



**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**

**TUESDAY, 24 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

<b>Education and Training Directorate.....</b>	<b>862</b>
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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 21 January 2009*

**The committee met at 8.59 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

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate

Byles, Mr Gary, Director-General

Kalogeropoulos, Mr Nick, Director, Finance

Colussi, Mr David, Acting Director, Canberra Connect

Peters, Mr Paul, Acting Executive Director, Roads and Public Transport Division

Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT

Ware, Mr Chris, Senior Manager, ACT NOWaste

Steward, Ms Fay, Executive Director, Land Management and Planning Division

Corrigan, Mr Jim, Director, Asset Integration, Design and Development

Hughes, Mr Stephen, Manager, National Parks, Reserves and Rural Land, Parks and Conservation Service

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, Libraries ACT

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, I welcome you and your officials to this public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates. The proceedings today will commence with the examination of the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and cover at least, starting with output class 1, municipal services, and we will try and work through outputs 1.1 to 1.5. Can I remind witnesses of the protections and the obligations afforded by the yellow privilege card in front of you and ask: have you read the card and do you understand its implications?

**Mr Corbell:** Yes, thank you, Mr Smyth.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank God for that! Can I also remind witnesses that proceedings are being broadcast for Hansard for transcription. We are also webstreaming and broadcasting live and you are being trialled on Committees on Demand. Are you happy to proceed?

**Mr Corbell:** Yes, thank you, Mr Chairman.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. If I could ask that when members ask their questions they keep them concise, and hopefully the answers will also be concise and directly relevant to the subject matter of the question. Minister, would you like to make a short opening statement?

**Mr Corbell:** As ever, Mr Chairman, I will not make an opening statement for these hearings, but I am very happy, as are my officers, to try and answer your questions.

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine. Minister, can you give us an update on the Majura parkway project?

**Mr Corbell:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** What are the timing implications and what happens if the feds do not come up with the other \$144 million?

**Mr Corbell:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. As you are aware, the government sees the development of the Majura parkway as a priority project in terms of road infrastructure for the city, completing that eastern arterial link which is essential for the overall operation of the territory's traffic network. As you are aware, the government has set aside approximately \$144 million to contribute towards the construction of this road.

We are continuing to work with the commonwealth to try and get their agreement. As the Chief Minister has indicated, we continue to try and seek agreement from the commonwealth in relation to the contribution of their 50 per cent share for the construction of the road, which is a road identified, firstly, as a priority by Infrastructure Australia and, secondly, a project which is very much a national road and part of the national highway network.

That said, in terms of timing, the government is currently taking advice on the implications of how we could commence construction of this project ahead of any final commitment from the commonwealth. A range of options are currently being prepared for the government's consideration.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you commence the work without the federal government saying that they will fund their half of the road?

**Mr Corbell:** We know that the commonwealth are very interested in providing assistance to the territory, but there are issues around the timing, as far as I can ascertain, in terms of when they would want to account for that on their budget bottom line. One prospect is that the territory government commence construction of the project with an understanding that funds will be forthcoming from the commonwealth in a later year, but in a timing that would allow the project to be completed sequentially.

These types of matters are the subject of discussion between the ACT and the commonwealth currently. The territory is looking at how it can potentially plan and deliver the project in that manner or, alternatively, options for upgrade of Majura Road and improved capacity of Majura Road, regardless of whether or not there is any commitment from the commonwealth.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. When you say we might start, does that mean that you would start on one side of the road—so two lanes first—and then come back and do the other two lanes when the federal money turns up, or would you start at one end and work towards the other? How would it be sequenced?

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Smyth, there are a range of options. Since becoming minister last week, I have asked my department to prepare options for me for consideration by me and the government in relation to the timing, staging and development of this project.

I am not in a position to provide any conclusive advice or direction at this stage. Options are being prepared right now for the government's consideration.

**THE CHAIR:** But you would rule out, surely, building Majura parkway in the same way that Gungahlin Drive was built, in that you would do two lanes, one in each direction, and then come back and do the other two?

**Mr Corbell:** That would certainly not be a desirable outcome from the government's perspective.

**THE CHAIR:** It certainly would not be. Are there any supplementaries on Majura?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. The Assembly last year passed legislation around a 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction target. Can you just explain to me how Majura parkway fits in with that?

**Mr Corbell:** Ms Le Couteur, the development of road infrastructure will continue to be an important element of managing the overall transport task in the territory. Obviously we know that there are pressures on existing arterial road networks currently. The government takes the view that it is an overall picture in dealing with the transport task in the territory.

We continue to invest in and add to the public transport budget and public transport infrastructure in the city. But that does not preclude the development of new upgrades to roads that, quite frankly, are unsafe and at capacity. This is an overall task for the government; it is not an either/or proposition. We need to continue to enhance existing road infrastructure, but we also need to continue to enhance, develop and strengthen the public transport capacity of the city. The government's focus is on both of those tasks.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Did you look at all at any other options apart from Majura parkway, apart from the large version of Majura parkway—doing some work on Majura parkway and some work on other bits of transport infrastructure such as public transport?

**Mr Corbell:** Infrastructure Australia, based on the advice the territory has provided to Infrastructure Australia, has assessed this project as one which stacks up in terms of the cost-benefit and in terms of the opportunities that are provided, because this is a major freight route for the city. It is desirable to see freight diverted from avenues such as Northbourne Avenue and having a more timely and efficient passage along Majura Avenue. That is a very important part of this project. I would have thought that would be something that you would support, Ms Le Couteur—diverting heavier freight away from the city areas.

**THE CHAIR:** More supplementaries and then Mr Hargreaves and Ms Bresnan for supplementaries.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Certainly we do support diverting freight away from the city centre. When the government originally made the submission to the federal government it argued that Majura parkway was a sustainability measure because of, as

you said, the diversion and the on-road cycle lanes and reduced travel time. Is it still the government's position that Majura parkway is a sustainability measure because it will reduce the total consumption of fossil fuels in transport?

**Mr Corbell:** We know that if vehicles are moving at a more steady and consistent speed, fuel consumption goes down and it is a more efficient way for vehicles to travel. I think it would be foolish for the government not to highlight that in its submission to Infrastructure Australia. Improved efficiency does mean that vehicles will emit fewer emissions.

As I say, you are trying to portray this project as an either/or proposition. The government's view is that it is not an either/or proposition. The development of the Majura parkway is an essential part of completing the arterial road network in the city, diverting large vehicles, in particular, away from other roads such as Northbourne Avenue. At the same time we continue to make very significant investments in public transport infrastructure enhancement and public transport service delivery.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am not really trying to portray it as an either/or; I think that is possibly more what you are doing. Has the department done any work around other levels of improvement of Majura parkway, apart from the \$250 million one—fixing it up so that it is safe and straighter? It appeared from the original EIS that a lot of the work was around the potential of the high speed train, the issues with the airport and—

**Mr Corbell:** I will ask Mr Gill to answer your question.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It was solving possibly a lot more problems than were necessarily needed, or not solving—

**Mr Gill:** The context within which Majura parkway is probably best considered involves three aspects. It will link the Federal with the Monaro Highway, so it will cater for an important freight task. From a national point of view, that is contributing to the national productivity. In a regional sense, it improves Majura parkway, a direct connection between the Federal and Monaro Highway. It will provide better access to Canberra Airport, which is a 24-hour freight hub, transport hub.

In a local sense, the Majura parkway will service the needs of developing Gungahlin and employment areas in the city and areas south and the airport. It will take traffic that is currently passing through the residential streets of north Canberra—Hackett, Watson, Downer: those sort of streets—and place them on a main road. So that is the context within which to look at Majura parkway.

The EIS that was approved by the Minister for Planning in September 2010 considered seven or eight different options for Majura parkway, including doing nothing, including an upgrade of the existing Majura Road, to the scheme that was ultimately recommended and approved, which was a high speed, high volume connection between the Federal Highway and the Monaro Highway.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** This is my final supplementary, if I may. Have you considered the impact of peak oil on the plans?

**Mr Gill:** Sorry, have I—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Peak oil—have you considered the impact of peak oil on the plans?

**Mr Corbell:** We are aware of the issue of peak oil, Ms Le Couteur. The government takes the view that, first of all, the response to peak oil is to ensure that we continue as a city to develop a stronger, more responsive and more efficient public transport infrastructure so that we have alternatives to private motor vehicle use for more people. Secondly, we are also aware—and certainly reports such as the Garnaut report and others identify this—that, as peak oil emerges—and there is debate, as you know, about at what point that will emerge—and indeed as mechanisms such as carbon pricing and so on move into play, we will see market responses and we will see fuel switching. In particular, we anticipate—and certainly reports such as Garnaut highlight this very strongly—that there will be a shift towards other forms of private mobility such as electric vehicles.

In those circumstances there will still be a need to ensure that the road network can operate efficiently and that issues such as congestion and the impacts of time caught in congestion will still need to be ameliorated. That is why projects such as this one are still a very important part of completing the overall road network.

**MR HANSON:** It bothers me when I agree with you, minister!

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hargreaves and then Ms Bresnan.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thanks very much, Mr Chair. Now I am staggered. I could almost go to my grave now smiling.

**Mr Corbell:** That is a good start for the day.

**MR HARGREAVES:** It is a good start. Minister and officials, I need to congratulate the officers publicly for what has emerged with in the airport roads and all of that stuff there. What actually emerged was brilliant, and I have had incredibly good feedback on it, so thanks very much for the good work you have done there. I understand, of course, that the Majura Road problem is the B-double-type quality pavement all the way from the Federal Highway through to ultimately Cooma. But when you get to the airport road part, as I understand it, there should be a flyover straight over the airport road bits. Was that part of the deal with the commonwealth? Will that be linked into it or has that now changed?

**Mr Gill:** The design for the Majura parkway would include a flyover separation of that as well as north-south and east-west roads. So Majura parkway would fly over Morshead Drive and Pialligo Avenue. And that is part of the scheme that is being presented.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Was that part of the arrangements for commonwealth contribution to the whole Morshead Drive, Pialligo Avenue and Fairbairn Avenue connection?

**Mr Gill:** It was part of the overall discussion. The funding available at the time was—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Insufficient, was it?

**Mr Gill:** —insufficient to actually construct flyovers across the Molonglo River and beyond.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And my final supplementary is: at which end of Majura Road are you going to start when you do start?

**Mr Corbell:** This is part of the issues the government is currently looking at in terms of options for development of the road and the interaction with what funding may or may not be available from the commonwealth.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Do you expect any complaints about the road construction noise from those people from the Hackett-Watson area? Those D10 dozers would kick up a bit of a fuss.

**Mr Corbell:** We always endeavour to manage these things sensibly, Mr Hargreaves.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Ms Bresnan, and then Mr Hanson has a supplementary.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you. Mr Gill, you said the parkway was seen as the high speed option. I think you mentioned looking at different options. I'm just wondering, in the work you have actually done looking at the transport needs of the north of Canberra, what analysis have you actually done to include high speed public transport in these options? Because I know you are mentioning the parkway—

**Mr Corbell:** What? On Majura Road?

**MS BRESNAN:** No, not on Majura Road necessarily, but, as well as the freight, we are talking about that being a major route for the north of Canberra. But what work have you actually done through the analysis to look at putting in high speed dedicated public transport? I am sure you are also familiar with the concept of induced traffic, in that when we build fairly large freeways, they fill up pretty quickly with cars.

**Mr Corbell:** I would have to say, Ms Bresnan, that I challenge you to go and drive on Majura Road today and say that the situation is satisfactory—

**MS BRESNAN:** And I do not think we have actually said that—

**Mr Corbell:** because it is not satisfactory, and so—

**MS BRESNAN:** Well, minister, can I just say—

**Mr Corbell:** Well, I am responding to your question.

**MS BRESNAN:** Actually, you are not.

**Mr Corbell:** Again, I think that the questioning we are getting from you and from Ms Le Couteur this morning is trying to cast some doubt on this project. The fact is—

**MS BRESNAN:** I think what we are actually saying—

**Mr Corbell:** as Mr Gill has highlighted, the transport task of this road is three-fold: there is the freight task, and unless you are suggesting that we try and provide some alternative infrastructure to the freight task that is currently undertaken by trucks in the territory—which is an issue, I think, well beyond the territory's control to manage—then we continue to need to deal with the freight task. And it is on that basis in particular that Infrastructure Australia has said this road is a national priority, because it is about enhancing freight connections for the national highway network and the broad city.

**THE CHAIR:** Excuse me, minister, the—

**MS BRESNAN:** Can I just say my question was—

**Mr Corbell:** I will come to your question.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, excuse me, minister—

**Mr Corbell:** I will come to your question.

**THE CHAIR:** Order! I was just going to say: please come to the question now.

**Mr Corbell:** I will come to your question.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you.

**Mr Corbell:** So you have to keep those things in context.

**MS BRESNAN:** We have that. We understand that. We have not ever said it is an either/or option.

**Mr Corbell:** Okay, and—

**MRS DUNNE:** It is not a conversation, Mr Chair; it is really asking questions and answering them.

**Mr Corbell:** The territory continues to develop—indeed this budget provides funding—and provide priority for public transport on Northbourne Avenue. So there is funding already in the budget for priority for the transit task on Northbourne Avenue that looks at how we best configure Northbourne Avenue, so that whether it is a bus, whether it is light rail, whether it is some other technology, we have got priority access for public transport down Northbourne Avenue. So the government is investing in that public transport task.

I am very keen, as the new minister, to push that agenda. I think it is vital that we develop a stronger focus still on the public transport task. The transport for Canberra agenda is a very comprehensive one, but I believe there is still more we can do in that space, and I will be making further announcements about that in due course. So there is funding in the budget to look at these types of other issues that you raise, such as priority for public transport on major corridors like Northbourne Avenue.

**MS BRESNAN:** So has there actually been work done as well for the very fast train route as well? That obviously has an impact in terms of the overall route of Majura parkway as well. What work has actually been done on that?

**Mr Gill:** The design of Majura parkway has taken into consideration a future corridor for any high speed train. That is why it is being designed 500 metres to the west of the existing Majura Road. So it was a consideration, although the high speed train proposal is not very well developed, as you would appreciate. But provision has been made for it as part of the process.

**THE CHAIR:** All right, Mr Hanson had a supplementary, Mr Coe had a supplementary, and then a new question from Ms Hunter.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, as you indicated, this is one of Infrastructure Australia's national priorities. But instead of money coming to Canberra, we have seen this pork-barrelling in the electorate of New England which appears to be at Canberra's expense. Have you spoken to the federal minister to inquire why it is that the money seems to be going everywhere but Canberra?

**Mr Corbell:** I and my colleagues, Mr Hanson, will continue to make representations to our counterparts in the federal government. The Chief Minister has already indicated that she has had a discussion with the Prime Minister about this matter to stress the importance of this project in particular for the city. And whilst I have not yet had the opportunity to speak to my counterpart federally, I will be pursuing those opportunities and raising the matter with him.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Mr Coe and then Ms Hunter.

**MR COE:** Minister, you said earlier that building a road in two stages—one side at a time—would not be preferable. Why is that?

**Mr Corbell:** I think we need to minimise disruption to the greatest extent possible on this major transport corridor.

**MR COE:** But it was okay for Gungahlin?

**Mr Corbell:** Gungahlin Drive, I think it is fair to observe, Mr Coe, was not an existing transport corridor when that road commenced construction.

**MR COE:** Surely if you are building a road 500 metres away from where it currently is, it is, in effect, a new road?

**Mr Corbell:** There are a range of quite complex intersections with existing road

infrastructure, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Yes, however that does not answer the question. It is, in effect, a new road, is it not?

**Mr Corbell:** I am highlighting to you the differences between the two projects, Mr Coe, which is the point of your question.

**MR COE:** No, no, it is not. No, no, the point of the question is: why is it appropriate to do it for the Gungahlin Drive extension but not appropriate for the Majura parkway?

**Mr Corbell:** The government has regard to how the community responds to the staging and development of these projects, and governments always have to make hard decisions, Mr Coe. It was not as though during the time of the previous Liberal government we did not see projects built in stages with duplication occurring at later points.

**MR COE:** So does—

**Mr Corbell:** And the government in relation to all of these projects has regard to timing, impact on the community and the amount of funds available in the budget process to deliver the infrastructure required.

**MR COE:** So, consistent with the work of the previous Liberal government, the NCDC and the NCA, if it is done in two stages, in whatever form, will the first stage include all preparation or bridgework, all the fundamental work, so that all that has to be done in stage 2 is just laying the bitumen?

**Mr Corbell:** These are the issues the government is currently considering, as I indicated in my answer to Mr Smyth's question. I have asked my directorate to prepare options on the development of this road, and those options are currently being prepared for my consideration.

**MR COE:** So if those options are still in the formative stages, why is it that we have had headlines saying that the ACT government will go solo and get the ball rolling, if you have not even considered all the options?

**Mr Corbell:** I have asked for those options because the government has determined that it wants to proceed with this project as soon as possible, and that is what the Chief Minister has said.

**MR COE:** So you will be proceeding with it regardless of whether it is economical to do it in two stages or not?

**Mr Corbell:** I think you are getting ahead of yourself, Mr Coe. What I am saying is that we will look at all the options and determine the best possible way to deliver this project as soon as is feasible.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Ms Hunter, a new question?

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, while we are on the Office of Transport, I did want to ask about the money that is being set aside in the budget for the transit ways for Northbourne Avenue that you were referring to before, minister, of \$2.5 million. I just wanted to know: how does this money interact with the feasibility study that is currently underway, and where are we up to with the feasibility study? Is it at this stage thought that there will be things such as bus lanes on Northbourne? I just want to know how these things are going to interact.

**Mr Corbell:** Sure. This is the next stage following feasibility, Ms Hunter, so, obviously, what the government has done is factored in funding for design so that as soon as the feasibility process is finalised we can proceed with a detailed design for a preferred solution to give public transport priority on Northbourne Avenue.

**MS HUNTER:** Can you tell us what has happened with that feasibility study? What have been the outcomes of that feasibility study?

**Mr Corbell:** The feasibility study is yet to be finalised but I understand that one stage of public consultation has already occurred in relation to the feasibility study and another one is planned for later this year. As to the exact timing and completion, I will ask Mr Peters to give you some information.

**Mr Peters:** The current status of the Northbourne feasibility study is as the minister said. There was a targeted consultation session around about March with key stakeholders from along the corridor really just to get their thoughts and their information about how they saw the corridor developing. The coverage of the feasibility study is really to look at how best ultimately that corridor functions in terms of a mass transit corridor, how do we provide for cyclist safety, how do we integrate with the land use along there now and in future, and how do we actually manage traffic and accesses along the corridor.

So the purpose of the study is essentially to come up with the ultimate plan that covers that stuff. We have had one round of consultation. There will be a broader community round of consultation in May. We are calling for submissions from interested parties at the moment and we would expect to come up with a preferred concept later this year.

**MS HUNTER:** Who was involved in that first round of consultation?

**Mr Peters:** The first round of consultation looked at stakeholder groups such as Pedal Power, representatives from the freight industry, I think the taxi council was there, representatives from the NCA have been talked about, because it is an important corridor from that perspective, of course.

**MS HUNTER:** Any residents groups?

**Mr Peters:** Yes, there were two residents groups. Two of the community councils from the affected area were involved as well.

**MS HUNTER:** So you have had one round of consultation. You are taking that

information into consideration. When is your next consultation?

**Mr Peters:** We anticipate that that will be around mid-June.

**MS HUNTER:** When do you think you will have it finished or when is it planned for this feasibility study to finish?

**Mr Peters:** Pending the outcomes of that consultation and any complexities that come from it, we would be looking to have that finalised around September, October this year.

**MS HUNTER:** Are you calling in any expert assistance?

**Mr Peters:** We have got a Melbourne expert engineering consulting firm—transport planning firm—engaged, URS. They have been essentially looking at the options for us.

**MS HUNTER:** Once you have got to September-October and you have finished the feasibility, how quickly do you move from that into the design? I note that this money has been put into the 2011-12 year. I am not sure that it is expected to spend it all in the 2011-12 year, but how long will that design take and then how long until we actually see some work start on Northbourne Avenue?

**Mr Peters:** There are actually two funding arrangements here. It was previously funded at around \$4 million in the previous budget to start some early works on Northbourne. So depending on what we find out at this initial feasibility study around September, then some early works will make sense. They may well be around improving cycle safety on the corridor. But we really need to understand what the ultimate corridor looks like in September-October to understand which bits we might do first.

**MS HUNTER:** So you have made no decisions about that \$4 million?

**Mr Peters:** No, not at this stage.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Le Couteur had a supplementary and then Mr Coe.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What is the time frame that you are looking at in terms of your design, not in terms of the consultation but in terms of whether you are designing for a 10-year time frame, 25 years, 100 years?

**Mr Peters:** The design time line is normally around 20 years in terms of future traffic and public transport and cycling projections. But we are really working with the appropriate land use authorities to understand what the future land use plans are for the redevelopment along the corridor so we get something that actually makes sense ultimately.

**Mr Corbell:** For example, close consideration is being given to the issues that have recently been resolved around the future development of Dickson—the Dickson master plan and the relocation of the—the creation of a new bus station to service the

Dickson group centre, connections through to Northbourne Avenue, the extension of Cape Street, I think it is, through to Northbourne Avenue and so on.

These are all issues that are to be taken into account because obviously Dickson will continue to grow as a significant group centre just off the corridor. It is important that we are able to connect public transport seamlessly into that growing precinct and strengthen that as a centre for that part of north Canberra.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is work being done as part of this project into the various potential modes for public transport—ie, buses or light rail and buses in bus lanes?

**Mr Corbell:** At this stage the focus is on a transit way; so it is about providing a transit way corridor. As I said earlier, these corridors should be planned. Certainly, provision will be made to have regard to the future upgrade of those corridors for rail-type infrastructure should that be something that the territory chooses to proceed with in the future. In the same way that we have done planning in terms of the measures on Belconnen Way to potentially be able to accommodate light rail infrastructure at some future points, those are the same considerations at play in relation to Northbourne Avenue.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** There is a story going around that every piece of infrastructure in north Canberra is in the middle of Northbourne Avenue basically and thus—

**MR HARGREAVES:** It is not.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Almost every piece of infrastructure. Is this in fact the case, that the design is going to be very much constrained by what we cannot see underground? Could you give us a bit more information about that?

**Mr Gill:** You are correct, Ms Le Couteur, that in the middle of Northbourne Avenue there are a lot of services located—electrical, high-optic fibre. So, yes, that is obviously a significant consideration in any design.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Presumably you could put cycling and walking on top of that. Light rail, buses, any—

**Mr Gill:** Either those services would have to be relocated or they would have to be protected; so the heavier the vehicles that use it, the more level of protection required or the greater the need to relocate those services.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is the design looking at the different implications of the different types of services?

**Mr Gill:** We are probably a little bit ahead of that at the moment. We are not quite at the design stage, as Mr Peters highlighted.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The feasibility study side, sorry. Is the feasibility study—

**Mr Gill:** A design would look at it in that level of detail that you are talking about and would rate the relevant options. That would be one of the considerations.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Coe followed by Ms Bresnan as supplementary questions and then Mr Hargreaves with a new question.

**MR COE:** Minister, what are your thoughts on the safety of the on-road cyclepaths on Northbourne at the moment?

**Mr Corbell:** Are you asking for my opinion?

**MR COE:** Whether it be your opinion or whether it be considered advice, I do not mind.

**Mr Corbell:** At the risk of opening a hairy old debate, the government's position is that on-road cycling provides an important choice for people who choose to commute by bicycle. I know that it is not to everyone's taste, on-road cycling, and that there have been conflicts between cyclists and motorists on occasion in relation to these lanes. Overall, my impression is that these lanes are generally well accepted and motorists and cyclists have learnt how to accommodate each other on our roads. There was certainly, I think, a high level of anxiety when these lanes were first implemented but now I think there is a pretty good level of understanding.

We continue to look at the issues around safety and ensuring that any particular area, any hotspots, can be appropriately managed. Again, we do not see this as an either/or proposition. On-road cycling and safe off-road paths are all part of the equation in terms of providing effective transport connections for Canberrans. There will be some challenges in relation to Northbourne Avenue because the corridor is quite narrow for the range of transport tasks that it has to undertake.

