes: Yes, that is right. We say that our maximum loan is 12 months, but if someone says, “We still have not been able to get the piece of equipment that we need ourselves, because it has not arrived yet,” or, “We have not got funding for it yet,” or if they say, “We still need it,” then we will probably extend the loan. There are a few highly specialised pieces of equipment where the demand has been too high for that and we have had to say, “No, I am sorry. We know you still want it, but we have to trial it with a couple of other people.” This new funding will give us a couple more of those high-demand items so that we do not have to do that.

MS PORTER: Terrific. That is very good. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: A new question from Ms Bresnan?

MS BRESNAN: Thank you. I refer to budget paper 4, page 358, the accountability indicators. You have got the client satisfaction survey there with 85 per cent consistent across the years. Do you keep figures on response rates? It is actually a question that has come up through other committees as well. That sort of impacts on what results you are actually getting. Do you keep figures on that?

Ms Hayes: Yes, we do. We have a period of time over which we hand out the client satisfaction surveys. We do not have any that we have printed.

MS BRESNAN: Are they handed direct—are they literally handed directly to people?

Ms Hayes: Yes, they are. Either as people come into reception or when the therapist does a home visit, the things are handed out. Basically, what we do is when we get to the magic number, which is around 500, we stop because our colleagues in research

and data want a valid sample, and 480 is a valid sample for our number of clients. When we have got to that number, we stop handing them out.

MS BRESNAN: Okay.

Ms Hayes: We might still get a few more in from ones we have already handed—

MS BRESNAN: You say you hand them out. So you give out 500, but what about—

Ms Burch: How many would you get back in?

MS BRESNAN: Yes, what is the average that you get back?

Mr Hehir: When we hit 480, we tend to stop.

Ms Hayes: That is right.

MS BRESNAN: Sorry.

Ms Burch: 480 returned?

Ms Hayes: Yes.

Ms Burch: Okay.

MS BRESNAN: If people do send in further information, how do you incorporate that into your—

Ms Hayes: That goes in as well.

MS BRESNAN: What is the sort of time period over which you collect them?

Ms Hayes: This year we did it from November to mid-April; so it is around a three or four-month period. Last year we did not get quite the number that we wanted. What we thought we would do is do a block around November-December, because quite a number of our programs run on a term basis. So we thought we would pick up people who had a program in term 4 and then those who were getting a program in term 1 and that that would give us an adequate size sample. That is what we did.

Ms Burch: This percentage is the global overall satisfaction but we are able to sort of unpick some elements within that as well.

THE CHAIR: Therapy services: what is the split, minister, between the funding? How much of it goes to government services and how much of it goes to non-government services?

Ms Burch: I think it is Therapy ACT.

THE CHAIR: This is just to provide for Therapy ACT?

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So where is the funding for something like the Shepherd syndicate?

Ms Burch: That is education.

THE CHAIR: That is education, is it? I did this last year. That is right. Mr Barr is back tomorrow. I will get him there. I understand that some members would prefer to have the range of questioning a little wider. Are there any more specific questions for therapy services?

Ms Burch: Can I just add to the answer on satisfaction, because I have just been provided with a result for 2010-11? It was 95 per cent satisfaction. I think that tells of the response to a great job by your team, Ms Hayes.

THE CHAIR: We will wind it out a little. Ms Hunter has a question.

MS HUNTER: Going back to disability, I wanted to go to the holiday and after-school funding. Again, I was pleased to see this money put into the budget. Minister, as you know I had a motion that was put up in April. There was an amendment you made and it got through the Assembly. That motion talked around the scoping, what it would cover and so forth. I understand from that that we should pretty much be getting close to that scoping exercise being over.

Ms Burch: The end of June is my understanding, yes. Courage Partners are completing the work.

MS HUNTER: It was to get a progress report on how that is going, who might have been involved and where it is up to at the moment. Are there any initial findings that could be shared with the committee?

Ms Burch: I am quite happy to do so. I will bounce that one to Austin Kenney.

Mr Kenney: I am not at the stage of initial findings. We are progressing nicely. It is on schedule for that final sitting week in August, as per the motion. The consultant has done similar work previously for FaHCSIA and so comes to us with quite a good background understanding of this area. She has been meeting with a number of important stakeholders, including the school principals. She also attended the workshops that we ran last week that I mentioned before, which included a number of parents.

She is putting together really a series of models that look at the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. Without wanting to prejudice the format of it too much, because it is still coming together, one could imagine a continuum from something which, on the face of it, is a very straightforward, predictable model of after-school care at a set location for a set target group, Monday to Friday, formalised into a range of other models that are much more flexible that might include integration with existing youth services. It might include a range of different settings that have more of an integration emphasis to them, depending on the target group and the needs of the parents.