I think in those circumstances we do need to look at all the options. We do need to have regard to how perhaps we can deliver fast and efficient corridors for cyclists, for people who want to travel fast on their bicycles and commute. That is certainly something that will be taken into account in both the feasibility and in any future design for the corridor.

**MR COE:** Am I right in thinking that the on-road cyclepaths pretty severely restrict the ability for the construction of bus bays off-road, thus restricting bus bunching?

**Mr Corbell:** Northbourne is a particularly challenging corridor because of the fact that you have got a very high volume of public transport already using the corridor. At the moment that is sitting in the left-hand lane of both carriageways. You have got the on-road cycling in there as well and we have got normal vehicular traffic.

So it is a challenging scenario to deal with and that is why I am foreshadowing that we will need to look at ways of how we reconcile giving priority to public transport so that public transport can operate more quickly and reliably along the corridor at the volumes that we anticipate into the future and at the same time cyclists, particularly commuter cyclists, have got a clear and rapid right of way as well as the slower off-road cycling and pedestrian activity.

**MR COE:** Bus bunching, I think, would be one of the more serious problems at the

moment restricting the flow of traffic on Northbourne. One way of eliminating that would be the construction of bays—getting stopped buses or stopping buses off the three central lanes. Is that going to be possible given the width of the corridor?

**Mr Corbell:** I am yet to see the detail of the feasibility work, Mr Coe, but I am confident that these sorts of issues are being taken into account.

**MR COE:** But surely it has been looked at before.

**Mr Corbell:** I beg your pardon?

**MR COE:** Surely this has been looked at before.

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Coe, what we are doing is a complete feasibility for the entire corridor and these types of issues are being taken into account in that study.

**MR COE:** Would you please advise what the thinking has been in the past?

**Mr Corbell:** I am not in a position to tell you what the thinking has been in the past. I have only been minister for a week.

**MR COE:** Perhaps you might be able to seek some advice from one of the 25 people in the room.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Including me.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps Mr Gill can.

**MR COE:** Sorry, 24 in the room.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Ask me. I will tell you.

**MR HANSON:** That will never end well, Johnno.

**Mr Corbell:** My officials suggest we will take the question on notice, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan has a supplementary, then a new question from Mr Hargreaves.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you. I imagine this will be built into the feasibility study, but are you able to give an indication now in terms of building transit ways on Northbourne—how much that would speed up public transport, particularly in peak times?

**Mr Peters:** The intent of providing a transit way along there would be to keep the bus speeds at about 40 to 50 kilometres an hour compared to the probably less than 20 that they are at during the congested peak periods.

**MS BRESNAN:** Sorry if you have already answered this as well, but what is the timing for the new bus stations at Dickson and Barton—which obviously feed into it?

**Mr Corbell:** There is no funding yet for Dickson. Obviously this will be taken account of in the design process for the corridor and then the government will need to allocate funding for construction along the corridor. I would anticipate that we would deal with Dickson—we would consider the issues with Dickson—at the same time we consider funding for the corridor as a whole.

In relation to Barton, there is funding, if I recall correctly, for design for the new Barton bus station, which is on National Circuit between Kings Avenue and Brisbane Avenue, if I am correct. We expect to commence design work in relation to that project this financial year—\$300,000. I beg your pardon; Mr Byles has just pointed out to me that there is \$300,000 also allocated for design specifically for Dickson.

**MS BRESNAN:** But in terms of the timing, Dickson will be fed into the design for Northbourne, but Barton will—

**Mr Corbell:** They will need to inform each other. We have got a completed planning study and preferred outcome for public transit as part of the Dickson group centre plan. Mr Byles has indicated to me that there is specific funding to deal with design of the actual bus station in Dickson. There is now also funding for design for the Northbourne Avenue corridor. I would anticipate that by the end of this financial year we will have well advanced design plans for both of those pieces of infrastructure, and that will hopefully be in time for the government to consider the next stage, which is commencing construction on these works.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** When you say this year, financially you mean next year?

**Mr Corbell:** That is correct.

**MS HUNTER:** With the preferred site for the Dickson bus station—is that going to be the Dickson motor registry?

**Mr Corbell:** The long-term solution identified in the Dickson master plan is, as I understand it, on the side of the Dickson motor registry, but in the interim it is anticipated that it would be on Challis Street. How it would be realised is yet to be concluded in terms of the physical look of the infrastructure, but it would be located on Challis Street in the vicinity of the motor registry and Dame Pattie Menzies House—in that general vicinity.

**THE CHAIR:** Any questions, Mr Hargreaves?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thanks very much, Mr Chairman. I draw your attention to BP4, page 82. We are talking about a budget policy adjustment. What I was interested in doing was exploring two of the items there. No doubt my colleagues will get a fixation on some of the other items that are there and obsess over those.

I would like to ask you this, please. In relation to the walking and cycling infrastructure provision of \$1.5 million, I would like to know, if you can, please, what

area you are targeting with this provision. Is it augmenting on-road facilities, is it new facilities or what is it? And the second one—I will give you both of them in one hit so that you do not have to come back to them—is the bus stop upgrades for disability standards. I have had an interest in this for a number of years. I would be very interested to know, for the record, what the nature of them is, but also I would like to know when you expect it to be completed.

**Mr Gill:** In relation to your first question, about walking and cycling infrastructure, the \$1.5 million provided at the start of this current budget is in addition to some existing funding already approved over four years which totals \$9.2 million over four years for walking, cycling and signage. In relation to walking and cycling facilities, it is \$2.1 million. So you have got a total of \$3.6 million available for walking and cycling in the 2011-12 financial year.

There has been a report on walking and cycling infrastructure needs completed and forwarded to the department on behalf of the government during the current year. That has identified about 200 locations. It is focused on walking, cycling and improvements between town centres and within town centres, and also about trying to provide improvements for people with mobility or vision impairment within town centres to ensure that they can get around the town centres.

There is currently a working group that the department chairs, consisting of groups such as Pedal Power, the Pedestrian Forum, various planning authorities and the health foundation. It has identified 15 locations—that is looking in some detail. An example of an approach that has been looked at in more detail includes the city cycle loop. It is an example of an improvement within the city, trying to improve facilities for cyclists in particular. Earlier in this meeting we touched on the need to improve the safety of cyclists. In this particular location we are looking at a separated cycling facility which separates—by a physical barrier perhaps a metre wide—cycle activity from general traffic activity.

**MR HARGREAVES:** On which road?

**Mr Gill:** The Civic cycle loop is looking at streets such as Bunda Street, Allara Street, Rudd Street, Marcus Clarke Street—that loop around the city—with some links into London Circuit.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And that is where you will have a separation of the cyclists from other traffic?

**Mr Gill:** That is where we are currently looking—exploring basically options to provide a safer facility in what is a busy location where there is a good deal of friction.

**MR COE:** Would such a segregation come at the expense of the existing road?

**Mr Gill:** In this particular location, it would not be at the expense of the existing road. It would be accommodated within what is generally a wide verge in these locations.

**MR COE:** What is that verge being used as at the moment?

**Mr Gill:** It is where pedestrians walk on the footpath. In some cases it is between five and seven metres wide—that verge.

**MR COE:** So we are not going to see roads being narrowed in the same way that lanes on Northbourne were narrowed to make way for the on-road cyclepath?

**Mr Gill:** The proposal being developed in the city does not include the loss of any traffic lanes. It looks at providing a reasonable standard in terms of width and facilities for cyclists as well as pedestrians.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Has the NRMA been involved in any of the discussions?

**Mr Gill:** The NRMA are part of this working group that we are currently convening.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Have they changed their attitude on cycleways then?

**Mr Gill:** No. The NRMA have always been supportive of cycling. What they have argued is that it needs to be in a safe manner.

**MR HARGREAVES:** My memory of what Mr Evans said in years gone by was that he wanted them off the roads and to have roads available only to cars. I am glad to see that his advice has been totally and completely ignored.

**MR COE:** This is a segregated road.

**THE CHAIR:** That is enough commentary.

**MR HARGREAVES:** As they say in the classics, on your bike.

**THE CHAIR:** Back to these reports.

**Mr Gill:** Hopefully that gives you a bit of a sprinkling of what we are proposing for walking and cycling.

Noting Mr Smyth's request to keep the responses succinct, I will move on to the bus stop upgrades and the disability design standards. In the current year budget there is \$1 million provided to improve bus stops to meet disability discrimination requirements. This is \$1 million on the top. This has been an ongoing problem for a number of years.

If you look at previous programs, an amount in the order of about \$350,000 has been provided to date. The government, in recognition that it is a co-signatory to this piece of legislation and meeting certain targets, has increased the amount of funding available. The targets basically relate to 2012 and 2022.

At this point in time, the routes that are being identified are routes with buses that have the ability to cater to people with disabilities—those buses that can kneel down and have ramps so people can get on. Those are the routes where the priority is being given. There are many routes across the territory, but that is the type of improvement.

**MR HARGREAVE:** That explains one of my supps on whether there was a consistency with where the wheelchair accessible buses are travelling and where we are actually going to change the fabric of the bus stops.

**Mr Gill:** That is an obvious link.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes. Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** Just as a supplementary to the issue of bus stops—I note that there is \$200,000 for a feasibility study for bus stops on Adelaide Avenue, on the transit lane. Where in particular are you looking at locating those?

**Mr Corbell:** There are three general areas that have been identified, Mr Smyth. The first is at the Hopetoun Circuit and Adelaide Avenue intersection near the Deakin shops. The second is at the Carruthers Street bridge at Curtin—the intersection with Yarra Glen. And the third, I think, is Kent Street.

This is an issue we have got to crack, quite frankly. We have got a large number of people now working in the Deakin precinct. We have seen upgrades and additional commercial office space being developed in that precinct. We have got one of our rapid high-frequency corridors less than a kilometre away, with buses running up and down it throughout the day every five minutes or so. At the moment there is nowhere for them to stop for people to get on and off at these key locations.

This project is about identifying how we can potentially build transit way stops on that corridor. As you would be aware, Mr Smyth, we already have priority on that corridor, so this is an opportunity to give commuters greater opportunity to utilise the frequent network by having actual stops on the corridors. This is the first piece of work to try and work out how to achieve that.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it the intention that the bus stops are actually on the median strip? Are you talking access via a bridge or footbridge off the two flyers at Kent Street and Carruthers Street?

**Mr Peters:** The intent of the study is to identify how to do it.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that a supplementary?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hargreaves; then Ms Le Couteur.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thanks very much. Going back to the cycleways and walkways, is it your intent to put interpretive signage along those routes? I know that the off-road cyclepaths and walkways—for example, put some signs indicating how far it is to a given town centre. I think the first one was on Macarthur Avenue, telling people how far it was to Belconnen. But also there are features along the way. Sullivans Creek comes to mind. Sometimes those things lend themselves to interpretive signage. Is there any intention to put anything like that along those routes?

**Mr Gill:** The intention would be to continue the ongoing program of implementing signage, both on-road and off-road, for walking and cycling facilities. As part of that \$9.2 million approved in previous budgets, there is a component for signage. That has been rolled out in recent years—generally very positively received.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And let me go to Athllon Drive. The duplication of that had a nice little on-road cyclepath going along the edge of that. It goes over the bridge. This almost slightly off topic, but it is in my head so I have got to get rid of it. There is a dry-stone wall next to the pool at Greenway; it is starting to crumble. Is there anything in the program anywhere—anywhere—to fix it? A simple yes would be good.

**Mr Gill:** There is nothing definitive in the program at this point.

**MR HARGREAVES:** At this point? Operative word “yet”. Thank you.

**MR COE:** Will you rule out putting interpretive signs on any of these paths?

**MR HARGREAVES:** You cannot do that.

**Mr Gill:** No, I have said my response is that we will continue to install signposting to help people to find destinations along various main cyclepaths, as we are doing.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Hear, hear. I have a supplementary—

**THE CHAIR:** No, before you go to your supplementary, the minister was just about to make reference to the dry-stone wall, which, as he would recall from when he worked in Mr Langmore’s office in 1995, is a remembrance gateway to Tuggeranong; it is not an original stone wall.

**MS BRESNAN:** I would rather have a sign.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, one that actually told you something rather than having to work out what it means.

**MR HANSON:** Mr Stanhope’s street art, apparently. They are interpretive signs.

**THE CHAIR:** Members!

**MR COE:** Maybe the owl could point in a direction as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister?

**Mr Corbell:** The dry-stone wall you can see from Athllon Drive is not a heritage object, but it is, if you like, a visual symbolic reminder of the fact that there is, in fact, a heritage dry-stone wall further in from the road which is part of an original settlers’ property. In relation to the condition of the wall close to Athllon Drive, Mr Byles tells me that you have raised this issue before, Mr Hargreaves. I would be happy to give you an undertaking that I will look at the matter for you.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thank you. I have a solution that will cost absolutely nothing, but we might talk about that later.

**THE CHAIR:** Mind you, it is a dry-stone wall, but I think they have cemented it now. A supplementary from Ms Le Couteur and then a new question from Mr Hanson, pushing right along.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** This is a supplementary to Mr Smyth's question about potential bus stops on Adelaide Avenue. I went to the consultation the LDA did about the Yarralumla brickworks and there was a slide about that. It was a wonderful thing, and I think they said it was going to cost—I cannot believe that I am remembering right—in the order of \$100 million. It was a very expensive thing, with lifts up and down. It looked absolutely wonderful. Is that the sort of thing you are looking at? My concern is, if it is that sort of price, I am not very confident it is going to happen.

**Mr Corbell:** The issue you raise with the possible development adjacent to Yarralumla surrounding the brickworks, the cost that you are citing there, obviously those plans are still at a concept stage and the government has not yet given any endorsement to that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I appreciate that, yes.

**Mr Corbell:** We are simply exploring options. But I think the cost that you might have heard cited there would involve significantly more infrastructure work than simply an installation of bus stations on Adelaide Avenue. The proposal, as I recall it, is that one of the options is to look at a relocation of how Cotter Road intersects with Adelaide Avenue eastbound coming from the Weston Creek-Molonglo area. So there are a whole range of options that are being explored there regarding the operation of that intersection which would obviously add significantly to costs.

But the concept, I think, is still the same—that is, we are struggling in Canberra to get the frequencies that people need to make public transport attractive. But where we have got the frequencies, we do not give good enough access to it. So the concept obviously with the options around Yarralumla is to have more people living close to where those good frequencies are and at the same time upgrading access along those corridors so that people can actually catch the buses that are going past their doorstep—either their work doorstep or their home doorstep—every five minutes.

I think this has to be a priority for the government. It is certainly a priority for me as the new minister. Strengthening our existing public transport corridors and giving people better access to the frequencies we do provide on these main arterials is really the first step in making public transport work better in Canberra.

**THE CHAIR:** New question, Mr Hanson, and then Mr Coe.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, chair. Budget paper 3, page 199, talks about some residential street improvements, including the implementation of road and traffic management improvements on Streeton Drive in Weston. I wonder if you could provide me with some more information about what that is, whether that is—

**Mr Corbell:** I will ask Mr Gill to answer your question, Mr Hanson.

**Mr Gill:** For a number of years now we have had concerns raised from residents in that particular area—Streeton Drive in the area south of Hindmarsh Drive—about the speed of traffic. And it rates highly. The department maintains what we call a traffic warrant system, which considers volumes, speed, crashes and particular locations, and Streeton Drive rates highly in that. That is how it has been identified for possible improvement.

**MR HANSON:** What of that amount—there is \$225,000 there—is for Streeton Drive as opposed to the other elements in there?

**MR HARGREAVES:** All three.

**Mr Gill:** Generally, we try to share the funding available between each of the locations.

**MR HANSON:** Do you know what you are going to do there in terms of traffic management?

**Mr Gill:** The solution at the moment is still under development, so we do not actually have the solution, but a solution will be developed. There will be some consultation with affected residents, and then we will firm in on the actual solution.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Does the same thing apply to the other two roads? They are still in the development stage?

**Mr Gill:** Yes. These projects basically are developed in the year that they are implemented. They are small schemes. The overall program is a relatively small program when you look at the dollars available.

**MR HARGREAVES:** So given the amount of money that is involved in that, the changes cannot be substantial, can they?

**Mr Gill:** No.

**MR HARGREAVES:** They have to be relatively cosmetic?

**Mr Gill:** Yes. Examples of work that has been done in the current year program is Flinders Way, for instance. Some speed humps on the street have been implemented this year. It is possible that a similar type of treatment might be implemented on Streeton Drive, but it is still to be progressed.

**MR COE:** And how is the process going to differ for this part of Streeton Drive compared to the part north of Hindmarsh? That went through several iterations over the last five years to get to the current layout of the road.

**Mr Gill:** There are some slight differences between the sections north of Hindmarsh and south of Hindmarsh. There is more direct residential access south of Hindmarsh Drive. North of Hindmarsh Drive, while you have got some accesses, it is generally

related to the Mirinjani retirement village. So there are some differences between the arrangements north and south of Hindmarsh Drive. The issues south of Hindmarsh Drive more relate to residential amenity and access and safety considerations.

**MR HANSON:** Are you aware of the concerns raised by residents about the area north of Hindmarsh Drive on Streeon, the intersection with Mulley Street? There have been representations made to me about a number of accidents that have occurred there and problems with traffic that flows from Mulley Street into Streeon.

**Mr Gill:** To answer your question, I am aware. I have attended Weston Creek Community Council meetings on a number of occasions. It was the intersection of Streeon and Mulley, and also the intersection of Streeon and Namatjira Drive, that have been the subject of some discussion. We have implemented some changes there in recent years and, overall, they have reduced the crash rate in that area.

**THE CHAIR:** A new question, Mr Coe, then Ms Bresnan and Mrs Dunne.

**MR COE:** Thank you. This year 25 per cent less municipal roads were resurfaced—so three per cent instead of the targeted four per cent. What is the justification for this?

**Mr Gill:** This has been the wettest year in the last 30 years and that has had an impact on our overall program. Also, the types of measures that we put in, when we set those initial targets we made an assumption that a certain amount of the roads would be done as part of the resealing program and a certain part would be done as part of the asphalt overlay program. The asphalt overlay is a more expensive program, so that can influence the actual proportion of work done. But the reduction this year is primarily a reflection of the very wet year we have had and also a greater use of asphalt rather than resealing.

**MR COE:** This is the third year in a row, however, that I am aware of that municipal roads have been under target. How precise are you in that target setting, or is it just a number that carries over each year, just because?

**Mr Gill:** No. We have a target in terms of maintaining the roads—five per cent of the arterial and four per cent of the municipal roads. That is our target each year. That is what we develop our programs to. It is not a precise science. It is influenced by the weather conditions. It is also influenced by the actual detail that we establish when we look at the specific location.

**MR COE:** Given the rain and the inability to actually resurface some of these roads, how much money has been rolled over or been saved as a result of that work that is unable to be done?

**Mr Gill:** The department would basically use all of its available money on the range of services in a particular year. If some work was not done this year, it will be programmed for next year.

**MR COE:** So all the money, you are saying, was spent to deliver three per cent of the roads instead of four per cent?

**Mr Gill:** But within Roads ACT, while I said that it was a very wet year and that that has an impact on our road resurfacing program, the weather itself basically has generated a lot more activity in our stormwater. So, within our program, where we cannot deliver one particular activity, we divert that money to stormwater. And this year we have basically had to deal with a lot of responses to storms and rainwater issues.

**MR COE:** That means that you actually never catch up. That means there is no capacity next year to do five per cent instead of four per cent, thus getting back to an average of four. Does that mean that the roads over time deteriorate at a faster rate and continue to do so?

**Mr Gill:** As I say, we make the best use of the money that we have in a particular year. Work that does not get programmed this year that had been identified to be done will be programmed for next year. So it is an ongoing program. We try to make the best use of available resources at that point in time.

**MR COE:** Well, you—

**Mr Corbell:** Obviously the localised flooding events that we experienced over the Christmas and new year period—the lead-up to Christmas and into the new year—did impact significantly on Roads ACT's activities. They had to undertake a large amount of remediation, urgent repair and replacement of assets following localised storm and flooding events. And I think it is entirely responsible that we give priority to restoring roads that have been damaged or made unsafe as a result of those events.

**MR COE:** It just surprises me, then, that if you do have these extraordinary events you would not have a separate budget line item to cater for that sort of circumstance.

**Mr Corbell:** Generally speaking, we do not make provision for a 30-year storm or flood event in our budgets—

**MR COE:** But should—

**Mr Corbell:** I do not think the previous government did either—

**MR COE:** You are not going to make one this year, though. You are not going to make one this year to catch up on the 25 per cent less roads that were resurfaced this year?

**Mr Corbell:** I do not think the previous government made provision for extraordinary events either in its budgets, Mr Coe.

**THE CHAIR:** Always a good excuse after 10 years—

**MR COE:** Well, if you want to always benchmark against the Liberal government, that is fine, and I think the Liberal government will be happy to go by that—

**MR HARGREAVES:** I would not be.

**MR COE:** But the fact is that you surfaced 25 per cent less roads and you have cited all these exceptional reasons, and yet you have not got any exceptional strategy to actually make do with the road surfacing program.

**Mr Corbell:** As Mr Gill has indicated, this is a rolling program; work that is not undertaken in one year is caught up in the following year.

**THE CHAIR:** But if you only—

**MR COE:** It just amazes me that you are just—

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, could I just say that mathematically that is not correct. If you only do three-quarters of what you had to do this year and you put a quarter back to the coming year, that means either a quarter of next year's is displaced or you increase the size of the program. I notice that Mr Gill is agreeing with this—

**Mr Gill:** That is right.

**THE CHAIR:** So when do you catch up?

**Mr Corbell:** Well, the program—

**THE CHAIR:** I think the point Mr Coe is making—

**Mr Corbell:** The work just gets rolled over—

**THE CHAIR:** is that you are only doing three-quarters of what you have to—

**Mr Corbell:** This is an ongoing infrastructure maintenance task and—

**THE CHAIR:** but you cannot catch up, having the program at the same level each year. There must be, at some point, additional—

**Mr Corbell:** No, I am not disputing it. There is no catch-up. The work simply rolls over into the following year.

**MR COE:** This is something we have heard about at estimates repeatedly, that we have ageing infrastructure. Mr Gill and Mr Stanhope spoke about this in the last two or three years. The infrastructure report card last year by Engineers Australia cited the tremendous problem we have with the maintenance of our ageing road assets. Yet it seems to me that the government has no strategy whatsoever to actually deal with this. Then when you have exceptional circumstances, such as heavy rainfall, you do not have an exceptional strategy.

**Mr Corbell:** This is an ongoing challenge for the territory, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** But you do not have a strategy. It is a challenge that has been known for years, yet you do not have a strategy. You just admitted that.

**Mr Corbell:** I welcome your suggestions on how money can be redirected from—

**MR COE:** Have you read this report card?

**Mr Corbell:** If I can answer your question, Mr Coe, instead of your hysterically waving documents around—

**MR COE:** Hysterically waving?

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Coe—

**MR COE:** I am a hysterical person, obviously.

**Mr Corbell:** It has been said, Mr Coe.

**THE CHAIR:** We will keep our private comments to ourselves.

**MR HANSON:** By you and Mr Hargreaves.

**MS BRESNAN:** Can I ask a new question?

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps a new question from Ms Bresnan.

**MR COE:** No, he can still answer it—

**MR HARGREAVES:** I am waiting for the Liberals Party's policy on controlling the weather—the Canute policy.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, will you finish and then we will move to a new question.

**Mr Corbell:** We manage the infrastructure maintenance task within the context of the overall budget and what is made available to us in the budget to do that.

**MR COE:** And finally, will you create a new accountability indicator in output 1.2 for the asphalt overlay program as the current one, according to Mr Gill, cannot be looked at independently? If the asphalt overlay program is also a key indicator, surely it should be there in 1.2.