I think with after-school care generally there is the range of pull factors about whether, I, as a parent, want my child at their school close to my work or close to my home. Those things pull against each other, particularly when you look at the special schools and the distances children travel to special schools. The pick-up issues for parents who have children at different parts of the town come at 6 o'clock or whatever the time pressure is.

She is looking at all of those things. Equally, she is looking at the vacation care and some of the schemes that have run locally in the past for vacation care and how they have been received.

MS HUNTER: So for the after-school, it is limited to 10?

Mr Kenney: No.

Ms Burch: No, 10 was to give us a guesstimate, a starting line. But certainly we will look at what we create, what we can re-engineer and what can we do.

MS HUNTER: So the model or models that you will present will depend on the numbers?

Ms Burch: That is right.

MS HUNTER: And just a final one to you, minister. That is all on track, or it will be by the end of June. And then, of course, we will have it tabled in the Assembly in August?

Ms Burch: In the Assembly in August, yes.

MS HUNTER: And we still have that guarantee of the first term next year?

Ms Burch: I have still committed to 2012, yes.

MS HUNTER: Great. With the person who is undertaking the work, you mentioned, Mr Kenney, that she did have experience in FAHCSIA. Was that with disability after-school care?

Mr Kenney: Yes.

MS HUNTER: Was it to do with that funding program that is in place?

Mr Kenney: It was specifically consultancy work for FAHCSIA on this area of after-school care for children with disabilities, yes.

MS HUNTER: Has there been an announcement about some extra money going into that federal funding after-school care? At the moment we have only got one, I understand, funded in the ACT from the commonwealth money; that is the wheelies program?

Mr Kenney: Yes. I do not have information on additional commonwealth money there, no.

MS HUNTER: So we still only have money for that program from the commonwealth?

Ms Burch: From the commonwealth, yes.

MS HUNTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: A new question from Mr Doszpot, then a new question from Ms Bresnan.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, my question is to you. We have had a number of parents coming to us and saying that they have made representations to the accommodation support service for government support group housing for disabled young people. The management team apparently refused to accept that staffing in the group homes is at a crisis level. How would you respond to that?

Ms Burch: As in workforce support across Disability ACT and accommodation?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Burch: We have a strong workforce strategy that looks to recruit over the longer term and train and support disability support workers. There is no doubt that every jurisdiction finds a challenge in finding a workforce, but we have been very proactive with our workforce strategy about how we move forward on that. I am quite happy for Kate to go to that.

MR DOSZPOT: I would like to know, in this answer, if you could incorporate it, how many people are currently employed as—is “carers” the right word?

Ms Burch: “DSOs” is the correct term.

MR DOSZPOT: Disability support officers. I would like to know how many are currently employed and how many we should have. So how many have we got and how many should we have?

Ms Starick: For disability support officers, I think there are approximately 265 FTEs—full-time equivalents—so there will be more in a head count. In looking at the disability support officer workforce, we have done an analysis of the exit from that workforce, which is at about 10 per cent, which is similar to what one would expect in most workforces, but there is a 12 per cent intake. So our recruitment into support positions is actually keeping up with our exits from positions.

We have also done an analysis on why people leave the service so that we can start to address recruitment and retention issues. About 81 per cent of our exit interviews, which are carried out on a voluntary basis, are related to people leaving for personal reasons, whether they are moving interstate or have an unspecified personal reason. There is very little evidence around work-related exits.

When we have looked at the workforce development and workforce strategy across the sector and in Disability ACT—we actually run about 44 different training courses through Disability ACT to look at the quality and the capacity of staff who are employed by and engaged by Disability ACT, as well as a range of initiatives to look at the workforce across the sector. So it is attraction to disability support work, retention and development, as well as career path and other opportunities in the workforce more broadly.

Ms Burch: Can I just add something that may be useful. Of those that are living in supported accommodation, Disability ACT—the figure, and correct me if I am wrong, is about 170 or 172 individuals across about 58 houses. But between the government and non-government we have nearly 440 individuals across multiple houses. So this is not just the responsibility of Disability ACT and their disability support workers; as well, it is the non-government providers.

MR DOSZPOT: My question was related to government providers. That is where the complaints to us have come from. On what you have just explained—what are the minimum qualifications that you require from your staff?

Ms Starick: Before people are engaged or employed in any capacity by Disability ACT, they are required to have a first aid certificate and a driver's licence. Once they are engaged, there is a range of education and training that they are required to undertake before they actually work with a client in a support capacity.