**Mr Corbell:** The government is always happy to consider any recommendation the estimates committee chooses to make in that regard.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan, a new question and then Mrs Dunne.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you, chair. I want to ask about the vision zero road safety program, which I imagine the Office of Transport has something to do with. I want to get some information about how that scheme is implemented within the Office of Transport, and in particular how it is fitting in with other strategies which the Office of Transport is responsible for, including sustainable transport strategies. How is it actually having an impact on the sort of policies you are pursuing?

**Mr Corbell:** Just generally, before I ask Mr Peters to provide some detail, Ms Bresnan, the government remains committed to this policy and approach. One death on our roads is one death too many. We do need to try and continue to reduce the road toll. We will do that through a range of mechanisms and measures to help motorists and to encourage motorists to moderate their speed. It is critical amongst these. Better road design is an important consideration. Enforcement, policing activities and so on are all part of the mix. In relation to progress to date and forthcoming issues, I will ask Mr Peters to talk to you about it.

**Mr Peters:** Thanks, minister. The vision zero concept is something that is in the national road safety strategy which was released, I understand, on 20 May. The ACT government has its own road safety strategy and action plan following on from that strategy which essentially aligns with the national road safety strategy and that vision zero.

**MS BRESNAN:** What I am interested in is how it has actually been—I know you are saying that there is the national strategy and the government strategy. But what are you actually doing to implement it in the Office of Transport and what impact is it having on the policies you are pursuing and working in with other strategies which you have, such as sustainable transport strategies?

**Mr Peters:** The road safety strategy is essentially designed around a system approach. That really means looking at how we engineer the road system. In our design of new infrastructure we try to design that infrastructure as safe as possible. Northbourne Avenue would be an example of the corridor where we are trying to take that system approach to ensure that we have safe facilities for cyclists and pedestrians along there.

I guess the second part of the system approach is an education approach for motorists. You may have noticed some of the VMS-type signs, the point-to-point camera program and those sorts of enforcement measures which we are working closely with the police on to introduce and try and educate our community. Their behaviour really makes the difference in terms of road safety.

I guess the third aspect of that is actually the safety in the vehicles and the design of the vehicles which, of course, is a national design rule matter that is also another important point.

**MS BRESNAN:** How are you working with other agencies such as ACTPLA in particular in terms of design of suburbs and stuff? How are you working with other agencies to make sure this policy is implemented?

**Mr Peters:** At a corridor level, when we are actually designing something like Northbourne, for instance, we obviously engage with those other agencies to make sure that we do get a right outcome in terms of land use and access—safe access to development sites, for instance and new development proposals—to make sure that that works. Tony spoke earlier about the city cycle loop. We do have road safety coordination committees and a road safety task force which involve internal stakeholders as well as external; so people like Treasury and other agencies—ACTPLA and those sorts of people.

**MS BRESNAN:** Is the vision zero idea a part of those road safety committees?

**Mr Peters:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, I would like to go back to the new structure of the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate and how it interacts with the sustainability directorate. I would like to get a feel for what movement there has been between those two organisations, or will be between those two organisations, and where, for instance, the policy centres will lie, especially in terms of nature conservation, biodiversity, water quality and those things.

**Mr Corbell:** All of those policy functions now sit—well, in fact, they sat in the old Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water. The nature conservation policy was already a responsibility of DECCEW. What has now occurred is that some remaining functions that were split between the two agencies—for example, officers that provided advice to the Conservator for Flora and Fauna who were located in TAMS—are now part of the new Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. I think that is the only significant transfer of staff—and Gary will correct me if I am wrong—from TAMS to the new Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate.

On the ground, stewardship, maintenance and operational management of our nature reserves and our national parks remain the responsibility of Territory and Municipal Services and Parks, Conservation and Lands—it is Parks and City Services. I am just getting my head around some of the nomenclature, Mrs Dunne. That only changed on Monday, Mr Wells tells me. So Parks and City Services within TAMS still maintains responsibility for the operational management, custodial stewardship, of nature parks and reserves. In summary, that is the operational split.

In terms of the dialogue between the two agencies, that obviously is one of the reasons why the Chief Minister has asked a single minister to have custodianship over these two portfolios. It is certainly desirable, from my perspective, to have a single minister responsible for the management of both the policy side and the operational side. It certainly worked well when there were two ministers. But I think there are real strengths in having a single minister responsible as well. That is obviously a factor that has influenced the Chief Minister's decision on that matter.

In practical terms, there has always been close dialogue between policy functions in DECCEW, as it was, and TAMS on these matters—for example, development of the review of the Nature Conservation Act, issues around weed strategies, issues around biodiversity offsets, issues around the functions of the conservator's office itself. There has had to be a clear dialogue between the staff in the two directorates as they are now, and that will continue.

**MRS DUNNE:** For instance, minister, with the initiatives for the conservation measures for threatened species in the communities in the woodland restoration that are in the TAMS directorate, what role will the office of sustainability play in ensuring that that money is best spent? As a practical example, we have got money

here and there are two agencies which have quite intimate concerns about how that money might be spent. So how is the spending of that money informed?

**Mr Corbell:** In general terms, the spending of this money is informed by the existing policy settings and priorities for maintenance or protection of particular biodiversity values. The higher order strategies, of course, are set and prepared by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate as it is now—DECCEW previously. Then the translation of those higher order policy objectives into operational plans is very much the function of Parks and Conservation staff. They make their assessments in accordance with the higher order priorities set in policy as determined by government on the advice of the environment directorate. In practical terms, I think it is quite a clear translation. It is higher order policy and then lower level operational decision making. Perhaps to explain that in more detail, Ms Steward or Mr Hughes can assist. I will ask one of them to speak on it.

**Ms Steward:** Thank you, minister. What the minister has said is accurate in terms of the way we will approach the management of our on-ground works. In effect, where there is a research component to any project, the policy component to any project involves any on-ground works, we will be working closely with the team that has now moved into the new sustainable development group. That will be an ongoing dialogue.

Where it involves on-ground works that will require project management, we will take carriage of the on-ground works. So in practice, any project where there is a relationship between the two will be reflected in the project outline and the responsibilities that each of the agencies will take up. I can see that there will be a completely seamless relationship between the two groups under the new structure.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. Could I just follow up, Mr Chair: there are four initiatives—woodland restoration, conservation measures for threatened species in communities, rabbit control in nature reserves and pest management—which amount to \$1,050,000 this year and similar amounts in the outyears. Will all that be spent on nature reserves? How will that money be divvied up?

**Ms Steward:** I might refer to Stephen Hughes, who is taking carriage of the actual program. I would like to say, though, that we have a weeds management program for the whole of the city. It is within the urban area as well as in our high quality nature reserves and national parks. We concentrate specifically on the areas of highest environmental value. So you will see that in terms of the allocation of funds it will be principally for that purpose, although we do put other funds towards riparian corridors within the urban areas, the Molonglo River and the like. If you wish to have further detail, I will defer now to Stephen Hughes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**Mr Hughes:** With regard to the rabbit control funding of \$200,000, that funding will be invested entirely in our national park and our nature reserve system within the ACT.

**MRS DUNNE:** So how many rabbits are we going to get for \$200,000?

**Mr Hughes:** How many rabbits?

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes. In the last couple of years we have had \$100,000 for—

**Mr Corbell:** I do not think we have a target or death toll, or anything like that.

**MRS DUNNE:** the pinnacles, and the previous year we had a similar amount for Mount Majura. We are looking at essentially two sites, are we, or are we changing the way we are doing rabbit control?

**Mr Hughes:** We are not changing the way we are doing rabbit control work. That \$200,000 will enable us to undertake follow-up work on nature reserve areas which we targeted two years ago, where we achieved around a 90 per cent reduction in the population. This funding will enable us to keep those populations low.

Those areas are Mount Ainslie, Mount Majura, the Pinnacle, Mount Painter, Jerrabomberra Wetlands, Red Hill, Callum Brae, Jerrabomberra Grasslands and Namadgi National Park, particularly around Boboyan and Gudgenby valleys. The funding also enables us to move into some other areas of concern where we have not been able to undertake rabbit control works in the last couple of years. These are new works. That will be in the Mount Pleasant area nature reserve and in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, as well as—

**MRS DUNNE:** So you are going to do all of that for \$200,000?

**Mr Hughes:** Our rabbit control program is quite efficient. We have \$200,000 in this budget. We invest money from our core base budget in rabbit control work as well. We use our own staff to undertake some of that rabbit control work. We also are fortunate enough in having a very committed park care movement in the ACT. We also use volunteers to complement the works that we are doing, particularly in identifying rabbit warrens and helping us with estimates of population before and after the control programs.

**Mr Corbell:** This specific measure is funded over a three-year period. So it is not just a one-off; it is an ongoing level of funding.

**MRS DUNNE:** On notice, Mr Hughes, could you perhaps inform the committee how much money comes out of core TAMS funding—just to get a feel for how much money is spent on rabbit eradication?

**Mr Corbell:** We can take that on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Rattenbury has a supplementary.

**MR RATTENBURY:** When it comes to weeds and pests, there is a weed operational control plan for weeds; is there an equivalent plan for pest animals?

**Mr Hughes:** Yes, there is a forward program for the control of vertebrate pest

management in the ACT. That includes rabbits, of course. It also addresses feral horse control, foxes, pigs, deer—a range of pest species.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Is that document publicly available?

**Mr Hughes:** I will defer to the minister on that one.

**Mr Corbell:** I thought there was a vertebrate pest management plan. I am happy to clarify that, but my understanding was there was a plan. I have no problem in making that available. Yes, there is one. I am happy to make that available.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you.

**MRS DUNNE:** I just wanted to follow up on the pest thing as well, if I could, Mr Chairman. There is half a million dollars for pest plant management now. One of the officials—I cannot remember who—said that that was not just for reserves. I wanted to get a feel for how much of that was for reserves and how much was not. Is there other money, or is this all the money for weed control?

**Mr Hughes:** The \$500,000 that appears in the budget for environmental weed control is new funding. That complements base funding that we devote to environmental weed control each year of \$277,000 and funding that we have directed to weed control out of fire insurance money that we received after the 2003 fires. In total, that adds up to \$1.087 million in untied funding which we can invest in implementing our environmental weed management program.

On top of that, we also have a range of funding for what we might call tied works, associated with other works such as the development of the Molonglo River park. I will just detail those for you. The Molonglo River park establishment includes around \$570,000 for willow removal in that corridor.

**MRS DUNNE:** This is for the Molonglo development area?

**Mr Corbell:** This is for the area of the Molonglo River below Scrivener Dam. I think it goes all the way through to the confluence with the Murrumbidgee. But particular focus will obviously be placed on the new urban development area.

**MRS DUNNE:** So what was that figure again?

**Mr Hughes:** Roughly \$570,000. The exact amount has not been finally determined yet, but it is in that order of magnitude. Also in the budget there was \$1.5 million for the restoration of waterways and surrounds. Of that money, \$832,000 is specifically for the removal of pest willow species. There are a couple of other smaller projects. That brings the investment up to \$2.489 million.

There is also \$200,000 for the removal of willows along the Molonglo River at Oaks Estate and \$150,000 for the removal of willows and revegetation along the Molonglo River water ski area at Pialligo. That brings the total funding available for environmental weed control in the coming year to \$2.839 million. On top of that, there is also the amenity weed control program, which obviously has an aesthetic and

amenity focus rather than specifically an environmental focus, of around \$745,000 a year.

**MRS DUNNE:** That is the weed spraying on median strips and things like that?

**Mr Hughes:** That is right, yes—that sort of control.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**MR RATTENBURY:** During the last financial year the environmental weed control operation plan—the version I saw—was not fully funded. There were quite a number of projects that were identified in there—some of which were high priority projects and a number of which were follow-up projects—that were not funded. Does the description you have just given mean that this year all of the projects in the operational plan will have sufficient funding to be completed?

**Mr Hughes:** The environmental weed control operations plan has a focus right out to 2019. It has targets in there for the achievement of weed suppression or elimination for every project that is in there. We implement that plan progressively, depending on the amount of funding that is available year by year.

**Mr Corbell:** The funding in this budget is focused on weeds of national significance—so high priority, high risk weed species and their encroachment, in particular, into endangered or vulnerable habitat areas. The additional funding identified in the budget—the half a million-odd—is particularly focusing on critical areas where we know weeds are encroaching into valuable areas of biodiversity that need to be managed and dealt with.

**MRS DUNNE:** Does that program, minister, include activities that would impede the encroachment, such as washdown, from affected areas into nature reserves in particular? Are those sorts of practices envisaged in the plan?

**Mr Corbell:** I am advised there are a range of locations that have been looked at and given priority for this work. For example, urban areas such as Red Hill, Mount Mugga Mugga, Mount Ainslie, Majura and Goorooyarroo and Kama nature reserves are all areas of priority. Those are obviously areas adjacent to urban areas. Equally, there are areas that are more remote, such as southern Clear Range, northern Clear Range and the Boboyan nature reserve. There are a range of locations both more remote and more adjacent to amenities.

**MRS DUNNE:** It might be easier, minister, if you could provide on notice a list of the priority weeds and the areas where they are being prioritised so the committee can get a better feel for the extent of the program and the approach which is being taken to address the current infestations of weeds and what is being done to ameliorate reinfestation.

**Mr Corbell:** The highest priority areas and the highest priority environmental weeds, I should say, are serrated tussock, Chilean needle grass, African lovegrass, St John's wort, broom, blackberry, sweet briar, boxthorn, seeding and crack willow, nodding thistle and Paterson's curse—in descending order.

**MRS DUNNE:** Where are you concentrating on those?

**Mr Corbell:** As I mentioned earlier, the concentrations are in areas where we know these weeds present particular challenges—sub-alpine and montane areas of Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, lowland woodland environments, including areas of nationally endangered yellow box-red gum communities throughout Canberra Nature Park and riverine environments.

**MS HUNTER:** There is \$1 million over four years to assist in the regeneration of the ACT's box-gum woodlands. What are the areas that you have identified for this measure? Also, how is the money likely to be spent?

**Mr Hughes:** The woodlands restoration program is going to take a landscape perspective, so it will not be just focused on one nature reserve here and one nature reserve there. It will not be a fragmented approach. The areas that we put our investment into will be determined to a large extent by the finding of the connectivity study, which is due for completion in June this year, which has been commissioned by what until recently was our conservation, planning and research area. It will also be guided by a steering committee which has representatives from the conservation community, the research community and our own research staff in that conservation, planning and research area.

At this stage I cannot give you specific nature reserves where it will be targeted, except I can say that there will definitely be work in the Kama nature reserve because some of the supplementary funding that is going to be put into that woodland restoration project is biodiversity offset funding available through the construction of the Kings Highway. It is going to be used for some research work on the restoration of box-gum woodland understorey, in conjunction with, I think, the Australian National University. That work will be done in the Kama nature reserve and that will be applicable to other works in the program.

**MS HUNTER:** The funding in this budget is additional to what was already there?

**Mr Hughes:** Additional to what was already there for what?

**MS HUNTER:** Is this additional money? Is this new money?

**Mr Hughes:** Yes, absolutely.

**MS HUNTER:** I just wanted to confirm that.

**Mr Hughes:** This is above normal operations.

**MS HUNTER:** You have mentioned the connectivity study. I also wonder how this all fits with one of the new initiatives, which is around mapping vegetation communities and plant surveys and mapping native species presence and so forth. How does all this connect together?

**Ms Steward:** Basically, all of this information is going to feed into a review of

ACTPLA—the new sustainable development is going to be doing a review of a spatial plan for the city or is presently doing that. One of the inputs is going to be to look at biodiversity and creating better linkages between those areas, linking the areas of high natural value to the south-west and Gorooyaroo to the north through the major corridors into the city.

This research is going to be pivotal in actually identifying what those characteristics are and the extent to which they can be enhanced through a targeted program of works over subsequent years. With all of this work—the on-ground work that we are doing, the research work that is being done through these projects—it will eventually go into a spatial map. That will inform either restoration or appropriate land uses. The lead agency pulling that together from a strategy and policy point of view will be the new sustainable development group.

**MS HUNTER:** You talk about the south-west and I think you talked about transport corridors—is that right? You just mentioned something about some corridors through. Is this connected to urban development as well? Obviously it is with the spatial plan. What is the connection there?

**Mr Corbell:** The work that ACTPLA—now the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate—is doing is to develop a new planning strategy for the territory, which is the requirement under the Planning and Development Act. It is a replacement, an update, a revision of the spatial plan framework. This is basically about us understanding the macro constraints and the macro opportunities in terms of settlement patterns for the city and then for the broader region. Obviously a very important input into that is to understand what important linkages need to be either maintained or enhanced in terms of different ecological communities. The obvious ones for us are grassland woodland communities in particular.

This mapping work and the work already being undertaken by the planners will give us a very clear picture of what key linkages need to be maintained, particularly between the territory and the broader region. These communities do not understand, do not acknowledge and do not really care about lines on maps, but they are nevertheless connections that we need to maintain, and enhance where possible, to ensure the survival of these communities.

Those are the types of considerations that we built into the planning strategy. Then the planning strategy will become a key consideration in terms of the future urban development pattern for the city in terms of what is and is not feasible for future urban settlement for the city and the region.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Le Couteur has a supplementary.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It sounds as though you are doing some new work on this. Is this likely to influence the development of the outskirts of Gungahlin? I am looking particularly here at Kenny, where some concerns have been raised. I do not have a map in front of me, but is Throsby the suburb which has the long sticking-out bit? Is the work you are doing there likely to influence the development—and Molonglo as well?

**Mr Corbell:** We already have a pretty good understanding of the issues and constraints in specific development front areas, whether it is Molonglo or whether it is parts of northern Gungahlin. The issue now is really to tie that knowledge together into a comprehensive whole so that the planning strategy for the next five, 10, 15 or 20 years of the city's development has embedded in it the very clear framework of what these corridors of connectivity are and how they need to be maintained for future planning decisions. Whether that relates to where transport corridors go or whether that relates to where new urban settlement occurs, we need to have that in the picture. That is really what this work is about.

**THE CHAIR:** On a different area, minister, TAMS has picked up the government accommodation and property services function. One of the things that that area is currently working on is a whole-of-government office accommodation strategy. Where is that strategy?

**Mr Corbell:** There is a division of responsibility now. Strategy and policy are a matter for the Economic Development Directorate. The actual physical maintenance operations of government accommodation sit with Territory and Municipal Services. We have the operational side; policy matters are in the other directorate.

**THE CHAIR:** On a slightly different area, just to go back to some of the roads, I believe there was some money to upgrade Southern Cross Drive. Can we have a breakdown of what work will be done on Southern Cross Drive?

**Mr Corbell:** I will ask Mr Gill to deal with that.

**THE CHAIR:** Then we will finish and go to morning tea. Then we will come back and work our way through the output classes.

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Gill can assist you in that respect.

**Mr Gill:** Could you repeat the question?

**THE CHAIR:** Southern Cross Drive—we spoke about Stretton Drive. I understand there is some money for Southern Cross Drive. What works have you done there?

**Mr Gill:** Southern Cross Drive, in the vicinity of Kippax, the western section of Belconnen? The west Belconnen section—is that the context of your question?

**THE CHAIR:** I assume it is near Kippax.

**Mr Gill:** Associated with the development of west Macgregor, there has been a significant increase of traffic in the vicinity of Kippax at two intersections. Some work was done to look at necessary improvements associated with that development; the priority locations for improvement have been identified as the upgrade of two intersections at Southern Cross and Florey Drive and Southern Cross and Starke Street, which is primarily the access into Kippax group centre. And the construction of two roundabouts has been identified. The project cost is \$1.5 million, programmed for the next financial year.

**THE CHAIR:** So they will be completed in 2011-12?

**Mr Gill:** Yes. There had already been some preliminary design work done in a prior year.

**THE CHAIR:** Any final questions on that?

**MR COE:** One of those intersections had a fatality last year; is that correct?

**Mr Gill:** There was a fatality between those two intersections. The person had travelled out of Starke Street and was heading towards Florey Drive—a motorcyclist. It was not necessarily associated with the condition of the intersections, but there was a fatality.

**MR COE:** That is in fact the question. How have the events of that accident impacted upon the design of the two roundabouts or the two intersection upgrades?

**Mr Gill:** The need for the intersection improvements had been identified prior to that crash, so it has not necessarily influenced the design.

**MR COE:** When was that identified then?

**Mr Gill:** As I said, the need for these improvements had been identified about two years ago as part of some feasibility work undertaken by the department.

**MR COE:** Was a budget submission lodged back then for that upgrade or for those upgrades?

**Mr Corbell:** It is not really appropriate to comment on internal budget cabinet processes.

**THE CHAIR:** Did the department lodge a submission? That is an entirely reasonable question.

**Mr Corbell:** Those matters are budget in confidence and we are not going to discuss them.

**MR COE:** Where on the list of priorities has the upgrade of these two intersections been for the last few years?

**Mr Gill:** These are not the highest ranked. For instance, these are not the highest ranked black spots in the ACT. These are improvements that have been identified as part of the west Belconnen development. They are not ranked in the top black spot projects that we list.

**MR COE:** Given that—

**Mr Gill:** And the work is not being progressed to address a road safety issue per se. It is the increase of traffic associated with west Belconnen development.

**MR COE:** It is simply that, given the severity of the situation—given that there has been a fatality there—I am curious as to what the provenance of the upgrades actually is and whether there has been any regard for any of the road safety aspects of it, not just the traffic flow.

**Mr Corbell:** As Mr Gill has indicated, Mr Coe, the fatality that occurred in this vicinity is not related to the operation of those particular intersections which are the subject of the upgrade, so it would be wrong to draw a link between those two matters. Obviously, there is an increase in the general volume of traffic, and the government is seeking to respond to that and provide improved infrastructure to deal with that volume. But the road safety issues—there is just no way you can credibly join a link between the tragedy of the fatality and the upgrades of these intersections. They are not related.

**MR COE:** I know that these intersections have been raised with the government over time. I was just wondering, given that some planning work has been done already on those intersections, what safety enhancements will be made, whether they are required or not?

**Mr Gill:** The intersections basically will involve the construction of two roundabouts. That will manage the conflict and reduce the speed of traffic.

**MS HUNTER:** How will this work fit in with the proposed park and ride at Kippax? Are you taking that in? Is there any connection?

**Mr Gill:** There is no inconsistency. It will provide better access.

**MS HUNTER:** Two roundabouts, buses—I always like to know that buses can get around a roundabout.

**Mr Gill:** Roundabouts can be designed to accommodate buses all across the city.

**MS HUNTER:** Sometimes they have not been. That is good to hear.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned that there is a list of black spots. Is it possible that the committee could have the list of the black spots?

**Mr Gill:** We can give you the list of the top-ranked locations, through the minister's office.

**Mr Corbell:** We will take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks very much. We will finish the morning session there.

**Meeting adjourned from 10.44 to 11.04 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, we will resume with information services, output 1.1. The Gungahlin shopfront: can you describe what the \$150,000 is for and what it is intended for the shopfront to be?

**Mr Corbell:** I might defer to one of my officials, Mr Colussi.

**Mr Colussi:** Good morning. Sorry, I missed the—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Gungahlin shopfront.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. Can we have a description of the project and what will be the outcome?

**Mr Colussi:** Of the feasibility study?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Colussi:** A consultancy was engaged to undertake a feasibility study for a shopfront in Gungahlin. That funding was provided for in 2010-11. That study was completed in January. The directorate is currently putting together options for government to consider, which is within the directorate on its way to government.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Is there to be a stand-alone shopfront or is the shopfront now to be included in the new proposed office building?

**Mr Byles:** As Mr Colussi has said, at this stage the options are being developed within the department. They are with me for consideration prior to submission to the minister.

**MR COE:** Can I ask why of that \$70,000 contract for PricewaterhouseCoopers only \$30,000 was spent?

**Mr Colussi:** No, that is not correct. There was \$100,000 initially earmarked for that consultancy, of which \$70,000 was for the consultancy; \$30,000 was earmarked for internal use, which I decided was not required from the Canberra Connect perspective, so that was handed back, and the consultancies come in at about \$59,000 out of the 70.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** When is it likely that the shopfront, in whatever configuration is decided, will actually be operational in Gungahlin?

**Mr Corbell:** That will depend on which option is adopted by government. As Mr Byles has said, he is finalising advice to me. I would be happy to keep you advised of progress on that matter, Ms Le Couteur, but it is certainly my intention as the new minister to get a conclusion on this matter as soon as possible.

**MR COE:** Is it outdated, that PWC report, given that the budget feasibility study for moving 500 public servants out to Gungahlin also includes provision of a shopfront?

**Mr Byles:** I do not think it is outdated, Mr Coe. I think it is just a matter of further considerations as we look at who government determines will move and the timing of that move.

**MR COE:** The Greens-Labor agreement has a Gungahlin shopfront as one of the elements of it. It is not going to be developed in the next 18 months, is it?

**Mr Corbell:** I think it would be premature to make that observation, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** In which case, why does the shifting of 500 public servants out to Gungahlin as a feasibility study also include the provision of a Gungahlin shopfront?

**Mr Corbell:** Obviously there is potential for short-term and longer-term arrangements in relation to the provision of shopfront services and one does not preclude the other.

**MR COE:** So are you saying that a shopfront is going to be built in October next year?

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Coe, I think I have already explained to you what the process is here. The government is awaiting advice on options for the installation of shopfront services in the Gungahlin town centre. There may be both short-term and long-term measures proposed in relation to that and the timing will be dependent on the options that are chosen. Nevertheless, as minister I am keen to see this matter resolved as soon as possible.

**MR COE:** Are we likely to see an official opening, similar to the prison, just before the next election?

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Coe, I am sure that other members of this committee will treat the matter seriously and recognise the importance of getting this right.

**MR COE:** You have form for opening things officially but not actually opening them, don't you?

**Mr Corbell:** I am happy to revisit that debate if you wish, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** I would happily go there.

**Mr Corbell:** I simply make the observation, Mr Coe, that delays at the prison were not a consequence of government action. An independent arbiter appointed under the prison construction contract has determined that.

**MR HANSON:** The tripartisan report didn't say that, did it?

**THE CHAIR:** We should be speaking here on TAMS, please.

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Coe raised it, Mr Chairman. An independent arbiter established under the prison construction contract has confirmed that the legal and the financial liability for delay rests with the contractor.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. We will come back to the shopfront.

**MR COE:** You are on message talking about the prison. So, given you are happy to give background as to why there were considerable delays in the opening of the prison, perhaps you can give us background, considerable background, as to why there are delays in opening a Gungahlin shopfront?

**Mr Corbell:** I regret that I am not in a position to do that, Mr Coe, but maybe my officials can advise of the time frame.

**Mr Byles:** Mr Coe, any delay is because of me. It is sitting with me, the brief, and I am considering the options and shaping the brief for presentation to the minister.

**MR COE:** That is very noble of you. However, this has been several years and that PWC report came down in January. So at best you have had it on your desk for maybe three or four months. That is not the delay that I am worried about. The delay is much more, dragging on for years, while you have 45,000 people living out in Gungahlin. I imagine Gungahlin residents probably have more transactions with Canberra Connect due to that nature of new service delivery and the like. This has been an issue for years, not three or four months. When are you actually going to bite the bullet and say whether you are going to do it or not?

**Mr Corbell:** I think it is wrong to characterise the situation as one where there is no service provision for Gungahlin residents. The fact is that the majority of transactions with Canberra Connect and ACT government are online, electronic or over-the-phone transactions.

**MR COE:** So are we going to see one or not?

**Mr Corbell:** But that does not preclude the establishment of a physical presence in the Gungahlin town centre, a physical shopfront service, and that is a matter which government is giving consideration to.

**MR COE:** It just seems to me that opening up a shopfront should not be insurmountable and should not be something which drags out to the length of the GDE.

**Mr Corbell:** Let us have a look at the actual transaction volumes in terms of how people choose to do business with government on these matters. I might ask Mr Colussi—

**MR COE:** You can make a case as to why we should have a shopfront—but is there going to be one or not? That is the question.

**Mr Corbell:** I just answered your question, Mr Coe: as soon as is possible. As I have indicated to you, as a new minister I am giving this matter priority.

**MR HANSON:** Mr Chair—

**THE CHAIR:** Just on the same issue; a supplementary?

**MR HANSON:** Yes, on the issue of call centres. If you want to go to that area I am very happy to go to that area or have we got some more on the—

**THE CHAIR:** No. Let me go to Canberra Connect. I note on page 72 under accountability indicators and call centre waiting time less than 20 seconds, the target

was 80 per cent and the outcome was 55 per cent. Why is that outcome so low? Why did people have to wait so long for Canberra Connect?

**Mr Corbell:** I will ask Mr Colussi to answer the question.

**Mr Colussi:** In relation to that performance indicator, it is probably helpful to look at the performance of the contact centre in a holistic service delivery form. For the last five years or so the contact centres had customer satisfaction of 90 per cent, including in 2010-11, and I think the statistic that you are talking about there refers to how many people have their calls answered within 20 seconds. The estimate for this year is about 56 per cent, which is close to about 400,000-odd calls that we have answered within 20 seconds. That does not necessarily mean that those people that were answered within 25 seconds or 30 seconds were less satisfied than those that were answered in 18 seconds or 20 seconds. I am just couching that in that context.

What that indicator does show is demand pressure on the contact centre. Some of that is population growth. Some of that is expectation management from the community. Some of it is the unseasonal weather that we have had. We have had significant rain events which have caused Canberra Connect to receive something like a 60 per cent increase in service requests. That 60 per cent increase relates to something like a 250 per cent increase in calls because we get multiple calls for each extra service request. So all that builds up a pressure in this financial year. We have also had some turnover in the contact centre which impacts our ability to deal with those calls as efficiently as we would have liked or could have in previous years.

**THE CHAIR:** Note 4 at the bottom of page 72 says you have had significant staff turnover and that has then coupled with the impact of providing on-the-job training to new staff. How many staff are there in the call centre and what is significant turnover?

**Mr Colussi:** There are 55 seats in the call centre. As to significant turnover, I might have to take that on notice as I do not want to estimate the actual numbers of permanent and contract FTE that have left over that year, so I might have to get back to you on that one. If I can talk generally, we have had a number of people retire this year—and it should be in the context also that the contact centre has had very low turnover for many years; in some years zero per cent turnover. We have a number of staff retire and some get promotions within ACT government. We see that as a cyclic thing and, yes, this particular year we have had some turnover. Particularly with contractors it takes a while to get new contractors on board and up to speed. It can take up to a number of weeks to get them ready to take phone calls. So that puts pressure on the call queues.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hanson, did you have a supp on the call centres?

**MR HANSON:** That was a similar supplementary.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Ms Hunter, on the indicators?

**MS HUNTER:** You were talking about 55 seats in the call centre. Are there any plans to reduce those numbers?

**Mr Colussi:** To reduce those numbers? No, there is no plan to reduce them.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. Points p, q and r under the Canberra Connect accountability indicators show the costs of the transaction whether it is at a shopfront, a contact centre or a web interaction. Are there plans to put further investment into the information technology, the online sort of interactions?

**Mr Colussi:** Yes, there are and in fact in this coming year's budget there is money set aside for upgrading the directory, which is fundamental in contact centre use and across government in fact. So there is that investment. There is ongoing investment in smart form payment options over the internet that we manage on behalf of the ACT government; also feedback management across government.

**MS HUNTER:** I will just go to customer satisfaction. How do you go about gathering that information? What is it determined on?

**Mr Colussi:** We engage a firm to undertake a telephone survey once a year. That was completed in April this year.

**MS HUNTER:** And how many people are surveyed?

**Mr Colussi:** Six hundred.

**THE CHAIR:** Is a copy of that survey available?

**Mr Corbell:** I am happy to take the question on notice and see what can be provided, Mr Smyth.

**THE CHAIR:** Further questions on—

**MRS DUNNE:** Mr Chairman, could I just follow up here? Is this the place to ask about the government portal payment system?

**Mr Colussi:** Yes, it is.

**MRS DUNNE:** This relates to some of the issues that constituents have encountered and we have encountered with the payments for the MyWay card. There is a problem with the long delay from making an electronic funds transfer. We have been told that the problem is that there is slowness with the payments portal. It takes two or three days for the payments portal to process money. Is that correct?

**Mr Colussi:** No, that is not correct. The payments portal that Canberra Connect operates is not pivotal in that transaction. I think what you are talking about are BPAY payments. Is that—

**MRS DUNNE:** Or EFTPOS payments.

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Peters can assist with some of the detail on this, Mrs Dunne.

**Mr Peters:** BPAY and EFTPOS online options are just options that are available for

payment.

**MRS DUNNE:** I do not want to discuss the MyWay payment. I want to discuss whether the payment portal on the ACT government website is part of the process that is slowing it down.

**Mr Corbell:** No, it is not.

**MRS DUNNE:** That is what I have been told by ACTION staff.

**Mr Corbell:** No, it is not. Mr Peters can explain to you what the reason is for the delay in relation to BPAY payments. It is in relation to BPAY payments that there is delay.

**Mr Peters:** Yes. In relation to BPAY, the advice on the website is that they can take up to five days, and essentially that process is not unusual. For instance, the University of Canberra card takes up to three days. Sometimes ours are done quicker than the five days, but essentially it is a five-day process. Day one, people make their application via their bank, for instance. Day two, that gets loaded into the ACT government receipting system, RAPS. Day 3, those payments are transferred out to the smart card system, Smartrack, which is the software for the buses. Day 4, that actually gets loaded into the buses, usually when they come back to the depot at night, and on day 5 the funds are available when people tag on. That is essentially the process.

**MRS DUNNE:** But if you make an EFTPOS payment the same thing happens. I will give you an example, Mr Peters. I loaded up my children's MyWay cards. I then immediately checked online with my credit card provider and the money had gone off my credit card, but it took five working days to get it onto my children's bus pass. What causes that?

**Mr Peters:** As I have just explained, that is the actual process. When you make the online transaction, the money comes out of your account. It then takes five days, essentially, or up to five days, for it to appear on the card. Our preference is for people to top up their MyWays using direct debit, which is automatic, or at a recharge agent, which is also automatic.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You are saying the direct debit is automatic. It is still—

**MRS DUNNE:** If you pay cash.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Correct me if I am wrong, but does it not still take a time between when you take the money out of my bank account and it goes into MyWay? If it is automatic, my question is: if you can do direct debit instantly, why can't you do it instantly with the BPAY, which comes straight out of my bank account. If one is instant, why isn't the other?

**Mr Peters:** There are two different systems, essentially. It is a financial institution issue with the BPAY.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No, it is not. The BPAY—as you went through your timetable, and I know from my previous lifetime experience, you got the money from the institution. The first day I asked for it. Second day, you have the money. After then, why isn't it instant if it is instant for the autopay?

**Mr Peters:** All I can say is that the advice that we have is that the actual process does take up to five days for BPAY whereas the direct debit does not.

**Mr Corbell:** I am advised, Ms Le Couteur, that it is a financial institution's processing matter in that the time taken to process the transfer of funds within the financial institution's systems is the reason for the delay before it can be receipted in the territory's systems. I am happy to provide a more detailed explanation, perhaps on notice, of the process. I raised this matter too when I became minister. I said, "Look, what is the issue here?" And the advice I have received very clearly was that it is a financial institution's processing delay and not—

**MR COE:** Why is it that with just about every other company where you pay the bill it gets credited the next day?

**Mr Corbell:** BPAY transactions commonly take up to five days before they are receipted.

**MR COE:** It is not common for that at all.

**Mr Corbell:** That is—

**MR COE:** It is not common. If you go and pay something on BPAY and it has not been credited in five days, you are calling up, wondering where it is.

**Mr Corbell:** That is the advice I have received, but I am happy to provide a more detailed technical explanation, perhaps on notice, as to how this occurs.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That would be good, and when you do it can you also just explain the difference when it is instant with autopay. I appreciate there are inherently some reasons why BPAY will take longer, but I just cannot see the level of difference between instant and five days.

**Mr Corbell:** We can address that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you.

**MRS DUNNE:** But it is only instant if—correct me if I am wrong—you pay cash?

**Mr Peters:** If you top up your card at a recharge agent, yes, that is instant.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, and you have to pay cash to get instant?

**Mr Peters:** At a recharge agent, or you can set up a direct debit online, in which case when your funds on your card fall below \$8 for a standard adult, then whatever amount you have chosen to top up online automatically goes on your card.

**MRS DUNNE:** The only instantaneous process is going into a recharge agency and handing cash over the counter?

**Mr Peters:** Other than—yes, instantaneous—

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr Peters:** You can set up a direct debit as well.

**MR COE:** But direct debit is not instantaneous. You have still got the delay. You are just offsetting the delay by having money in your account that—

**Mr Corbell:** As I have indicated, Mr Chairman, I am happy to provide a more detailed, technical explanation for this, on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** But there is no interaction between the MyWay system and the payment portal for the ACT government, which is where I started? That is what ACTION staff told me.

**Mr Colussi:** That is not correct.

**MRS DUNNE:** Part of the delay was caused by the bill-paying system on the ACT government portal.

**Mr Colussi:** Anything that is receipted through the ACT government payment portal is receipted overnight and disbursed the next day.

**THE CHAIR:** You might like to update your information to ACTION staff by the sound of it. Other questions in output class 1.1, information services?

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have got a general question which I did not manage to ask in the morning session.

**MS HUNTER:** Let us give it to Ms Le Couteur.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Ms Le Couteur, with a slightly more general question and then we will come back to 1.1.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is about TAMS and finding the five per cent savings in the operational budget, which I understand it did. There has been a lot of discussion around the idea that TAMS should have some sort of automatic growth indicator in the budget, possibly relating to the amount of roads or the size of Canberra, the expansion of the city. What work have you done on this and is TAMS managing to operate at the same capacity given the efficiency dividends?

**Mr Corbell:** Gary?

**Mr Byles:** Thanks, Ms Le Couteur. I am pleased to say that I think TAMS is operating at a better capacity than in previous years, noting the fact that the efficiency measures have to be delivered across government, these are challenging times across the nation financially and everyone has got to tighten their belt. In doing so, we have been able to address this internally. I am confident that the financial result at the end of the year will be better than certainly the recent previous years. However, that remains to be seen, but I remain confident.

What you are talking essentially is growth funding for municipal services. We have had significant progress. You will see in the budget there is an allocation this year for growth funding. It is a model that is being developed in consultation with Treasury, realising that we do have significant growth challenges. The city is expanding. We are very proud to be able to provide excellent municipal services and we want to continue to do so. But we are also conscious that we have other directorates who equally need significant funding. Perhaps the Chief Finance Officer, Mr Kalogeropoulos, can expand about the model that is being developed.

**Mr Kalogeropoulos:** Thanks, Gary. Indeed there is funding in the 2011-12 budget for growth in municipal services delivery. Though we have had growth funding previously, that has generally been of an ad hoc nature, if you like, in prior budgets. I think the positive thing with this initiative that we have got in the 2011-12 budget is that there is a mechanism, and it is planned to be an annual mechanism. So as part of this budget process we have agreed that there will be a formula.

The formula will be based on the number of rateable properties that come online for that current year. That process will inform future budget bids and we envisage that that is going to be an annual process. So as part of the 2011-12 initiative \$1.121 million has been allocated in 2011-12 and that is ongoing in terms of the forward years. There will be another process for the 2012-13 budget.

We did some studies or some analyses of some land releases, particularly around Harrison, to get estimates on what the actual cost would be to Territory and Municipal Services in terms of the additional maintenance burden that we would have with the growth in the city. The figures that we came up with, together with the Treasury, were approximately between \$500 to \$600 per block released. That is the annual maintenance burden that is incurred by the department.

This is the first year that we are implementing this mechanism, and as a process we will be reviewing the actual numbers, the actual costs that we have incurred, with those rateable properties that have come online, and that formula may well be adjusted accordingly.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is really interesting. I was not aware of that study. Have you also looked at or are you going to look at multi-units in the future, because I assume that the cost per unit would be different for you or—

**Mr Byles:** I would think this is a work in progress. The good news is that we have established some sort of model, methodology, to work from and again as this unfolds

we will have more discussion with Treasury to see how it develops and confirm the basis of our methodology. So the answer is that I would expect that to be part of our further studies.

**MR COE:** Might you be able to provide some advice to Treasury about revised rates that people will be paying, given the new cost analysis?

**Mr Byles:** I am happy to discuss with Treasury any issue. In terms of rates I would expect that is just a matter for the Treasury and government.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have had discussions with a number of developers who have told me they want to do something nicer in the public realm point of view—they want to provide better facilities in parks and things—and they said they were told by TAMS, “You can’t do this because we do not have the operational budget to maintain it once your initial couple of years is finished.” Will this new growth funding mean that there is more possibility to have better public realm in our new areas?

**Mr Corbell:** I think that is really a separate question, Ms Le Couteur. Asset acceptance by TAMS is a matter that I am keen to look at more closely. I know that developers of new estates where they are developing new estates are often keen to provide additional amenity or additional infrastructure of different types, maybe storm water or rain water re-use or whatever it might be. These are matters that I think government should be more open to.

That does not mean that it is *carte blanche*. It does not mean we will accept, nor should we accept, any sort of level of infrastructure regardless of the implications in terms of maintenance and ongoing operations of that infrastructure. But in my view perhaps the approach has been a little too conservative in the past and, whilst we do have to have a close regard to the cost implications, if there is innovation in the delivery of infrastructure or facilities for residents, particularly in new estates, I think we should be more open to that and it is certainly a matter I want to pursue further.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have a new question, Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** Yes. On BP4, page 73, at 1.3—

**THE CHAIR:** No; we are doing output 1.1.

**MR HANSON:** I thought we had moved from there.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** With regard to the possibility of creating a new or a single government intranet and streamlining the IT systems, I was wondering what impact that is going to have on the library service and whether they have been consulted about what their requirements might be and what their capabilities might be?

**Mr Corbell:** I will ask Ms Little.

**Ms Little:** Could you repeat the question, please?

**MR COE:** Sure. With Dr Hawke's review recommending some streamlined IT across the ACT government, including a common intranet, I was just wondering what consultation the review team had with the library service and what communication the library service has had with the rest of government in terms of outlining what your requirements are with regard to IT and your databases.

**Ms Little:** I can perhaps best answer that to say that it is very early days. I am just wanting to clarify: are you talking about an intranet which would be internal to government or are you perhaps talking about our website and the services we do there?

**MR COE:** Really both. Of course, the library is heavily dependent on information systems. I was really just wondering what involvement you have had with regard to this new framework they are setting up.

**Ms Little:** As I said, it is very early days. We have not had any discussions regarding the streamlining of websites other than to say that we work with InTACT. InTACT in fact have just developed our new website, which is probably something you have seen. We are expecting that we will be able to integrate our website and our services into whatever the government puts together.

**MR COE:** In relation to your core database—I am not sure what it is called—containing your catalogue, is the actual format of that database such that it can easily be updated and upgraded to suit modern systems?

**Ms Little:** Are you referring again to the whole-of-government website?

**MR COE:** Your catalogue in particular—your catalogue database.

**Ms Little:** The catalogue database is a library management system; it is a system that we buy off the shelf. It is accessible through the internet. You can even use your mobile phone now to access it. I am imagining that there will simply be a link from whatever the government website is to our catalogue and that it will be as seamless as it is from our existing website.

**MR COE:** So you do not envisage any particular challenges with regard to your existing databases and the new IT framework?

**Ms Little:** Obviously we will want to be involved in discussions, because we do have a series of services that we deliver to the community through our website. Our website is a very important part of what we do. You may have noticed that, as I have said, we have just upgraded it and added a lot more facilities. I cannot see that those things cannot be transferred over into a whole-of-government environment.

**MR COE:** I understand that the library has got a few processes in place where customers are notified by text message about different things.

**Ms Little:** Yes.

**MR COE:** That system that you have for the text messaging—is that a system which is unique to the library service? Has the library service procured that or is that something that is in operation elsewhere in government as well?

**Ms Little:** To be honest, I cannot answer that question for you, Mr Coe; I do not know what else is available in other parts of government. It is certainly a very popular part of our service provision. We do remind people that it is a courtesy to send text messages out about books being due in the next little time, but it has certainly made it much more efficient for us in terms of communicating with people. And it is a growth area for us in terms of being able to let people know when requests are in and those sorts of things.

**MR COE:** When you took that on, did you have to go through Procurement Solutions to do that or was that something that Shared Services already had available?

**Ms Little:** I will have to take that on notice. It was in place before I arrived in the ACT. I will have to take that on notice.

**MR COE:** Sure. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** In regard to some of the services you provide, I note from output d on page 72, output class 1.1, that you had expected 300,000 pages to be downloaded in the year but only 200,000 had been downloaded and you are going to review the website and the database. What is wrong with our website and what is wrong with our database?

**Ms Little:** There is nothing wrong with our website. The new website has just been released, and it does make it much easier to access our databases and to use services online. We did set that 300,000 as a stretching target. At the same time, what we have done is implement a program of training for our users in how to be much more targeted with what they select.

Of course, that is partly good for the environment, because we are not having lots of things printed out. We are spending a lot of time with our clients as they walk through the door, and also with schools—teaching them how to be much more targeted with their searches. We did it both ways. We set ourselves a stretching target and then we did ourselves out of the number because we have been training people.

**THE CHAIR:** So it is much better targeted rather than being a shotgun approach?

**Ms Little:** Absolutely. And we have redone the website and it is now much easier to find the databases and to access them.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Any further questions on output 1.1?

**MS HUNTER:** Certainly. I note that under indicator e, around the registered library users, that figure has increased. We have, I think, 55 per cent of the population.

**Ms Little:** Yes, 55 per cent of the population. In fact, as of about now, it is about 57 per cent.

**MS HUNTER:** Number-wise, that is quite a significant increase—from 184,300 to 200,000. What impact has that had on staff?

**Ms Little:** Obviously the staff love it, because we are more popular and people are coming in. As you would know, a couple of years ago now, we implemented the radio frequency identification system, and that has helped manage workloads. We have also put a new book sorter in at Gungahlin. I do not know whether Ms Le Couteur got to see that on Saturday when she was there. We are implementing a range of labour-saving technologies in order for the staff to be out on the floor more working with the community.

**THE CHAIR:** So your RFID is operational?

**Ms Little:** RFID has been operational for quite some time.

**Mr Corbell:** You could give the minister for corrections some tips. They are having problems with theirs.

**Ms Little:** The RFID has been working for quite some time, and we have some—

**Mr Corbell:** Books are easier to manage than human beings.

**THE CHAIR:** Books can be quite subversive, minister.

**Ms Little:** It is amazing the number of people that have asked us if we can actually track their books.

**MR HANSON:** They go missing quite regularly. Security is better at ACT libraries than at the jail. I can read it in the press release there.

**THE CHAIR:** So you don't lose books in the library service?

**Mr Corbell:** I am saying that books are most unlikely to try to scale the perimeter, Mr Smyth.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps the library service should be in charge. But back to Ms Little.

**MS HUNTER:** You have obviously set a higher target again for next year, so you are expecting this increase. Was there a particular reason why this increase has occurred? Is it just population or have you had some targeted programs?

**Ms Little:** We have many targeted programs, and the library service has undergone quite some considerable change in the last 12 months. We have allocated staff to working more out in the community and bringing more people in. We have implemented giggle and wiggle, as you might know, and that has been very popular. What we are trying to do is—in the library we call it outreach—get out into the community and bring more people in.

As you might know, we are running a lot of programs, seminars and those sorts of

things. We have had a series on the law; we have had a series on health; and we have had a series on seniors. People who would perhaps not normally just walk in to borrow a book are coming in to participate in those programs and then see the range of services that we have to provide.

**MS HUNTER:** How is it going over at Kingston?

**Ms Little:** It is going really well. Kingston is very popular, and the people around that area love it. Staff love working there too.

**THE CHAIR:** Further questions on this output?

**MR COE:** Yes. I think in the last estimates hearings, if not annual report hearings, I asked a question or two about the safety of the staff. I think there have been one or two instances, perhaps at Dickson. I am wondering whether there have been any incidents of a similar nature in the last 12 months or so.

**Ms Little:** Mr Coe, when you work with the public, there are always going to be things happening. There is a program of staff training and development that we put in place. We teach them security risk skills. We are just working with the health department to implement a program around mental health issues. We have given all of the staff personal security alarms. We address it on an ongoing basis. When you work with the public there are always going to be incidents.