MR DOSZPOT: Is fluency in English a requirement?

Ms Starick: In the recruitment process, there is a requirement that we recruit without discrimination and that we recruit fairly and openly. There is a merit selection process that includes a face-to-face interview as well as a written component.

MR DOSZPOT: What does that mean? Does it mean that they do not have to be proficient in English to get a job?

Ms Starick: To my knowledge, everybody employed by or engaged by Disability ACT does speak English. That is not to say that there are not people who do not have accented English.

MR DOSZPOT: I guess the complaints we are getting are that people are finding it very difficult. They are operating under difficult conditions, but so are the people who are the recipients of their care. Sometimes they are finding it very difficult to understand in some cases. That was just a question that has been posed to us. What is the staffing formula? How many staff are allocated to each house?

Ms Starick: It depends on the needs of the people in that house. Every year we go—are you talking government provided or sector?

MR DOSZPOT: I am talking about government.

Ms Starick: Every year we go through a process where we look at what people do in

their daily lives and what they want to do. It is an individual planning process—what their goals and outcomes are and what the staffing requirements to support that are going to be within the resources available to them. The staffing ratio is really dependent on the needs of the individuals that are in each house or each household.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned training—that there is training available and you provide different types of training. Is all the training available in Canberra or do people have to get some pre-qualification or pre-training before they are able to go through the interview process?

Ms Starick: The mandatory and basic training for a disability support officer can all be provided in the ACT. But we also do encourage, through some national disability organisations—we also have study bank and fund attendance at conferences, which may be interstate but provide an opportunity for networking and professional development.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that funded by the department?

Ms Starick: It depends on the—

Mr Hehir: Normally study bank is done as a percentage, so it may not be fully funded. There are two different ratios that we use for that. It depends on how relevant it is to the workplace—is it explicitly relevant or is it broadly relevant?

Ms Burch: Mr Doszpot, whilst you are asking about government services, there is an expectation, given that over 50 per cent of the services are provided by non-government agencies, of the same criteria, training and support base there. We expect that to be delivered through the sector as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Were you going to add anything else?

Ms Starick: I was just going to say that one of the other areas that we do fund and support is the Disability Professionals Learning Network, which is run by the sector or representatives of the sector. That also provides opportunities to engage speakers and network opportunities for support providers across the sector. It also has the awards.

MR DOSZPOT: My final question is: what consultation process is in place to give the parents of these young people in government group houses an opportunity to discuss what they claim are very serious problems? They call it a crisis in housing. What opportunities are given to them to bring these to your attention?

Ms Starick: Do you mean to engage with us around their concerns?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Starick: There are a number of avenues. There is the complaints and feedback service that Disability ACT has, as well as the information line. We collect a range of feedback from parents, families and members of the public through that system, as well as the daily contact that we have with families who provide input around the

quality of the services that they are accessing or that we are providing, as well as—should they like to pursue a change in the living arrangements for their adult son or daughter.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you very much. A new question, which may well be the final question today.

MS BRESNAN: I will try and make it short, and I do apologise if this has been answered already, but I just want to check. Under the future directions implementation plan for 2010 to 2014, it mentions establishing a housing options worker in Disability ACT. Has that position been established?

Ms Ford: We are just in the process of engaging a suitably skilled person. In the initial stages that position will be a 12-month position while we establish what form, tools, resources, et cetera would be most helpful to families in planning their housing, their tenancy and their support options. Once we have a much better picture of what the work would be, whether it is incorporated into the area where we do our case coordination or whether that sits in a hub that we are currently negotiating with community providers so that we are doing early intervention—we will make that decision a bit further down the track.

MS BRESNAN: Can you say when that person will be employed?

Ms Ford: We are just in the process of discussing it with that person now.

MS BRESNAN: So it is soon? It is imminent.

Ms Ford: It is soon, very soon, yes.

Ms Burch: So there is a person.

MS BRESNAN: There is a person? Excellent.

Ms Ford: There is a person who is very interested, who we are discussing it with and who we would hope to be able to engage on a 12-month basis to do this work.

Ms Burch: It is about those broader options about accommodation—broader than just group housing.

MS BRESNAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: That finishes the afternoon. Minister, I thank you and your officials for your attendance this afternoon. I remind you that any questions taken on notice we would like answered within five days. Members, if you have additional questions to go on notice you have got four days to get them on; that would cover output classes 1.1, disability and therapy services, and 1.2, therapy services. Thank you very much.

Ms Burch: Thank you, chair. Before we all scuttle, I thank the department, now the Community Services Directorate, for their fabulous work over the last 12 months.

The committee adjourned at 5.28 pm.