**Mr Byles:** Mr Coe, can I just add to that. I have regular discussions with the Chief Police Officer about the provision of response at times of incidents. The police are very responsive, and I have had nothing but good reports from the library staff about how responsive they are.

**MR COE:** Those personal alarms that the staff have, are they actual duress alarms that are linked to the police or—

**Ms Little:** No, they are not. They alert their colleagues that there is something that they need to follow up on. We have quite stringent procedures around what you do if you are not feeling personally safe in the library and you are perhaps addressing an incident. You never do it on your own; there is always an allocated person to do the talking and an allocated person to do the watching. There are quite serious protocols that we follow in the libraries around that. Those duress alarms are really for when you are out in the library somewhere and your colleagues do not have line of sight.

**MR COE:** Are there duress alarms at the front counters?

**Ms Little:** No, there are not.

**MR COE:** That are linked to the—

**Ms Little:** No. There are telephones and, as I said, a protocol for calling the police. The police, as Mr Byles said, have been very helpful. They have given us particular key words to use so that if we use a particular word they know what the incident is like.

**MR COE:** Sure. Roughly how often would police be called out to a library—a ballpark figure?

**Ms Little:** Not that often.

**MR COE:** Monthly across the ACT or—

**Ms Little:** Not even monthly. I stress that because we have got standard procedures across all of our libraries—our staff move between libraries, so it is important that they know those standard procedures wherever they are—and we have invested a lot in training, a lot of those issues can be defused by our own staff. We call the police as needed, and it has been fine.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can I just ask you this. We have just been through the fact that there are a lot of new library users. What policies do you have for determining where and when you create new libraries? I note that you have just opened a great one in Gungahlin, but how do we keep on going?

**Ms Little:** That, of course, would be a subject for the minister and for the government. There are national standards around libraries, but that would be a policy decision of government.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Minister, do you have any comments?

**Mr Corbell:** I am sorry; I missed your question, Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I was asking about new libraries. Do we have a policy about when and where we get new libraries?

**Mr Corbell:** These matters are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Obviously, we look at issues around demand, the levels of coverage we currently have, usage and patterns of new settlement or concentrations of population in the city. These assessments are made as and when necessary.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Ms Little said that there was a national standard. Do we follow that?

**Mr Corbell:** I have to admit I am not aware of the detail behind that, Ms Le Couteur, so I am not really in a position to comment on that.

**MR COE:** Is there a policy on closing down libraries?

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Little, what is the national standard?

**Ms Little:** For the number of libraries? National standards are actually based around the population and the national standards are around hours of opening, staffing and collection size.

**THE CHAIR:** The ACT library service and the government had a policy that no-one

would be further than five kilometres from a library. Is that still something that we adhere to?

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

**THE CHAIR:** There was a move some time ago, before this government, that that would then be reduced so that nobody would be further than three kilometres from a library. Are we moving towards that?

**Mr Corbell:** At this point in time the government's position is that the level of service provision of libraries is adequate in the city, particularly with the opening of the fantastic new facility at Gungahlin. We now have very good coverage in all of our town centres and a number of smaller facilities in other locations around the city. The government has no plans at this stage for any additional library facilities but, as I say, we keep this matter under review. If there are guidelines or models that are used around the country, we will certainly have regard to those in developing our policy responses around whether there is a need for additional facilities.

**MR COE:** What about in Molonglo? What work has been done about a facility in Molonglo?

**Mr Corbell:** At this point in time Molonglo is at the very early stage of development. Obviously the planning authorities have had regard to the development of a group centre precinct in Molonglo and land and concept planning have been set aside to make provision for sufficient land for group centre activities. That would obviously include provision for municipal-type services such as a library. We are simply not at the stage where we have to contemplate the development of a library at this time. Obviously, with the development of Molonglo advancing, more attention will be paid to that as the new suburbs are developed.

There is also, of course, the issue that Weston Creek becomes a larger service centre for the newer suburbs of Molonglo in the early stages. Mr Barr, as the incoming Treasurer, has indicated that these are matters that the government will have to pay closer attention to as those new suburbs start to develop.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Continuing with another policy question, purchasing policies for libraries—presumably you have some. Would you like to tell us some more about what the criteria are as to what you buy?

**Ms Little:** We do; we have a collection development policy which is an extensive document. Library staff and trained librarians try to provide a broad range of topics and try to provide a balanced number of perspectives on any topic. The idea of a truly representative collection is to have both the fors and againsts of a particular topic or different perspectives of a particular topic.

In terms of fiction, we always, of course, try and make sure that we have the better literature, perhaps we could say, and the things that are winning awards and those kinds of things. At the same time we are aware that the public does enjoy recreational reading, so we select those materials as well.

We look at our demand. We map what is moving off our shelves and use that as part of our decision-making tools. We watch what people are requesting through our system, and our new website allows a much more efficient process for that as well. We monitor what is in the media. To be perfectly honest, we monitor who is being interviewed on 666, which authors, to make sure that we can meet the needs of the community.

**THE CHAIR:** What will you do now that Oprah has gone?

**Ms Little:** That is exactly true. Now that Oprah has gone, we have lost one of our sources of inspiration for what to buy in our collection. This year we will have \$2.6 million to spend on materials. This is an additional capital injection that we have had for a couple of years. You will see by the loan statistics that it is having a really big impact. Our loans this year are skyrocketing in comparison with other years, and certainly in comparison with other libraries. We know there is a direct relationship between the quality of what we have got on the shelves and people's desire to borrow it.

**THE CHAIR:** I am going to finish there; I will not ask you to define what is "better literature"; I suspect that may go on all afternoon. We might move on, members, to the Office of Transport, if there are any final questions for the Office of Transport. Minister, I am curious about something on page 73 at output 1.2—sustainable transport, point g, increase in the length by kilometre of bus priority/transit lanes. I see that in the coming year we are going to get 0.2 of a kilometre, so 200 metres of transport lane. Where is that very valuable 0.2 of a kilometre going to be?

**Mr Corbell:** I will ask Mr Gill to come back to the table. It is worth making the observation, Mr Smyth, that an extensive amount of money has been set aside in this and previous budgets to do a lot of planning and design around improved right of way, priority access and transitway infrastructure. So there is a lot of forward design feasibility in the pipeline. That will obviously reflect in future budget years in terms of delivery of additional public transit infrastructure. But in relation to the current state of play, Mr Gill can explain what that is.

**Mr Gill:** Your question is in relation to item g, noting that this year we have achieved 3.7 kilometres, primarily in Belconnen and on the approach to the city from Barry Drive into the city. The 0.2 forecast for next year, noting the minister's comment about the fact that there are further proposals in the planning pipeline, relates to Kingsley Street in the city, a section between Rudd Street and Barry Drive. There is a section of public transitway being constructed.

**THE CHAIR:** All 200 metres of it?

**Mr Gill:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Any further questions?

**Mr Corbell:** On one of the busiest transport corridors in the city where priority will make a significant difference.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** In the same place, if we go up to f, we were hoping for 50 kilometres of on-road cycle lanes; we only got 35. Is there any reason for that, and will we catch up next year? It appears that we will not catch up next year.

**THE CHAIR:** We have had this argument about catching up.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I know.

**Mr Gill:** This particular performance measure is very much linked with the resurfacing program.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So that is basically the answer?

**Mr Gill:** That is the answer.

**MR COE:** Which is linked to rain, which is linked to God!

**THE CHAIR:** Any further questions, Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** Yes, could you give us an update on what is happening with the RTA inspection site at Dickson? It was my understanding when we were talking about this the other day that there was an intent to relocate that facility or absorb it into the new office block. Can you tell us what is happening?

**Mr Corbell:** As I explained at the justice hearings earlier this week or late last week, Mr Hanson, the government has identified that with the construction of a new central government office building in the city, a range of functions will relocate from the Dickson Motor Registry site to the city and then that will allow for the motor registry site to become surplus and potentially available for sale or redevelopment.

Provision has been made in the cost calculations for the government office building to have regard to the need to replace the physical inspection capacity at Dickson. No decision has yet been made on where that would be but provision has been made in the overall cost calculations for the government office building to pay for a new inspection pit capacity. The location of that will be determined by the government in due course, noting that the development of the government office building will not be complete until 2014 and obviously relocation of staff and functions will not occur until—

**THE CHAIR:** 2014 or 2017?

**Mr Corbell:** I beg your pardon, 2017, with commencement in 2014. So that is the time frame we are working on here.

In relation to the physical location of the inspection facilities, it is worth noting that it is desirable in the government's view to have this type of semi-industrial type activity not occur on the main entry avenue into the city. We are actually trying to get heavy vehicles off Northbourne Avenue, particularly freight vehicles, and it does not make a lot of sense to have the primary inspection point for heavy freight vehicles on Northbourne Avenue. So it would be desirable to relocate that facility to a more

suitable location away from that major entry corridor into the city.

**MR HANSON:** Was the possible sale of the Dickson site included in the cost-benefit analysis for the new government office building?

**Mr Corbell:** Yes.

**MR HANSON:** And was the cost of a new inspection site included in the cost-benefit analysis?

**Mr Corbell:** I have already answered that question: yes.

**MR HANSON:** So the sale was included of the Dickson site and the requirement to build a new inspection site has been included in those costs?

**Mr Corbell:** The requirement to replace the inspection facilities has been built into the financial assessment that the government has done for that project.

**MRS DUNNE:** How much do you envisage that it will cost to relocate the inspection pits?

**Mr Corbell:** I do not have that detail immediately available. I am happy to take the question on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Does one of your officers have it? You did not have it the other day because you did not have the correct officials with you.

**Mr Corbell:** No, what I said to you last time and what I say to you again today is that the financial analysis surrounding the project and the associated offsets are all the responsibility of the Economic Development Directorate and Mr Barr as the responsible minister. So you would have to direct the more specific questions to him. I am happy to assist and to take the question on notice in relation to this particular component.

**THE CHAIR:** So none of your officers knows what the provision is that you speak of for the provision of a new testing facility? Nobody in this room knows what that allocation is?

**Mr Corbell:** We are happy to take the question on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** I remind you that you have been held to account by estimates before for having data that you just choose not to release.

**Mr Corbell:** The answer is no, we do not have that detail to hand.

**THE CHAIR:** But you said provision has been made?

**Mr Corbell:** Provision has been made by government in the analyses that have been undertaken which are the responsibility of a different directorate within the government, and that is why I am referring your questions to that directorate.

**MR COE:** The model for this sort of service delivery is changing around Australia. I would imagine there is a fair chance that the government will not even deliver this kind of service. It could well be that this whole thing is outsourced and you have a licensing arrangement or whatever.

**Mr Corbell:** Maybe.

**MR COE:** Surely that sort of thinking and that kind of modelling had been done by the department and had to be given to Treasury for them to actually quantify the value of the new building, in which case surely someone in this room would have that kind of information.

**Mr Corbell:** No, this issue is at a very early stage of contemplation and what—

**MR COE:** But it has been incorporated into your costings.

**Mr Corbell:** Provision has been made to replace physical capacity that will be lost when that site is redeveloped. That is the only provision that needs to be made at this time. The specific model of delivery, the actual physical location, whether, as you say, it is outsourced or whether it is conducted by government are all matters yet to be determined by government—

**MR COE:** So have you made provision or not?

**Mr Corbell:** but a provision has been made to ensure that the government can continue to provide that inspection function.

**MR COE:** We want to know what that provision is. You are talking about that provision being made; what is the provision?

**Mr Corbell:** What we are talking about is a project which government has agreed to but which is yet to enter its design phase and once it enters its design phase this level of detail will start to be fleshed out.

**MR HANSON:** If your department has provided it to Mr Barr, why won't you provide it to us?

**Mr Corbell:** I beg your pardon?

**MR HANSON:** Your department has provided that figure—

**Mr Corbell:** No, I did not say that my department has provided that figure.

**MR HANSON:** Someone must have.

**Mr Corbell:** That is incorrect.

**MR HANSON:** You are saying that when the analysis was done, they did not come to your department to find out how much that would cost?

**Mr Corbell:** You seem to be struggling with a fairly simple concept, which is—

**MR COE:** This is ignorant at best or deceptive at worst.

**Mr Corbell:** Well, I beg your pardon. There is no deception on my part, and my officers have been quite clear about this. The project around the government office building has reached the end of its feasibility stage. The government has determined that it is feasible and we wish to proceed with it, and we will now proceed through design and then construct stages.

**MR HANSON:** Sure, but you should—

**Mr Corbell:** Let me answer your question. This is a process and a project that is not going to commence until 2014 in terms of its construction. It is not going to be physically complete until 2017 and relocation of functions and activities will not start to commence until 2017. That is a whole six years away, Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** There is money for it in this year's budget.

**Mr Corbell:** And the government will work sequentially through these issues—

**MR HANSON:** You have already spent \$5 million.

**Mr Corbell:** as we proceed through that process. At this point in time, what is appropriate for the government to have done is to have made provision for the replacement of a function that will ultimately in six years' time no longer be available to us at that current location.

**THE CHAIR:** But the very simple question is—

**Mr Corbell:** And, therefore, at this point in time, the provision that needs to be made at a broad conceptual level is a notional allocation for the replacement of that facility in the overall project.

**MR HANSON:** And what is that notional—

**Mr Corbell:** That has been done. That has been done by the Economic Development Directorate, and, as I have said to you, I will take the question on notice and give you that answer.

**MR HANSON:** But surely your department provided that advice.

**Mr Corbell:** No, my department did not give that advice. It is essentially a land value—

**MR HANSON:** So they did not seek advice on how much that sort of facility—

**Mr Corbell:** It is simply a land—

**MR COE:** It cannot be a land value. You said it was replacement. You said it was replacement of the facility. It was not knocking down a facility, which would be the land value. You said it was a provision of replacing that facility; therefore, your department must have had that expertise rather than Treasury.

**Mr Corbell:** It is a notional allocation. It is a notional allocation based largely on land value and the function that needs to occur, and that has been done by the economic analysts and the financial building analysts.

**MR HANSON:** And they did not seek advice?

**MR COE:** For someone who said that you did not have the information, you seem to know a lot about this process and you seem to know a lot about this provision. I find it very hard to believe that someone in this room does not have the figures.

**Mr Corbell:** I find it very hard to believe that you struggle with such a simple concept, Mr Coe, but, unfortunately, that is the reality we deal with everyday in this place.

**MR HANSON:** So if we were to FOI any correspondence about this issue—

**Mr Corbell:** The fact is—

**MR COE:** That is right. You have got a great track record, minister.

**MR HANSON:** You would have been found to be misleading, Mr Corbell.

**Mr Corbell:** I am not hiding anything.

**MRS DUNNE:** It rather sounds like it.

**Mr Corbell:** Mr Chair, I find it quite insulting that the suggestion is made that I am hiding something. Ask Mr Byles—

**MRS DUNNE:** Well, you have got a track record.

**Mr Corbell:** ask anyone here—

**THE CHAIR:** I can go back in history—

**MR COE:** That is what we are trying to do. We are trying to ask that.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Coe, please. It is okay.

**Mr Corbell:** It is the same answer.

**THE CHAIR:** All right, we need to move on. You have taken it on notice. I have to say, I have the same dismay that, having asked this question several days ago, nobody here knows what the provision is. You have said “allocation”. You have said “provision”.

**Mr Corbell:** Several days ago I referred you to the Economic Development Directorate. I am doing the same thing today.

**THE CHAIR:** You have also said you would take it on notice. What is the current value of the motor registry at Dickson?

**Mr Corbell:** I will take that question on notice also.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Further questions on this output, and then we need to move on to output 1.3, waste and recycling.

**MS HUNTER:** On Office of Transport?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, Office of Transport.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** But we cannot spend much more time on it.

**MS HUNTER:** Well, we have got another session on 26 May, but anyway. Going to the road safety program from the last budget, there was a significant amount of funding that was provided for new road safety measures, and it is specifically around a road education campaign. Could you give us a breakdown on how that money was spent and what was achieved?

**Mr Corbell:** Look, if you are asking for a more detailed reconciliation of these things, Ms Hunter, I am going to have to take that question on notice—

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, that would be good.

**Mr Corbell:** —and give you a breakdown.

**MS HUNTER:** If we could just have a breakdown on where it was targeted. Also, I am particularly interested as to whether the education program was tailored to the type of car accidents that we have in Canberra. We tend to have a lot of rear-end collisions and so forth, so actually targeting that education around—

**Mr Corbell:** I will seek to provide you some advice on that matter.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. Could you update us on what your vision zero road safety program has involved to date?

**Mr Corbell:** I think this question has been asked already.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan asked that this morning.

**MS HUNTER:** Sorry, I did miss that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Just quickly, there is money—\$100,000— to increase the level

of lighting in the city. Have we also got plans for lighting in other town centres? It is BP3, page 152.

**Mr Gill:** These funds are in addition to some existing funding that was approved last year, and it will be to continue the lighting of the Sullivans Creek path and also an extension from Dryandra Street up to Canberra Stadium. There is a section of community path linking from Dryandra Street up to Canberra Stadium which is quite heavily utilised.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Does it go through the bush, that path?

**Mr Gill:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, I know the bit you mean.

**Mr Gill:** That is the section. It is not a large amount of money, but it has been identified for a useful purpose.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Right. So it is not actually in the city.

**Mr Gill:** Well, Sullivans Creek is.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No, that is fine. Page 156, shade structures, is that also a question I should ask now or not?

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You have got here \$400,000 for shade structures for playgrounds. Is this going to mean that all the playgrounds in Canberra will now have shade structures, or how many—

**Mr Corbell:** Not all the playgrounds in Canberra, no, Ms Le Couteur. What will occur is that a number of sites have been identified in all districts across the city for shade structures, so the funding will be shared fairly evenly or distributed fairly evenly across all districts in the city.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do you have any issues with vandalism with the shade structures?

**Mr Corbell:** We have issues with vandalism full stop.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Well, full stop. I was just wondering if they were a soft target compared to some of the other things in playgrounds.

**Mr Corbell:** Ms Steward can assist.

**Ms Steward:** In terms of the shade structures specifically, we do not have any incidents that are alarming in terms of vandalism to shade structures. Vandalism does occur, but it is often at the most accessible assets that we have in the city. It is quick, it is often localised, a little predictable. We have our hotspots, and we know where

they are generally.

**MS HUNTER:** And how much are we spending on vandalism every year?

**Ms Steward:** Through you, chair, I would have to take that on notice.

**MS HUNTER:** BP3, page 156, it talks about the Eastern Valley Way stage 2. So my question was about plans for the revitalisation of the Eastern Valley Way inlet and whether it will include a full public consultation process so that users and local people et cetera will be involved in the types of upgrades being planned.

**Ms Steward:** I will defer to Jim Corrigan as director of that project.

**Mr Corrigan:** Yes. The answer is yes. Some consultation has already occurred with the design stage for stage 2 for Eastern Valley Way, and consultation will continue with local groups.

**MS HUNTER:** We did have on our community day some representatives from the art centre who were concerned that that whole area leading up to the art centre is not being considered in an holistic way. Particularly, they have an issue around access where the path is coming around and then suddenly stops where there is apparently a fence, and it is a bit dangerous with kids and so forth. So are you having a look at that whole area from the skate park all the way around, or are you just chunking it and looking at chunks as you go?

**Mr Corrigan:** No, no, we are looking at that whole area. On that Eastern Valley Way, the first project is under construction now. It is worth looking at the skate park, and then this project is the second stage. That is replacing the bridge and the footpath and the public toilet there. We will get connections there through Eastern Valley Way. And the third part of it is further up, the Emu Inlet project, where they are upgrading the park and changing the edge of the lake wall and addressing the stormwater issues there as well.

**MS HUNTER:** So your design has taken all of that into account?

**Mr Corrigan:** The project has obviously been designed. There are three designs going on, but, yes, it has been—

**MS HUNTER:** It is integrated?

**Mr Corrigan:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. Because there were some concerns being raised by representatives from the centre.

**Mr Corrigan:** I am not sure of the process. I am more than happy to know more about those particular details from the arts centre.

**Mr Corbell:** We will review the evidence they gave you, Ms Hunter, and we will seek to take that into account where feasible.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Moving on to output class 1.3. Mr Hanson, I believe you have got a question?

**MR HANSON:** Yes, I do, and it is on page 73 of BP4. I am just looking at section b, and there seems to be an increase in the annual tonnes of waste to landfill per head of population from 0.59 to 0.67, but then a number of costs are going down. The annual contractor cost of curbside collection per household and the contractor cost of landfill and waste per tonne. I am just wondering if you can explain to me how we are able to achieve an increase in the amount of landfill per head of population but a decrease in the costs of that?

**Mr Corbell:** I will ask Mr Ware if he can assist with that.

**Mr Ware:** Thank you, minister. The tonnes of waste to landfill this year has increased, but, of course, the costs that we pay our contractors for managing that tonnage of waste peaked at 200,000 tonnes. So, in effect, every additional tonne that we get over those 200,000 tonnes sees a proportional decrease in the cost per tonne.

**MR HANSON:** Right.

**Mr Ware:** So, in effect, as costs go up, the cost per tonne decreases.

**MR HANSON:** So essentially we have got a fixed price, and the more waste there is the cheaper it gets, but it is not actually costing less?

**MS HUNTER:** So it is an incentive to waste more.

**MR COE:** Is it not a perverse indicator when, as the denominator increases, the ratio changes such that it looks like it is a better performance when, in actual fact, it is simply because the denominator is increasing?

**Mr Ware:** That is correct. It is just a ratio that gives you an indication of how much it costs per tonne.

**MR HANSON:** So the actual cost that we are paying for contractors is remaining static, or is it going up with CPI or—

**Mr Ware:** There are rise and fall provisions that incorporate CPI, WPI and the cost of fuel, along with other indices for rise and fall increases, but the major one is the cost of fuel that will rise and fall each year.

**MR HANSON:** Right.

**MR COE:** Would it not be helpful as a new indicator in output 1.3 to have a raw figure about the total tonnage? Because if that total tonnage was included as an indicator, that would probably provide a more holistic image of the whole situation, would it not?

**Mr Corbell:** We do have tonnage per head of population, so that is an indicator of overall growth in the amount of waste generated.

**MR COE:** That is true, that is true. However—

**Mr Corbell:** But, as ever, Mr Coe, if the committee wanted to make a recommendation about a particular performance indicator, the government is always happy to consider that.

**MR COE:** That is true. The reason I say it is that you have got per head population and then you have got all these other per capita figures and costs per households, but without knowing what figures you are using in terms of the number of households, the number of people and all that sort of thing, it is very hard to actually get a perspective on the whole thing. For instance, if suddenly there are a heap more households, that could change the situation—or the other way around.

**Mr Corbell:** As I say, if the committee wants to suggest some enhancements to performance indicators, we are always happy to consider those.

**MR COE:** Yes, but I think a new indicator—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Would it be difficult to work out the reference between—

**MR HANSON:** Can I pursue a line of questioning, chair?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Hang on. This is on Mr Coe's point, because it is around the indicators. If the committee is going to make a recommendation, I want to know about this bit: is it difficult to determine the amounts of waste to landfill in terms of the three different types—domestic, commercial and construction? Is it a difficult issue? And do you take into account the construction waste tip, I think, at Pialligo in your figuring?

**Mr Corbell:** That is not waste to landfill; that is waste that is diverted from landfill for recycling or reuse. We do quite comprehensive assessments of volumes of the different types of wastes in the overall waste stream, where it is going and the amount that is diverted from landfill and recycled. We do have very good data on all of those issues, Mr Hargreaves.

**MR HANSON:** Can I just follow up on the issue of why the amount of landfill seems to have gone up per head of population? A figure of 0.59 to 0.67 seems like quite a large increase in a year.

**Mr Corbell:** Yes. Waste generation rates are increasing. That is an issue we need to focus on and that is why the government is developing its new waste strategy. It is close to finalisation. Waste generation rates have been increasing as a result of overall the relative affluence of the community and our propensity to purchase more and to throw out more. Waste generation rates remain a challenge for us as a relative affluent community compared to other places around the country. The new waste strategy is designed to—

**MR HANSON:** That is an increase against a target of 0.8 tonnes; then in the target you are setting you suggest that you will see an increase of only 0.3 tonnes.

**Mr Corbell:** Yes. There has been a particular increase, as noted in the footnote there, as a result of a large amount of unanticipated waste that has had to be dealt with from the Molonglo ponds in particular—a very large volume of waste coming in which is a one-off but which nevertheless has impacted on the figures in terms of the estimated outcome for this financial year.

**MR HANSON:** And that waste from the Molonglo ponds—was that part of the contract?

**Mr Corbell:** No; this is asbestos waste. This is all waste going to landfill; it is not just household collection. This is other waste going to landfill. This is—in relation to the Molonglo ponds, it is asbestos waste.

**MR HANSON:** But I am just wondering—

**Mr Corbell:** It is asbestos waste that has to be securely disposed of.

**MR HANSON:** The contract was different. I am just looking at that figure down at the bottom. The contract cost of landfill and waste per tonne has gone down. You said that was because of a significant increase, but now you are saying that increase was probably attributed to the asbestos. I am just wondering, therefore, whether that was part of an existing contract.

**Mr Ware:** The asbestos that was disposed of to landfill from the Molonglo ponds had to be managed by the contractor at Mugga Lane, and it counted towards—and included in that contract cost per tonne.

**MR HANSON:** Right. So it was not treated separately as a separate amount?

**Mr Ware:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary from Ms Le Couteur; and then I have a supplementary and then a new question from Ms Hunter.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question relates partly to your footnote on page 73. Footnote 3 says:

This data included a substantial over-estimate of annual tonnages by a large recycler ...

Going back to page 69, you have a wonderful graph of resource recovery rates which quite cheerfully shows that we have got a low point now and we are going up from here. My questions are these, minister. When is the waste strategy going to come out and why is it not very ambitious? We are going up but it is going to take us a while even to get back to where we were.

**Mr Corbell:** What we are dealing with now in the territory is really the hard end of the waste spectrum. I think I have made this observation before. The gains that were achieved over the decade and a half or so from the time no waste was first promulgated—I am not wanting to downplay the effort, but they were waste streams that were relatively easy to understand and deal with. We are now dealing with more intractable and difficult waste streams that require in some instances new technologies and definitely in all instances new approaches.

Our resource recovery rate is still the strongest in the country. What we want to do is build from that. The projections that are built in there anticipate certain types of capacity coming on stream. For example, we have got the new provision that has been made in the budget—I think it is in the current year's budget—for the construction of new facilities at Hume: 1.7 million to create new facilities at Hume for private recycling operators to move into to deal with different types of more intractable waste streams. It might be e-waste; it might be things such as mattresses; it might be other types of materials a large amount of which are still going to landfill. So there are new facilities to deal with that.

We then have the proposal for a commercial materials recovery facility to deal with recyclable material from the commercial sector. The government has given its approval to go to market and test market responses for the construction of that facility. The waste policy, when it is released later this year, will outline the government's direction on wet household wastes and how we best extract those from the waste stream. And then right at the very end of the spectrum is the most difficult area around some of the intractable waste streams and how we can divert those from landfill—whether indeed we can look at waste to energy technologies as an alternative to doing that.

I think that the assessments we have got are very robust around how we can push up resource recovery rate even further. The feedback we are getting from other jurisdictions that are aware of our policy development is that they are regarding it as best practice in terms of the next step in dealing with the more intractable parts of the waste stream. I think we have a lot to be proud of in terms of the new policy settings that are coming forward, the work that underpins them and the fact that we are going to continue to advance and continue to lead Australia in the resource recovery effort, for a city of our size.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How can you be so confident given that our target was 75 per cent and what we think we are doing is 69 per cent in terms of resource recovery? I take your point that we are now left with the intractables to some extent, but my question really would be this: why can't we be as good as we used to be in resource recovery? Okay, there are the intractables, but why aren't we as good as we used to be and what confidence do we have that we can get back to at least where we were?

**Mr Corbell:** Largely because a lot of the growth is in the intractables. The high level of waste generation that we see per capita is driven largely by elaborately evolved manufactures that are very difficult to deal with—electronic goods and so on. That is really what is driving this uptake. We are handling general household rubbish pretty well. We have to deal with the wet wastes—the organic matter in our household waste

stream—and there is a range of strategies that are being finalised to deal with that. We deal with the general dry recyclables very well. We are now expanding recycling the dry recyclables—plastic, bottles, glass, tin and so on—into the commercial sector, and there is a lot of very good work happening in that space. But it is that growth in things like computers, televisions, stereos and all that sort of waste which is very problematic and that is contributing. That, regrettably, is lifting the overall waste generation level.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But the target for 2010-11 was 75 per cent. The target for 2011-12 is 67 per cent. This is on page 73, indicator c. Why are we getting so much worse in one year?

**MR HARGREAVES:** It is generation Y and their landfill fashion.

**Mr Corbell:** I think Mr Ware can deal with this point.

**MR HANSON:** The same question was asked five minutes ago.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We are re-asking the same—

**Mr Corbell:** I understand there is actually an error.

**MR HANSON:** You are recycling the same question.

**THE CHAIR:** Members!

**MR COE:** A hundred per cent.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Landfill fashion.

**MR HANSON:** Fantastic. You re-used the question. That is good.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, because we did not actually answer it.

**Mr Corbell:** I understand there is an error in relation to those figures. I ask Mr Ware to correct it.

**Mr Ware:** Last year at the annual report hearings the then Chief Minister, Mr Stanhope, made a correction to the record advising the committee that the figure that was achieved in the previous year was incorrect due to a data reporting error from two of our contractors—which created a correction. Unfortunately, this figure, 75 per cent, could not be changed, due to the timing issues that are there. We have a correct figure. That figure there, the expected outcome for this year, was not going to be 75 per cent. We were unable to change that, due to the way of reporting these data, I understand.

**MR HARGREAVES:** What was it?

**Mr Ware:** We expect our estimated outcome for this year to be 69 to 70 per cent. We have erred on the side of caution and said 69. That has been impacted, as previously

discussed, by the delivery of quantities of asbestos-contaminated soil from Molonglo. The target for next year, unfortunately, was a mistake. Sixty-seven per cent is incorrect. If you look at the graph on page 69, it reports that next year—unfortunately the graph is a bit of a blunt instrument in this case—we are anticipating 73 per cent. So we anticipate 2½ per cent growth over the next four to five years, as that graph outlines.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the number for 2011-12?

**MS HUNTER:** Seventy-three per cent.

**Mr Ware:** Seventy-three percent.

**MS HUNTER:** Not 67.

**Mr Corbell:** Not 67; 73.

**THE CHAIR:** If you go back to 2009-10—are you saying that this mistake goes back not one year, but two years? The target in 2009-10 was 75 per cent, and according to that you achieved 75 per cent.

**Mr Ware:** When we set this figure—it would have been April last year—anticipating 75 per cent, we were not aware of the data error that had occurred the previous year. We were not made aware of that data error until early August last year.

**THE CHAIR:** But the target for 2009-10 was 75 per cent. I have not got the previous year's box, but I assume that follows on from the 2008-09 year. How long has this error been in existence?

**Mr Ware:** It would have been in place for two years, but we were only made aware of the error in August last year after the target for this year had been set.

**MS HUNTER:** Minister, you mentioned the issue particularly with e-waste, and that is a major issue for all jurisdictions to look at. My understanding is that it is also being dealt with by a COAG process. Where is that up to? It seems that there has been lots of fanfare but very little action.

**Mr Corbell:** All states and territories have agreed to the establishment of a national product stewardship scheme for the management of e-waste. The authority for the creation of that scheme has been given by environment protection ministers from around the country and by the relevant commonwealth minister. The time frame on that—I would have to go back and get some advice on that, but early last year agreement was given by ministers at the environment protection and heritage ministerial council.

I think there needs to be enabling commonwealth legislation to ensure that retailers can be directed to implement product stewardship and provide for the collection of televisions, for example, and computers. As to the progress on that commonwealth legislation, I would need to get some advice for you. But certainly from our perspective, agreement has been given by government. The timing of it is a matter of

interest to us all. I do not know, Chris, whether you can provide details on that.

**Mr Ware:** I believe, from my counterparts in the federal government, that the enabling legislation is to be tabled in the Senate in the winter session.

**MS HUNTER:** Interesting timing.

**MR COE:** Just quickly, if that is all right?

**THE CHAIR:** Very quickly.

**MR COE:** The previous minister for TAMS facilitated a tour of the different facilities around town. On that tour, Mr Ware, I think you mentioned that possibly the government might be looking at acquiring some land around the Mugga Lane facility. I was wondering where we are at with that—whether actual negotiations have taken place or whether it is just something in the pipeline for later on down the track.

**Mr Corbell:** The government is still giving consideration to that matter, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** So there have actually been conversations with leaseholders?

**Mr Corbell:** Not at this time, no.

**MR COE:** Right.

**Mr Corbell:** Not in terms of any detailed negotiations.

**MS HUNTER:** So you still have not looked at the intended use once that rehabilitation is done?

**Mr Corbell:** I beg your pardon?

**MS HUNTER:** I assume he is talking about the rehabilitation at Mugga Lane.

**Mr Corbell:** No. He is talking about additional land—

**MR COE:** I would like to put on the record my thanks to Mr Ware, Mr Breynard and the former minister for that tour. It was a great tour.

**Mr Corbell:** Thank you, Mr Coe. It is always an interesting tour looking at waste.

**THE CHAIR:** With that, we will terminate the hearing at this stage.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Brendan, I have got one question on waste management.

**THE CHAIR:** We will be coming back to it on Thursday.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, we have completed outputs 1.1 and 1.2, so we will not need

officers from those areas on Thursday. We will commence again at output 1.3, do 1.4 and 1.5 and move on to ACTION and enterprises.

Minister, could questions taken on notice be answered within five days for those areas. Members, if you have further questions you have four days in which to put them on notice.

**Meeting adjourned from 12.30 to 1.59 pm.**

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Education and Training and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation

Education and Training Directorate

Watterston, Dr Jim, Director General

Huxley, Mr Mark, Acting Director, Information Services

Cover, Ms Leanne, Executive Director, Tertiary and International Education

Whybrow, Mr Mark, Director, Finance and Corporate Support

Collis, Dr Mark, Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Student Support

Wilks, Ms Trish, Director, Learning and Teaching

Sharma, Ms Sushila, Acting Director, Finance and Corporate Support

Young, Ms Megan, Acting Director, Governance

**THE CHAIR:** It being 2 o'clock and sufficient members of the committee being here to commence the taking of evidence, I need to do my well-practiced introduction. We are here to look at output class 1.4, disability education, and output class 2.1, non-government education. This will be the final session for Education and Training.

Minister, in front of you is the privilege statement. I need to confirm that you and your officers have read the statement and understand the privileges and protections offered by it.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** As I am sure you know, the proceedings are being transcribed by Hansard. You are being webstreamed, broadcast live and being trialled on—

**Mr Barr:** Committees on Demand?

**THE CHAIR:** Committees on Demand. Are you happy to proceed?

**Mr Barr:** I am, indeed.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MR HANSON:** I would like it noted for the *Hansard* that the minister has put his jacket on today.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you, Mr Hanson.

**THE CHAIR:** He has probably just come from a media briefing of some sort.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** We have a fair amount of detail to get through this afternoon; so hopefully questions will be concise and answers will be concise and relevant as well.

Minister, would you like to make a short opening statement?

**Mr Barr:** No, as we are continuing hearings, Mr Chair, I am happy just to move to questions. We are, just to confirm, commencing with output class 1.4?

**THE CHAIR:** Apparently so.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** But before we go to 1.4, I understand that you have made some announcements today about high schools. Would you like to tell the committee some of the detail about that?

**Mr Barr:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** Given that it was not available for the part of the hearing when we were doing high schools—

**MS HUNTER:** No, you are keeping secrets.

**THE CHAIR:** perhaps you would like to enlighten us and, if possible, supply the committee with copies of the statement.

**Mr Barr:** We would be happy to do that. Yes, I launched the strategy, as I foreshadowed, in fact, last year, Mr Chair. We undertook a period of consultation in relation to the public secondary school strategy. I have released that this afternoon under the title “Excellence and enterprise: advancing public schools of distinction”.

As I foreshadowed to the committee last week, and have done so in a number of public speeches on the topic, it brings together under three key themes 11 particular strategies. They go to distinctive schools, school autonomy, information and communications technology, flexibility in pathways for students through our system, looking to provide greater opportunities for accelerated learning for gifted and talented students, also recognising that there are a proportion of students within the system that are currently disengaged from mainstream education, and so seek to employ new teaching strategies to engage those students.

As we discussed last week in relation to a number of the new appropriations in this year’s budget, a number are relevant to this particular document, most particularly the secondary school innovation fund initiative but also the investment in teacher quality. As we again discussed last week in some detail in relation to the enterprise bargaining process, one of the key areas here is to signal the government’s intention around their promotional positions that we will be seeking to establish through this enterprise bargaining round to have a particular emphasis on those positions within our high school system. That goes to complement previous initiatives around new teachers into the system where, again, the focus was on public high schools.

There are a number of other elements. I could talk for the next hour in relation to the document. I presume the committee does want to explore the other output classes, but I am happy to provide copies of the report. It will be on the department’s website, if it

is not already, in the near future. I am happy to provide printout copies for the committee, if that would be of assistance, or you can print them out yourselves, if we do not want to use paper.

**THE CHAIR:** It is not on the web at this stage.

**Mr Barr:** It is not? It is a matter of minutes away.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the cost of implementing that which is outlined in that document?

**Mr Barr:** It depends on the time frame, really. There are a series of short, medium and long-term initiatives contained within it. Some are obviously financed within this year's budget. Others will relate, for example, to future capital works expenditures. If you want to look at the totality of all of the areas discussed, it touches on largely the output class of secondary education. You are talking about many hundreds of millions of dollars that are associated with the delivery of secondary school education. I think an important point to stress in relation to this is that there are some targeted new initiatives.

We will seek to use the national partnership funding we have with the commonwealth around targeting areas of need, particularly in literacy and numeracy outcomes, and also commit to a longer term program of infrastructure renewal within the secondary school system. Examples that you would be aware of, Mr Chair, in relation to the partnership with the federal government about the building the education revolution had a particular emphasis on primary schools. We recognise that we will need to supplement our older school refurbishment programs. A number of high schools have benefited from those programs in recent years, but we will need to particularly focus on high schools that are more than 20 years old.

Obviously, as a number of stakeholders have observed, the teaching and learning environment, for example, at Gungahlin college—that is a school that was officially opened only on the weekend—is a vast leap ahead of a school that was built in the 1970s. We have quietly behind the scenes over the last five years invested very heavily in our ICT backbone, the one gigabyte broadband network, seeking, again, to work in partnership with the commonwealth government, whereby they have provided a large investment in IT through the digital education revolution. We have complemented that through work that we have undertaken within the public school system.

Those initiatives come together and create the opportunity for the connected learning community and the virtual learning academy that are initiatives within this strategy, and that have been previously announced, that are on the ground now in schools. It brings together a series of government policy initiatives—the Teacher Quality Institute, reforming the classroom teacher career structure, investment in school leadership and the school autonomy agenda. Together with our education and communication technology and the new curriculum, there are a large number of areas that come together in this strategy.

I think some of the areas that perhaps have not got as much attention in today's media

relate to the cross-sectoral committee. Effectively, it is around broadening the roles and responsibilities of the BSSS to look at the entire school curriculum, the assessment standards, at P-12 rather than having the BSSS with a sole focus on years 11 and 12. There is the issue of the year 10 certificate and various other competencies that we will assess and examine their usefulness in the system from 2011 onwards. That is a brief precis, Mr Chair, of the discussion so far.

**THE CHAIR:** How much in this budget is directly attributable to implementing that document you have in front of you, which we do not have?

**Mr Barr:** There is the secondary school innovation fund, the teachers' EBA money, both in terms of new initiatives and in terms of provision obviously being made for salary increases within that sector. The totality of funding is—\$1 in \$4 in the ACT budget is spent on education and training. The senior secondary area—if you look at the output class, you get an exact sense of it. It is \$82 million for public secondary colleges and \$127 million for high schools. There is more than \$200 million being invested in this area. A lot of what is contained within here, though, is not adding additional cost into the system. It is about changing the ways that we teach and learn.

**THE CHAIR:** Other members have supplementary questions. It is somewhat disappointing that just a couple of days after we have done the output class this would have been discussed in, the document is tabled in this way.

**Mr Barr:** It is not “tabled in this way”. I can launch my policy initiatives when and wherever I want.

**THE CHAIR:** Of course you can, but I would have thought you might have liked to defend them here or discuss them here in the estimates committee.

**Mr Barr:** We have been discussing these issues for years.

**THE CHAIR:** Without the—

**MR HARGREAVES:** This is going to come as a shock to you, Mr Chairman, but he does not like you very much.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary from Mr Doszpot? Do you have a supplementary, Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** We can go to Mr Doszpot first.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, you mentioned the broadband network rollout to the schools. Has every school been fully implemented?

**Mr Barr:** Every secondary school?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Every secondary school.

**Mr Barr:** That is my understanding, yes. I will get Mr Huxley to give you some details.

**Mr Huxley:** That is correct. All of the high schools and colleges have been hooked up to gigabyte 5. They are on the ACT government network.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Every single one?

**Mr Huxley:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. What is the methodology for the maintenance of the system? Is it maintained by InTACT or does each high school and college have to find their own—

**Mr Huxley:** It was fully funded under the smart school, smart students program initiative; so the connections of the fibre to all schools was implement by InTACT, managed by InTACT.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And the teachers—is there any additional personal training, personal development, that has to be completed for everyone to fully understand the system?

**Mr Huxley:** In terms of the fibre, it is literally just a connections feed issue.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand that, but the application is running on—

**Mr Huxley:** There has been a range of different professional development for a range of the other initiatives. The minister mentioned the CLC, the connected learning community. It is currently available for all schools to use as they see fit. We have a staged implementation which we have been through with 36 schools. That is actually targeting a leadership team within the schools. That is five days professional development and we have international expertise being brought in. Professor Stephen Heppell was actually brought in as part of that training, so we have best practice international input. We are also doing a lot of at-school training and support. The learning technologies team from the learning technologies section, as well as the vendor, have provided over \$150,000 worth of professional development support for the first-use implementation.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The five days of professional development have been fully taken up by all of the teachers?

**Mr Huxley:** The five days professional development is for a peer coaching team within the schools. It actually involves the leadership of the school as well as anywhere between three and five identified teachers who then form a team to lead the implementation at the school in the manner that they see fit. We are really developing the capability of a core group within the school.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand that is the concept, but has it been fully taken up? Have the five days professional development to complete that been taken up by—

**Mr Huxley:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can you tell us how many?

**Mr Huxley:** At this stage 36 schools have taken that up, taking five days each. We aim to have all schools through by the end of this year. Implementation started in the middle of last year, so we have had 36 schools already through the program. We are taking on about 16 per term through that program.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**MS HUNTER:** I wanted to go back to the very glossy, extremely glossy, document and ask a couple of questions around it. Firstly, it was reported in the *Canberra Times* this morning that it was only taking two years to do years 10, 11 and 12, or less time, to graduate, and to move on to tertiary education of some sort. What is the thinking about how that would work?

**Dr Watterston:** Similar programs exist in other states. A large part of the report talks about the capacity to enhance the performance of students' gifted education—

**MS HUNTER:** Gifted and talented.

**Dr Watterston:** Part of that process is being able to ensure that student pathways are managed on ability rather than a chronological pathway. There are a number of ways of doing it. It does not necessarily have to be doing the final two years of school within years 10, 11 and 12. It could also be earlier on in the high school program. The framework that is provided in the document will enable schools to be flexible around providing opportunities within their own communities. This document is about empowering principals and schools from this point on, in the short term, to look at what specialisms and opportunities they think they need to provide to their community, as well as providing the broad curriculum that they already do for their local communities.

Within that framework and within that sense of empowerment that I have talked about, schools will make those decisions. But it will be done in a complementary way, still within the system, so we do not have schools replicating each other. It will be done in a way which provides a scope that increases the breadth across the ACT public high school system. At this point I cannot tell you exactly what it will look like because we need schools to use their initiative and innovate around that issue and, now that they have got the opportunity to be more flexible, provide structures that will enable students with the ability to progress at their own rate.

It will also involve us working closely with the universities. We have talked to Professor Ian Young and Professor Stephen Parker about this already. They are both extremely keen to look at ways that we can make those transition points between secondary education and tertiary or higher education more fluid. Part of the deal, I think, is not having those hard barriers that students are faced with when they have to have a transition. It is about being more fluid. It is around having university, school, tertiary education and training interact in a way that, as I have said already, provides a bit of fluidity around those movements. One of the things that we have done with our

youth commitment is to create pathways planning. A lot of this work will be flagged earlier for students and written into their pathways plan. That will enable them to progress as they see fit.

**MS HUNTER:** So there has been money put aside? You talked about the innovation fund to assist schools to kick off some of these ideas. You have talked about the distinction between schools being able to specialise. Mr Watterston, you have just talked about this idea of being able to graduate earlier if you are a gifted or talented student. There are case studies around Australia, for instance, where this has happened. Have you looked at real schools with particular specialisations or approaches in place around the country? Have you got case studies, or is this really about schools starting from scratch—

**Mr Barr:** I will just make one observation. We have this successfully in place with the ANU secondary college. So there is the principle around it.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** What we are seeking to do—

**MS HUNTER:** But it is not just the idea of that particular example; it could be another specialisation.

**Mr Barr:** Sure. It is seeking to extend that principle of college age students undertaking some units of study at a university level into the high school years as well, so that there are opportunities for accelerated learning throughout the secondary school system. That is just a broad statement of principle. There are a number of examples of these sorts of specialisms and academic partnerships. Obviously, we have got our own version commencing with Kaleen and Lake Ginninderra. The example that I have seen in Victoria that is particularly attractive is the Monash science school. Jim can certainly talk about how that works. It is a very interesting and innovative model.

**Dr Watterston:** I have worked extensively throughout my career in Western Australia and Victoria. With that experience, but also as part of this consultation process, we have talked to most states in Australia and have certainly been aware of programs. As the minister said, for the last five years I have been instrumental in the development of the John Monash science and maths school in the eastern region of Victoria, which is where I was previously placed. I am aware of the capacity of schools to develop specialisms, I guess, that enable students with particular interests to pursue those areas in a way that is much greater than just the broad education that we provide in some of our schools. So in that sense we have done our homework.

One of the programs from Victoria that appeal to us is what is known as a SEAL program—select entry accelerated learning. It is in a number of schools and covers quite a range of schools. High schools, which are mostly years 7 to 12, in Victoria offer opportunities for students to do three years worth of education in two. There is select entry for those programs, but it is within a school that provides a broad curriculum for the whole community.

As I heard the minister say this morning, we are looking at a program of schools within schools, really. It is about making sure that we cater for community interests as well as the talents and needs of students within that group. The diversity that we are looking to provide across the ACT will be a considerable enhancement on what we think is very high order education that we provide in our high school system now. I do not think we are saying the system is broken. I think we are saying that we can continue to innovate and lead across the nation by providing a wealth of additional opportunities that we see will enhance what we are doing.

**MS HUNTER:** You said that there is some duplication around at the moment. In particular, there was some talk around the duplication of particular vocational education courses and so forth. How are you going to ensure that not everybody comes up with the same idea or wants to specialise in the same area? How are you going to ensure that we have a good spread across Canberra so that students can have reasonable access, and that also relates to geographic location?

**Dr Watterston:** I think that is the benefit of our being a system. While we are talking about diversity and specialisms within individual schools, I think the key to this whole process is to make sure that as a system we guide that development, that we make sure that we increase the scope of opportunities for students across the ACT and that we take on the point that you have made about not duplicating. It is about ensuring that we guide the development and the innovation within each school.

To that end, we have started—and we are talking to schools. Leanne could talk a little bit more about the training opportunities and the trade training centres. It is about making sure that the resources that we are going to be receiving from the federal government are invested in schools in ways that are complementary to each other. I think that complementarity is the key to this—that we do not just let each school go off in their own direction and think of what would be clever to do—that we actually, as a system, make sure that we provide for all gifts, if you like, that students have and are able to provide pathways for students to give them choices. I think that is the key to the whole framework that we are providing. It is about making sure that there are choices. I do not want to see this being an enhancement to competition between public schools. In fact, we think it will be completely the opposite.

**Ms Cover:** As Jim said, we are working on a system, particularly around our submission for the trade training centres, but keeping in mind that the trade training centres are only very much one part of our whole VET-in-schools programs. If I can give you an example about how we are developing our systemic approach to the trade training centres, it is basically through three mechanisms: firstly, through a principals consultative committee. So each of the principals, of course, are attached to a network, and so we are working on four submissions to trade training centres built up from within the actual networks, the principals, and the community that support those networks as well.

Secondly, through strong advice from industry. So each of the networks has an overarching body of industry experts that is giving us advice about qualifications. In terms of the trade training centre development, there is a lot of duplication, say, for instance, in hospitality. And duplication, when you see hospitality in multiple networks, does not necessarily mean a bad thing, because if you look at hospitality as

an example in trade training centres, you will see different elements of a hospitality training package being delivered by potentially different networks. So, from a system approach, we have got a really broad, deep offering of something like hospitality to grow and meet those skill demands in the future.

Industry have been really supportive in coming to the table and telling us about what sort of qualifications we will need, what sort of infrastructure we will need, what sort of equipment and also in providing pathways, learning opportunities within industry in terms of workplace and structured workplace learning and experience as well.

Just thirdly, what this process has done is really built great collaboration not just within our schools but relationships between our schools and the industry and businesses that actually support each of the four networks.

**MS HUNTER:** You were saying that four submissions are being worked up for the four training centres in the four school networks. How many are we expecting to be allocated to the ACT? Do we just have to try our best, or is there some way—

**Mr Barr:** There is an expectation certainly that each jurisdiction will receive an allocation of funding. I cannot pre-empt exactly how many, but we need to go in and put forward good cases. But we certainly are anticipating commonwealth support for a number. Can I guarantee all four? No, I cannot.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** But there are many rounds of funding. It is a long-term program, so—

**MS HUNTER:** They will not all necessarily be funded in the one round?

**Mr Barr:** In the one year, yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** So our expectation would be of success, but whether we get all of them up in the first year of our applications, no. We would anticipate they will over time, given it is a—

**MS HUNTER:** And they would be located at schools?

**Ms Cover:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**Ms Cover:** Yes, the proposals actually look to upgrade existing infrastructure within the high schools, because we want to promote the pathways for students coming through the early secondary years through to the years 11 and 12, so it is a mixture of upgraded facilities and new initiatives happening in high schools but also within our nine colleges, which are all individual RTAs as well.

**Mr Whybrow:** And just to add, if I turn you to page 330 of BP4, which is the capital

works program, this is based on commonwealth advice of an initial allocation. And I should point out that these applications are subject to a competitive process, but the advice that we have got from the commonwealth budget information is \$12.122 million, which is included in our budget.

**MS HUNTER:** To come to the ACT?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Mr Doszpot on a supplementary.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister Barr, Mr Watterston has spoken about the complementarity and then the way that everything needs to be looked at. There is a feeling amongst parents that we are just facing one revolution after another, one reform after another, and we are losing track of some of the basics. Do you feel that? We have had specialist schools in Canberra for quite a while, and quite successfully acting as specialist schools.

Are we creating a bigger patchwork than we really require, rather than having not just the complementarity, which is important, but also the synergy between the way that we are all using the same educational methods where, if kids move from one area to another, they still maintain the continuity of education?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly, the concept of the school networks and the system approach is clearly a key element of this. It is important to just go back over the origins of this piece of work. There was a discussion paper last year. There have been rounds of stakeholder meetings, over 100 written submissions. This has been worked through in detail with schools, with parents, with students, with education stakeholders, so this just did not emerge out of the ether. It has been a long period of work engaging those people.

I always question the use of the term “parents” in this context. I suppose it depends on which parents you talk to. Parents participated in this process, and the organisation that is there to represent parents has been engaged in this process. Can I guarantee that every single parent will agree with every single item within this? No, of course not. And I think you would struggle to find any area of public policy that you are going to get every single citizen in your community to agree with, but, to the extent that we have sought to synthesise the views of all of those who participated in this process, sometimes there are quite contrasting views that you need to balance, and, in the end, you must make a decision and go forward.

I suppose the starting point for me is the concept of just doing nothing and sitting back, and doing absolutely nothing is not an option. We embarked on this process to strengthen education, and that is the basis on which the professional talents of this directorate have been brought to this task, utilising a combined total of many hundreds of years of experience in education. I think these ideas have been robustly tested. They have some practical applications already within the ACT system and some areas that have worked successfully in other jurisdictions. And, as with any project, there are some things that we are trying; we are aiming to be innovative. I think one of the long-run strengths of the ACT system is its capacity to be innovative.

Has every single innovation that has been tried in ACT education over 40 years been outstandingly successful? No, but many have been. Many have stood the test of time, because people have been prepared to take a chance to trial something and see it through. And certainly it is my hope that the collective work here will result in the sorts of outcomes that I hope all in the community would share—that is, for a further enhancement of our public education system. I think it is critical to our ongoing success as a society that we have a strong public education system. And that is what we are seeking to achieve.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Just a supplementary to that. Obviously, the aspirations will be commensurate with the application of it and the uptake. The question is: which would be the other jurisdiction nationwide that we would most closely resemble if it goes according to plan?

**Mr Barr:** Combinations of Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia. We have sought to pick some good ideas out of a number of different jurisdictions and develop some of our own that are tailor made for the ACT. It is not easy to immediately say, “Right, well this is the same,” because it is not. Every state and territory is different and has a very different set of circumstances confronting their public education system. We are a city state. We do not have rural and remote schools. We do not have some of the challenges that states like WA and Queensland have in relation to a very decentralised education provision.

We have taken advantage of the comparative advantage we have as a city state, and an example of that is the broadband network. No other education system in Australia could seek to link all of its schools in the way that we have. The distances, the vast distances, involved in laying that sort of infrastructure would be prohibitive for the big jurisdictions. So here is our chance as a small city state to work to our strengths and to be innovative.

I think this piece of work and the collective advice that has gone into it are of high quality and give us a chance, but it is not a short-term fix. It is not a one-year thing. It is not an election cycle thing. This is a long-term structural reform, and it will take time, and we do not anticipate implementing it all immediately. As I said, there are short, medium and long-term goals that are contained within this document.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am echoing the views of quite a few people I have spoken to who are looking at not a short-term solution but they are looking at the last 10 years of your government and the way that education has been addressed. And the observation and the question that people are asking, Mr Barr, is that we have got the jurisdiction with the greatest amount of funding going to government schools and the least amount of funding going to non-government schools, yet we still have this leakage of the students from the government sector into the non-government sector. It must indicate something about what the parents are thinking about the constant revolutions.

**Mr Barr:** Your initial statement is not factually correct, in both instances, so both in terms of—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Well, please correct me.

**Mr Barr:** I believe that there is one other jurisdiction, and that is the Northern Territory, as a result of the unique circumstances that it faces—

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is a huge mistake, then.

**Mr Barr:** in relation to funding of public education. I am not sure that your statement on non-government education is strictly correct either. Mr Whybrow might be able to—

**Mr Whybrow:** The most recent available figures on non-government school per capita grants by states are in the national report on schooling. It is 2008 data. Within that, if I just read it out—the ACT's state government grants contributions on average are \$1,607. There are two other states which provide significantly lower than this amount. For Victoria the average amount is \$1,472 and for South Australia it is \$1,533. We are in the same sort of territory as Tasmania and the Australian average, which are \$1,779 and \$1,880 respectively—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Which is a percentage of around 17 per cent.

**Mr Whybrow:** There is a difficulty in using percentages. I am aware that New South Wales, for example, have a legislative requirement to use 25 per cent. The methodology that we use in the ACT—if I simply change my figures there and give you an update, because you normally want to know what it is this year—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** It is 17.93 per cent.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** Last year it was 18.7 per cent. The year before that it was 17.8 per cent. It generally hovers around that 17 or 18 per cent mark. The last time there was a significant review into funding in the ACT was the Connors review in 2001. At that stage, it was 17 per cent.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** The difficulty, I think—it builds on something the minister said earlier—is this idea of comparing things that are inherently different. We do not have geographical isolation. There are a couple of other important elements in this national report on schooling which I might point out. In there we talk about table 4, about the percentages of students in each of the systems. As we are well aware, with the most recent data, we have the highest percentage of people in the non-government sector. That creates certain economies of scale for that sector.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure.

**Mr Whybrow:** The other important point to note—which is a lot of work that is going into the Gonski review and seeking the ACT government's involvement in

that—is that we get into an issue about funding education and what needs funding is. It is probably also worth pointing out that within the ACT—it is the second highest within the non-government sector of receiving fees and charges from their students, second only to Victoria. So there is a range of factors in comparing systems like with like.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure.

**Mr Whybrow:** The biggest difficulty is the 17 versus 25. I am not subject to knowledge of how the New South Wales department of education actually calculates that, so I do not know if they are the same thing or not. We use a fairly simplified formula that works on the total allocation of state funds—that is total expenditure less the commonwealth contribution—and compare that to our commonwealth grants to get our percentage.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** We incorporate some services that we provide to the non-government sector—things like the NAPLAN testing, which the department meets, and the Quality Teacher Institute—but as to how they do it in another jurisdiction, it is very difficult to understand that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure. And that is not my question.

**Mr Whybrow:** Sorry; I hope that is—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you; that is very enlightening. I think you stated that that was a 2008 report. Is that correct?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is correct. That is the most recent release.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Are you able to table that?

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. I have got my notes on it, but it is available on the website.

**Mr Barr:** We will provide the committee with a copy.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That would be good.

**Mr Whybrow:** We can provide you with a copy.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is three or four years ago.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes. The most recent data that has been collated is on the My School website, but that is still 2009 data.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And it is consolidated?

**Mr Whybrow:** That is the difference. That is why I have not used that data. It is not consolidated at this stage. ACARA themselves are looking in the sense of how do we

get consistent figures. We have ROGS data, we have this, and now we have the My School website. I think our next iteration is moving to one set of numbers.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you very much.

**Mr Barr:** An example of the difference is that in the ACT, non-government schools are provided with land either at concessional or no cost, whereas in other jurisdictions there are sums of money attached with that. An option would be for us to incorporate that value of land figure into our calculations. We have not, but it would certainly boost the percentage if we did.

**MR DOSZPOT:** All right. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Just getting back to the document, minister—theme No 1, or key direction No 1, is to improve education provision for students with a high academic ability. Is that to address a perceived view that the kids with high academic ability are leaving the government system?

**Mr Barr:** I think there is some evidence to suggest that in some parts of the city the choices made are different. I think people are choosing to enrol in particular government schools—coming out of area to enrol in some or choosing to enrol in a non-government school going out of area in order to pursue a particular program. An example, obviously, that has been running for a long time at Lyneham high is LEAP. They receive enrolments from more than just their priority enrolment area for such programs.

To the extent that that is clearly a driver of educational choice, the opportunity is there to expand on programs like that and have them available—with different emphases and perhaps in differing areas. But having that capacity is important for the public system—this concept of a school within a school. The advantage of utilising the virtual learning academy so that your physical location does not matter so much as your capacity to engage with other students, teachers and education leaders in particular areas of interest to you in an online environment is also important, and that is an initiative that emerges out of this.

**THE CHAIR:** But to go to the question: is there a perception that it is the students with high academic ability that are leaving the government system? Indeed, have you done any academic or socioeconomic analysis to determine—

**Mr Barr:** If you look at NAPLAN results, it is clear that you can achieve excellence regardless of the school you attend. In fact—

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine, and I do not disagree with that. But the students who are leaving—have we done a profile of the students? We know the reasons that they are leaving, through the exit surveys, but have you profiled what the students look like who are leaving the government system.

**Mr Barr:** It depends what you mean by “leaving”. As in leaving the public school within their priority enrolment area, leaving the public system—

**THE CHAIR:** Let us do it at a couple of levels.

**Mr Barr:** or choosing a particular non-government school that might have a—

**THE CHAIR:** Leaving the government system to go to the non-government system—I am assuming this is largely a response to the bleed from the government to the non-government sector.

**Mr Barr:** That is a factor, but it is not the only factor.

**THE CHAIR:** No, but largely that is what we are doing here.

**Mr Barr:** No, not largely. It is a factor but not the only factor. We have still got the majority of ACT resident students in public schools. So we have a responsibility—

**THE CHAIR:** Not in high schools.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, in high schools. We do.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes; we heard that the other day.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, the majority.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. ACT resident students.

**THE CHAIR:** You can use that factor—well, I am not going to go there, because you can argue all day. This is here to address the bleed from the 14 per cent differential from the kids—

**Mr Barr:** No; this is there to enhance public secondary education. If a by-product of that is—

**THE CHAIR:** How does that address the bleed to the non-government sector?

**Mr Barr:** Providing enhanced quality public secondary education will in and of itself have a positive impact on enrolments.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Minister, what would be the story if all of the students in New South Wales were banned from being educated in the ACT? What would it look like then?

**Mr Barr:** There would be approximately 1,509 fewer students in non-government schools and about 600 fewer in government schools, so you would see a figure of roughly 51 or 52 to 48—52 to 48 in terms of ACT resident students. I am sure we would all know the schools within the non-government system that attract a particularly high enrolment, say, for example, out of Queanbeyan. You see that. There are also ACT public schools that attract a particularly high enrolment out of surrounding New South Wales. But obviously, when you exclude New South Wales students, the picture changes a little. That does not change the reality ultimately, though, that there is a dip in the high school years. We have a higher share in primary

schools and colleges than we do in high schools. Hence the desire to reform in this area. But that is not the only reason for this document. And there are nearly 10,000 students whose educational opportunities we want to enhance through this work.

**THE CHAIR:** But to go back to where I started—okay; take the New South Wales students out of the equation and you have only got a 12 per cent differential from the kids that we have in our primary schools to the kids that we have in our high schools. How does this document address it? Apart from establishing another committee, a lot of this is things that we have already done. Centres of specialisation—we do that. Improve access to voc ed—we have got good access in many ways to voc ed. If you go through all of this, what is it that will change the perception? The other day we were told by Mr Grace—quality of education and reputation. How does this enhance quality of education?

**Mr Barr:** This goes to quality of education and reputation of the public system.

**THE CHAIR:** I am afraid I do not see it. I see a lot of gloss, I see a lot of pictures and I see a big document, but I see in the third-last paragraph on page 47 that “over the next few months we will develop a blueprint for action that will identify key strategies to be progressed over the short, medium and long term”. How many more documents will there be?

**Dr Watterston:** Can I address some of the issues that you have mentioned. The whole process has been one about dialogue and consultation. So at this point—the minister referred to the network model that we have—for the first time in the ACT public school system we have principals working alongside each other. So this is a framework about making sure, in a complementary way, that we can develop areas of need and pathways and a scope that provide a much broader curriculum and richer opportunities within the system.

The next phase of this work in the short term is to get principals who are already working in this network and who meet regularly now to look at local area planning about how these schools meet the needs of a person’s transition right through the school system, instead of being separate entities that then take on students that have left primary school, are in the high school system or whatever. How do we have, as I talked about before, a fluid transition right through the system? These schools are looking now at planning about specialisms and about programs and about flexibility within their organisational structure that will enable students to be advantaged.

It is not for the system in a document like that to say: “This is what we’re going to do at Lyneham. This is what we’re going to do at Alfred Deakin.” It is about empowering principals to take the flexibility that we are now offering them to be able to tailor their schools in a way that will meet the needs of the students that come from their own communities. It does not have hard and fast strategies in it because that is not the process as it goes forward. But it is a significant change and it provides a range of opportunities that I do not think exist in that form anywhere else. It is part of making sure that schools can adapt to the environment in which they work and provide 21st century learning, which I do not think necessarily happens to the full extent at the moment.

On the point you made earlier about how we are going to win students back, I think we have actually focused on the wrong area, in talking about the students that leave non-government schools and go to government schools or vice versa. I think we are talking about offering choices to families before they even choose which school they want their students to go to. The majority of students that make up the 52-48 or whatever have not changed systems or have not changed sectors. We want to offer people who think they have to spend a lot of money to buy an education, and we want them to know that there are, equal or better opportunities in the public system and give them those choices.

People make choices for all kinds of reasons, and we do not want to interfere with what those choices are. But they certainly need to know that the public system offers everything that they will need and, depending on what their cultural, religious or other choices or needs are, they can still choose whatever they like. But if, as Mr Grace said the other day, it is about the quality of education, that perception is wrong. I can tell you; I work in the system. I do not doubt that people have the perception, but it is wrong. We have the highest performing public system in Australia. So we need to do a better job of making sure people know about that, and we also need to not stand still and to enhance what we are offering, and that is exactly what this framework does. It provides a range of opportunities and flexibilities that will enable schools to determine their own future within a complementary system where, as I said, the word “system” permeates the way that we are going to operate, instead of having separate entities that just try and serve their local community.

I do think it is about making sure that all families have choices and that they do not feel like there is only one way. Especially in the area that you were talking about, the high performing students, there is research that is around in a number of states—and it is quite clear when you look at NAPLAN results—that independent schools achieve at higher levels because that is where people think they need to go to get those results. I can tell you without any reservation or hesitation that those results are achievable in government schools, because we see them all the time. So the aim of this document is to let people know that we are moving forward but there is also just as much scope within the public system to achieve at any level as there is in the other two sectors.

**THE CHAIR:** We will see. I think Ms Hunter has a supplementary.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes. Before, when we were talking about the submissions being worked up for the trades centres, for instance, and being worked up in the four networks, I asked whether it was going to be based at a school, and we talked about that. How are these decisions going to be made about which school? I can understand that they would be working around what sort of skills or what focus they might have, but how do you come to the decision about where it would actually be located?

I would also like to link that in to the innovation fund, because there is only a certain amount of money. I am sure it will continue over the next few years. Again, how will you make the decisions about who gets access to that money? Will it just be based on the best idea or will it be those schools which may have been struggling a little bit and which really need to show that they have a particular specialisation—or specialism, as I can see in the document? How will you make those decisions? What is going to happen there?

**Mr Barr:** We will deal with trade training first and then—

**MS HUNTER:** Not just about vocational education training but across the board.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**Ms Cover:** In terms of trade training centres, the mechanism we have used is through the principal consultative committee, so each network worked with their principals to have a look at a number of factors, including what were their existing facilities, what was actually on their scope in the VET programs at the moment, and what was industry telling us about what the emerging training areas were in their particular community areas. For instance, the hospitality one has been one that people are keen to pursue because not only is there a huge shortage in the hospitality industry but also, because of the ACT resources such as clubs and various other community facilities, it makes sense that the community and industry that are at the doorstep of that school community work hand in hand to actually provide that training. So that is some of the work that we have done around what should be delivered in the particular networks.

We have then looked at it and said, “Okay, if there is going to be interest in hospitality, as an example, what is industry telling us about the sustainability of those particular programs?” They have given us some advice about looking at the community resources in a particular network and giving us advice about which types of qualifications within training packages should actually be offered.

**Dr Watterston:** In terms of the innovation fund and how we will use that money, at this point it is seed funding, if you like. I go back to the network model. We have principals meeting on a regular basis and talking about what the local area needs are within those networks. But that funding is really to free up teachers and people within the school community to come together to plan and talk about what it is that they need to be able to do within their school environment to enhance opportunities, as I have talked about already.

Part of that whole autonomy project—and Mr Whybrow can talk about this in a minute—is freeing up the way that we fund schools in a whole range of different mechanisms to try and make that money available within the network process so that schools as a group—principals, executive staff—can talk about how those resources are deployed within their own environment, but much wider than just the school.

So I am seeing a level of sophistication that probably was not there before about schools making decisions to give up resources to other schools based on the needs within that whole network. Within that existing framework or that network model, that is how we want to go with the innovation fund, in talking about what innovations would be required within that particular network, not just particular schools, that will enable us to provide the breadth of pathway delivery that students can then be advantaged by. In that sense, it is a collaboration that I do not think has existed before.

The innovation fund will enable schools to plan together and look at that complementary delivery that I was talking about before. As there are future budget rounds and funding, I think we will start delivering some of the outputs that we are

talking about. But at this stage it is really about making sure that we do this in a way that advantages the whole public system rather than just individual schools, as I talked about a minute ago—not enhancing competition but making sure that the delivery is one that benefits the whole of the ACT.

**MS HUNTER:** At this stage, because it is quite conceptual in some ways, it is a little bit hard to really get a handle on what this looks like on the ground, which goes back to the case study type of thing that I was talking about.

**Dr Watterston:** I can certainly understand where you are coming from, but, as the minister said before, this document brings together a range of initiatives that are already in place, in addition to providing the flexibility and opportunity for schools to develop in a way that will enhance what they are already doing. I think it brings together the whole movement that we have created in terms of this idea of collaboration that I talked about—about principals being responsible for the education of all students in the ACT rather than just the ones within their own school fence.

It is about that planning mechanism, that work they are doing together and the money that Mark has been able to free up in our budget that normally just was allocated on a per capita basis to schools and which really sometimes was not enough to do anything with, bringing it together in large pots, giving it to networks and giving it to groups of principals to make allocative decisions that really advantage the system rather than individual schools. So that is the funding mechanism in the short term that will enable us to do some of the things that we have described in this document.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can I just ask you about how you are balancing what could be regarded as the flipside of this? What you are talking about, as far as I can see, is each school having specialisations, diversity et cetera, whereas in the older days, you went to your local school. I had a conversation over the weekend with my next-door neighbour about where she is going to send her kid to high school—to the local school. One of the major reasons was that they could ride their bike there. How are you looking at the desire of at least some parents to have their children within the neighbourhood—

**MS HUNTER:** Going to their local school.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** in their close local school that they can walk to, ride their bike to or possibly catch the bus to? I am not sure whether it is in the longer term or not, but another way of looking at it is that our transport task is likely to get harder with peak oil. In making a more diverse system where things that you want will not necessarily be offered in your local school, how are you balancing that with the competing demands which are very much around localisation?

**Dr Watterston:** I think that is a brilliant point, and one that I hope is inherent in this document. I think Ms Hunter mentioned this before. We are not talking about select entry schools. We are not talking about making schools specialist schools rather than having specialisms, because if we make specialist schools then your point applies completely: people within the local community will be locked out of those environments. We are saying that our high schools and colleges will still provide a broad curriculum to the local community and still serve the people around them—the

local catchment area, if you like—but, as we know, in the 21st century environment, in the contemporary school environment, people are moving. So there are some people that choose to go to their local school because it is the local school.

With other people, if we look at the independent school sector, a large number of people in our community attend independent schools, and most of them have to travel to get there. We figure that it is possible to get the best of both worlds in the public system and have specialisms within schools so that if you do have a particular interest or particular talents or gifts in a particular area you can get those needs met in a particular environment while local students are not disadvantaged at all.

I think that is the best of both worlds. That is exactly the outcome we are looking for. I am sure that one of the things you will not hear from parents going forward about the innovation that comes out of this document is that their local needs are not being met, because that is the hallmark of the ACT secondary system. We are retaining that, and I think building on it and enhancing the opportunities that we are offering. So I take your point, and I think that is what we have had to the forefront in all of our deliberations around this report that we have delivered today, because we do want to make sure that what we already offer in the community in the ACT remains there and in most ways is strengthened.

**Mr Barr:** Very briefly, to give a couple of practical examples of what is already in place that people would be aware of in terms of specialism, we can look at the performing arts programs at Lyneham high and Calwell high. Look at the Telopea Park school French program. So they still offer a broad education for everyone within their area, but they have some other very special and distinctive offerings where they are building up centres of excellence. They are very practical examples of the sort of thing we are talking about. But we cannot say at the moment that every single ACT public school has a program of that quality, that has that universal appeal and that is drawing people in from different areas. Does that assist in providing some practical examples of what we are talking about?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Sure.

**THE CHAIR:** A final question from Mr Doszpot, one from Ms Hunter, then we will move on to output class 1.4.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I guess all of us are talking around similar sorts of aspects here. I will read out from this morning's *Canberra Times* what I presume is a quote from Mr Barr:

Mr Barr called for the review of the ACT's 31 high school and college providers last July in a bid to turn the enrolment trend around, acknowledging there was an image problem in high schools and the sector needed to be re-energised and refocused.

This is where I have a little bit of a problem if we take that statement out of context—

**Mr Barr:** That is a journalist's paraphrase. I do not think they are the words that I have used, but—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. That is why I was asking.

**Mr Barr:** It is not a direct quote. I think it is—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I presumed it is a quote. But the fact is that—

**Mr Barr:** It is not a fair presumption—

**MR DOSZPOT:** There seems to be—

**Mr Barr:** If there is a quote in the article, there is a quote. If there is not, it is the journalist's words.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The context of what the journalist has said here is that you are saying that there is an image problem and the sector needed to be re-energised and refocused. While that could be part of the problem, the bigger problem that I keep hearing about is that people at the schools want to be engaged, want to be talking, want to be getting their ideas across. There is great frustration that they are not being listened to. I guess that is the part that I am concerned about; that even if that statement is accurate you are almost presupposing what you would think the problem is without listening to the people in detail. Anyway, I am making that as a point. You may want to explain that.

**Mr Barr:** That is a statement. Okay. Then my response to that would be that this document is as a result of a year-long consultation—input from all of the stakeholders, written submissions, discussion over a number of rounds. That has been, I think, a significant engagement. Is it possible that out there amongst 350,000 people there are some people whose views are not fully met and whose ideas are not fully incorporated within this document? Yes, it is entirely possible, Mr Doszpot. I would defy anyone to present a document of this nature that would get 100 per cent agreement from every single citizen in the ACT. As you and I both know in the business of politics, I could say that sunny days are nice and, because I am a Labor Party spokesperson saying that, there would be a bunch of people go, “No, they're not, and there are 10 reasons why.”

**MR DOSZPOT:** No, I cannot believe that.

**MR HANSON:** We need more rain, Mr Barr. I think you are missing the point.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, indeed, for example. I rest my case.

**MR DOSZPOT:** By the same token, Mr Barr, I simply say that we all are very much aware of your concentration on image, and I guess that is what I am talking about. Sometimes you have got to look beyond the spin, and let us have a look at what is taking place.

**Mr Barr:** You can run those lines, Mr Doszpot. That possibly reflects some focus group or polling work that the Liberal Party has done: “Just don't say anything of substance. Just attack the other side and be negative.”

**MR DOSZPOT:** Oh?

**Mr Barr:** Tony Abbott has certainly cornered that market—

**THE CHAIR:** We are not here to talk about Tony Abbott.

**Mr Barr:** You are not a great Abbott clone, Mr Doszpot. You are better than that. You can be better than that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr, I will let it go at that point. But I just hope that—

**MR HANSON:** That is a bit of a patronising little lecture, Andrew.

**MR DOSZPOT:** while I do not expect 100 per cent of people to be in agreement with you, more people will get a listen to than currently seems to be the case. I will stop there.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Ms Hunter, to close this session.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you, chair. I just wanted to get a little bit more information on the virtual learning part of all of this and a bit of a sense about where you see this sitting as far as who it is there for. This is a little bit like musical chairs, isn't it? Mr Huxley might be able to fill us in. I know that over the years, having worked in the youth sector and particularly with children who are from backgrounds that are disadvantaged, there are a number of young carers, for instance children or young people who are moving around because of homelessness or family break-up or whatever. So what is this one about? Is it a whole range of different students or particular specialities?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, and beyond students as well, also to engage parents. There is a parent portal that is part of this, to get greater parental involvement. Obviously, a lot of families have internet access at home—I think we have the largest proportion of home internet connections—

**MS HUNTER:** We have, yes.

**Mr Barr:** of any jurisdiction in Australia—so part of this is around engaging parents and obviously the teaching profession as well. Mr Huxley might want to—

**Dr Watterston:** Just before Mark goes, can I just—

**MS HUNTER:** Can we focus on the student part?

**Dr Watterston:** There are a number of angles to this. One is the gifted area. We are providing professional learning for all high school teachers in gifted education. The old idea was that gifted students were pushed off into a broom closet somewhere and they just sat there and there was a small group that worked—

**MS HUNTER:** And certainly that was reported publicly today, so I am aware of the gifted and talented part.

**Dr Watterston:** That is right. That is part of the virtual learning academy. The other part is for students to be able to have mixed modes in their learning. There are always going to be opportunities for people to miss school—I think that is part of the issue for us and we are working on our attendance rates—but for older students there is no reason why some of that learning cannot occur online. I have two children at university and they do half their work online and do not attend as many lectures as I would have in the old days. So there is that opportunity. Kids that are sick all the time can still access learning. I do not think in the ACT we have really exploited that part of it enough. It is not all things to all people, but it is going to provide us with a focus so that we can work as a system to provide a method of delivery that enhances the face-to-face tuition.

As I said before, it is for gifted students, also for students in challenging situations and for those students who are not engaged in mainstream education. We are finding now that some of those people—and we have instances of some that have talked to us in recent days at the launch of our youth commitment about why they were disengaged and how they found it difficult to go back into the schooling system. So if there is a way to bridge that gap the virtual learning environment will be something that we can do that—

**MS HUNTER:** So that will get some attention and focus for those students?

**Dr Watterston:** Absolutely.

**MS HUNTER:** And does it in any way link in with the Murrumbidgee education centre?

**Dr Collis:** Currently, just in the last six weeks, we have been trialling with a partnership with the University of Canberra a literacy program based around Kindle technology, at the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre, achievement centre and Connect10. Whilst this is not the CLC—this is the first step—we are looking to see this document to give it horsepower so that we can move into the use of technology to empower disadvantaged and alienated young people, because until now the technological revolution, if you like, has in fact worked the opposite way; it has actually disempowered the young people in this space. The work we are doing around literacy and numeracy through the use of Kindles and our partnership with the UC is very much about the first step in that.

In terms of the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre, we are going to look towards that. There are some technical and security issues around that. However, the CLC looks like being a way around a number of those issues because it is possible to enclose an environment. So the answer is, yes, we are very much looking to use this initiative to move forward in that area.

**Mr Huxley:** I will just add a couple of examples of the CLC being used in this context. We have Gungahlin college on establishment using it as a way of easing the transition from students in the feeder area in the high schools and actually setting up a principal's blog and wiki with incoming students. That was around the actual uniform at the college and that was very successful and had a good uptake. We even had an example in Hawker from the piloting of the CLC over six months ago where students

were actually completing an online chemistry task with students who had to depart to the US for family reasons; they will be able to retain their connection with education. They are just a couple of examples that are already practically in use.

**THE CHAIR:** All right, members. We might move on to output class 1.4, disability education in public schools. Minister, how much of the Shaddock review and the suggestions made in it and your document *Excellence in disability education in ACT public schools—strategic plan 2010-2013* has been implemented and how much of that covers what Shaddock suggested happen?

**Mr Barr:** Sure. Most committee members are familiar with the background to this. The priorities contained within the findings of that review were around building staff capacity, partnerships with families, stakeholder partnerships, building support to schools and processes. In terms of stakeholder partnerships, the following actions have been achieved: the establishment of a service level agreement between DET and Therapy ACT around the provision of therapy services in schools; the establishment of a cross-sectoral disability education steering group comprising representatives of Catholic, independent and public systems and this group is progressing the findings of the review in relation to closer collaboration between the school sectors; the Disability Education Reference Group, which reconstituted in 2010, particularly looking at the terms of reference and membership of that group, which is a community consultative forum convened by the director-general of the directorate that monitors the work on the strategic plan. The role of the group is to provide feedback on disability education issues, and the minutes of the meetings are posted on the directorate website. There is a parent carer working group within that education reference group that has been formed to work on the development of a parent guide for disability education that describes the services, processes and policies available.

In relation to the building of staff capacity, there are a number of different actions that have been achieved: training in positive partnerships; supporting school-aged students on the autism spectrum; approximately 100 teachers have participated in five two-day training sessions and parent carer workshops will take place in July of this year. The essential skills in autism program has seen 47 teachers go through that program from a range of special education settings. Positive practices in behaviour support: 60 teachers have participated in a four-day workshop. There has been training provided for 20 learning support assistants through the CIT in 2011.

There has been a series of innovative practice grants of up to \$20,000 provided to specialist mainstream primary and high schools to explore the adoption of new practices to support the learning of students with a disability. The range of successful schools and projects include Cranleigh school, consultants working with the staff on conductive education and autism; the Malkara school, therapy assistants mentoring learning support assistants to increase student achievement of therapy goals; Florey primary has been funded for a program in language disorder support; Turner school are developing home-school partnerships and digital portfolios; the University of Canberra, Kaleen high school, differentiation of assessment of students with a disability program; Macgregor primary school, higher engagement and access to curriculum and engagement of an academic partner to work with the school; and Gowrie primary, funding for a promoting positive play for students with autism program.

In relation to the building of processes within the system, there has been the engagement of a consultant to evaluate and report on the student-centred appraisal of need and individual learning plan processes to integrate resource allocation with education adjustments.

That is a brief snapshot of the work that has been achieved to date. Mr Collis might like to expand a little more on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Just before you do, in last year's budget there was about \$1.6 million over the four years for students with a disability. So is the \$5 million a year in each of the outyears on top of last year's money?

**Mr Barr:** That is correct, yes. You would be aware that there has been a growth in the number of students with a disability, although that growth has plateaued in this recent census. There has been over the period of time a significant increase. So 10 years ago there were 1,462 students with a disability within the system. There are now 1,848.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that both government and non-government?

**Mr Barr:** That would relate to government schools. The non-government school data is on the school census. I can tell you that the number of students with special needs in non-government schools has increased from 2007, when there were 418 students, to 2011, when there are 500.

**THE CHAIR:** You do not have a 10-year figure?

**Mr Barr:** I could get a 10-year figure, but the data I have got in front of me from this year's census on non-government school enrolments goes back to 2007.

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine. From both of these initiatives, what is the split between government and non-government sectors for the funding of disability?

**Mr Barr:** In relation to disability funding, there has been a separate initiative relating to the non-government school sector that was another \$1 million a year. That was delivered two budgets ago and off into the outyears; so that has been built into the base funding. That was an initiative that we undertook to provide to the non-government system in this term of government. We delivered on that very early in this term of government and it remains an ongoing initiative into the outyears.

As I indicated in our discussions on these matters last week, the federal government have also made an announcement in their budget that they will flow through to the states and territories increased commonwealth grants in this area. That extra money flows to all students with a disability, regardless of the school sector, and will be passed on by the department once the appropriation is made to ACT Education and Training. Mr Collis can provide further information on the implementation of the Shaddock review.

**Dr Collis:** The *Review of special education in ACT schools 2009*, which was chaired by Professor Shaddock, had some 86 recommendations—actually, I think they were

termed options—for the public school system. They were grouped together under about eight general headings. The first heading was actually to develop a comprehensive strategic plan,

In fact, the Department of Education and Training, as it was then, embarked upon that process. The disability excellence strategic plan is the outcome of that. At the same time, the Catholic Education Office embarked upon the same process. As you may be aware, there was a combined launch of those two plans, plus a statement of commitment by the Association of Independent Schools in September of last year. We have been operating under that plan since about September last year.

Can I say that it is extremely comprehensive? The minister has given a description of all those activities that have been completed. Can I highlight particularly the service agreement with Therapy ACT and the Department of Education and Training? It is the first time. It is a very historical moment and it has really looked at aligning the kind of educational and therapeutic practices that exist in those two organisations.

I think we can see the beginning success of that in the budget submission that comes under Therapy ACT with the therapy assistance program that will be in our specialist schools—the 6.5 positions—which really came out of the work around negotiating that service agreement and realising that there needed to be a different way of doing business so that we could get actual therapy hours to our young people more consistently in our specialist schools.

We ran a little trial at Malkara and the outcome of that was quite successful. But it relied upon the framework of an agreement so that we could agree about how therapy services looked within an educational setting, how therapy services looked within a school and so forth. I would highlight that.

I think the reinvigoration of the disability reference group has been really important in this. At the end of last year we formalised that as the chief executive advisory group with appropriate terms of reference to oversee the disability education strategic plan. I think that really set in place a formal community consultation on an ongoing basis around our achievement in the strategy. It also put in place a really rigorous reporting structure that would require us to be reporting to that organisation as well as to now the Director-General of Education. Those are two highlights.

What I would like to say is that we have commenced work on a couple of other really large bodies of work. I would like to point these out. The Woden school, as you may or may not be aware, is the lead school in the Australian curriculum. ACARA are interacting directly with that school to look at the curriculum. If I might say so, this is really cutting edge work. This is the holy grail in disability education, as pointed out by Professor Shaddock. How do you assess the curriculum we deliver to students with disabilities, given the diversity we are talking about, and report against what is achieved? In other words, how do we know we are making an appropriate difference?

The answer partly lies in needing to have a curriculum around that. There is work going in around that project and we hope to deliver something really meaningful and nationally leading in the next 12 months over that. I could keep on talking but—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hanson, in his normal quiet way, has not had a question all afternoon; so we will go to Mr Hanson and then to other members who have questions on this area.

**MR HANSON:** I am wondering whether the government has provided a formal response to the Shaddock review.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, we released the strategic plan and that—

**MR HANSON:** But you have not actually sort of responded. Often when there is a review conducted—I know it did not have recommendations in it, but it had a series of findings and it had—

**Mr Barr:** I mean, the government response was that we released our strategic plan for disability education.

**MR HANSON:** So you simply used that to inform your strategic plan rather than to say, “We agree with this bit, not with this bit,” or “We are going to—

**Mr Barr:** Yes, because he did not make specific recommendations. It was not the sort of review that was perhaps like an Assembly committee. We respond to the Assembly committees.

**MR HANSON:** Which is a lovely segue into my next question. The Assembly committee that we had on the needs of ACT students with a disability, the government responded to that. We had 30 recommendations arising from that, of which the government agreed with—

**Mr Barr:** We agreed with all but one, didn’t we, I think?

**MR HANSON:** No. You agreed with the majority—you noted, I think, or agreed. But the majority you agreed with. I am just wondering if you could update us on the implementation of those recommendations and how that is progressing.

**Mr Barr:** I will have to get back to you on that. Do you want a reconciliation against each individual recommendation? I just read out a very long list of things that were contained within both Shaddock and the—there is a lot of crossover.

**MR HANSON:** I understand that it could take the next half an hour, but it would be useful to know where we are progressing with that because you have agreed to these things. Often what happens is that the government comes back and says “agreed” and, you know, “We will get on with it.” After that it is difficult for the Assembly sometimes to keep track of—

**Mr Barr:** Sure. If you are wanting a response or an update on each of the recommendations, we can provide that.

**MR HANSON:** That would be useful.

**Mr Barr:** That would be useful? I will—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Not right now, though.

**MR HANSON:** No.

**MS HUNTER:** No, not right now.

**THE CHAIR:** You are taking the response to the recommendations on notice?

**Mr Barr:** Mr Hanson's question is: can we provide a response in terms of updating the progress on each of the recommendations within the Assembly committee report?

**MR HANSON:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** We are happy to do that. What I will seek the committee's indulgence on is that I am not sure that can be done within five days. It may take a little longer, but I am happy to provide that.

**MS HUNTER:** No, we understand.

**THE CHAIR:** But it will not take five years, either?

**Mr Barr:** It will not take five years. No, that is true. We will find a time between five days and five years that is closer to five days.

**THE CHAIR:** That will be good.

**Mr Barr:** That will be good? Yes, happily.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Just a supplementary, Mr Chair. If I recall correctly when we were talking about the Shaddock review last year and I was asking about the progress and when the government was going to put a formal response in, you said words to the effect that currently you cannot do that because there is a review underway and there is a consultation between the systems, which is understandable. I always understood that you were going to give us a formal response to the Shaddock review.

**Mr Barr:** And we have. We have delivered that—

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is a strategic plan—

**Mr Barr:** response both in terms of the Assembly committee and the strategic plan and the launch, the joint launch with the CEO and the AIS of statements of intent as well.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am not sure if I would classify a strategic plan as a formal response.

**Mr Barr:** Given that the Shaddock report did not contain formal recommendations

with which to—it was not like an Assembly committee report. There was a series of—

**MR DOSZPOT:** It gave you a number of options.

**Mr Barr:** It put forward options and we said that we would respond to that by way of policy announcement, which we have made.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay; so you are saying not to expect any formal response?

**Mr Barr:** We have responded to the Assembly committee and—

**MR DOSZPOT:** With a strategic plan. Okay, got that.

**Mr Barr:** to Shaddock, yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Collis was going to give Mr Hanson some information?

**Dr Collis:** Yes, I am a little bit confused. Do you want me to go through the 30 recommendations?

**MR HANSON:** No, I think we are going to do that on notice.

**Mr Barr:** We will do that on notice, yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes. I think we are.

**Dr Collis:** But we could. In any event, it would take so much time.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Go on, give me another heart attack, Mr Collis. I can only deal with one heart attack a year.

**MR HANSON:** If you could do that off the top of your head, though, it would be a very impressive thing to behold. But with the time constraints that we have, it is probably prudent that we do that on notice.

**Dr Collis:** It would be a memory thing of some feat, but it would also be a little bit redundant in the sense that, because of the nature of the strategic plan we just talked about, a number of the initiatives we have just mentioned cover, I think, maybe eight or nine of the recommendations—something like the innovative practices was a recommendation of the legislative inquiry, and we actually have that now in place. And I could go on to—

**MR HANSON:** It is really just a matter of this committee and also the education committee being able to assure themselves that that body of work is being implemented. If it is being done through this strategic plan or another mechanism, that is fine. We will get that on notice.

**Mr Barr:** Look, I will provide a response. If it is in time for this committee, great. If

it is not, I will do it in the Assembly in the June sittings.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. A new question from Ms Hunter, then Ms Le Couteur.

**MS HUNTER:** I just wanted to go back to the increase in funding for disability education and just get some sense of how that is going to be distributed, where it is going to be used. I might just add in a bit more to that. How will you, or will you, include parents, carers, advocacy groups in discussions about where that money will be spent?

**Mr Barr:** Sure. Just as a snapshot, obviously the major area of growth has been in the inclusion support program funding and also allocations through the SCAN process. So this only goes to—

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, I wanted to get on to SCAN; obviously I have a particular interest.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. And I outlined before that one of those areas related to some external work looking at the SCAN process. Then I suppose there are two questions—the additional money that we have allocated in this budget and then we have got the additional money that the commonwealth are providing through the ACT government. So we obviously had wind of an announcement and had been lobbying the commonwealth to up their share of disability education funding, so I am very pleased they did that. But we were not entirely sure of the quantum, obviously, until they made their announcements on budget day. So we are probably in a better position to talk at this stage about our allocation, but, undoubtedly, the commonwealth money is a welcome boost on top of the allocations contained—

**MS HUNTER:** How much is that commonwealth money?

**Mr Barr:** From memory, it is a \$200 million program nationwide, so—

**MS HUNTER:** And do we have some idea?

**Mr Whybrow:** Over four years.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, over four—

**MS HUNTER:** Over four years, yes.

**Mr Barr:** And we are likely to get somewhere between 1.5 and two per cent. That is notionally our population share, is it not? So that is the sort of ballpark we are talking about. Who would like to talk about that? Mark, is it?

**Mr Whybrow:** About—

**Mr Barr:** So on our \$5 million.

**Mr Whybrow:** Okay. Maybe the best way to refer you is to page 324, but it does relate to our SCAN and—

**MR DOZSPOT:** Page, sorry?

**Mr Whybrow:** Page 324 of BP4.

**MR DOZSPOT:** Got it now.

**Mr Whybrow:** And it does relate to the SCAN allocation model of ensuring every student with a disability is provided with the resources they need. I guess it is there in black and white with some targets within a special school setting of \$53,000 being the average cost. To let you know some broad numbers, the 2011 census numbers have 350 students in special school settings, so moving that average to \$60,206, and then the increase of the average cost of students within a mainstream setting. So those averages represent the allocation of dollars and where the money will eventually be spent.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So how many students in the mainstream schools?

**Mr Whybrow:** I think we said 1,840—

**Ms Sharma:** 1,498.

**Mr Whybrow:** Sorry.

**MR DOSZPOT:** 1,840?

**Ms Sharma:** 1,498.

**MR DOSZPOT:** 1,498. Can I just ask a supplementary while I have got the floor? There was an 11 per cent increase by the looks of it at the special school level, but what was the increase for the mainstream students?

**Mr Whybrow:** Where is the—

**Mr Barr:** So what is the percentage increase from 23,627 to 26,467? Is that what you are asking?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** We will do a quick calculation.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, what I am asking is what was that based on, the increase?

**Mr Whybrow:** The increase is actually based around the SCAN allocation. Each individual is individually assessed.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay, yes.

**Mr Whybrow:** And that individual assessment determines a funding arrangement for them.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**MS HUNTER:** Sorry, I had another part to my question.

**Dr Collis:** Yes, I was going to get to that.

**MS HUNTER:** Excellent.

**Dr Collis:** Was that the one about the parents—

**MS HUNTER:** How to engage, yes. Thank you, Dr Collis.

**Dr Collis:** I mentioned before the disability education reference group, and one thing we are trying to set in place is the process in order that we can get in-time advice about how we are moving into that disability education. So, the actual firming up of the terms of reference and the membership of the Disability Education Reference Group and formalising that was really our first step. That is partly why I was a bit excited about the fact that we managed to do that at the end of last year.

We have a very broad church, if you wish, in terms of who sits on there, but we have significant representation for children from the vision impairment association, the Deaf Children's Association, the ACT Down Syndrome Association, the ACT P&C councils and on and on. There is a significant representation there of the four families in that space.

One of the bodies of work that is being conducted as a consequence of the change of terms of reference—because that group until now has been advisory only—

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**Dr Collis:** We moved to allow that group to have a limited working party capacity, and the first working party that branched off that group was, in fact, the parents support group, which is fundamentally chaired by a manager from the disability education section, but the membership is really all parents. And they are currently providing us with advice around particularly communication and training that they believe is needed by both schools and parents in terms of how to make the interactions and communications between families and schools more effective than they are now. So that is the body of work that they are undertaking now.

But, in addition, we have tied them in with a group working out of Disability ACT to look at a communication strategy for parents right across the disability domain so that we can move towards a challenge 2014 outcome of a one-stop shop so that we can actually ensure that, wherever a family goes, they will be able to get information about all of the services—

**MS HUNTER:** The programs, therapies, the services, yes.

**Dr Collis:** and the programs that are provided. I might just like to bookmark that here as one of the recommendations of the legislative inquiry that we are achieving on.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay, there you go. Tick.

**Dr Collis:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Mr Doszpot, and then Ms Hunter.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The question that I would like to get down to is: how have funds been allocated for students with special needs? You talked about the SCAN system. Obviously I am aware of that. But has there been any prioritisation of the increased funding that has come in as to whether some schools should actually get comparatively more than others because they have more direct needs that are required there? Is there any such evaluation outside SCAN, or is SCAN the final determinant for that?

**Dr Collis:** The funding model that we currently use is SCAN, and, indeed, there are two other ways of funding as well. In specialist schools there is funding, which is actually just the base funding for the specialist schools for the principal and the executive structure and so forth, and then SCAN aggregates the actual classroom teacher component of that, whereas in the inclusion support program, SCAN generates the whole of the resource that goes for the trials. So I just need to point out that the funding model actually uses SCAN in different ways, and there are three different ways, depending on whether they are inclusion support, whether they are in specialist classes or whether they are in specialist schools. SCAN is relevant across the whole lot; it just factors differently in those three settings.

In regard to the current funding, SCAN is in itself a process for determining relevant need. So, in fact, we would not put another layer of decision making about where the funding would go on top of that, because that is what the SCAN process is. It actually makes sure that there is a comparative resourcing based upon need going to different students in different circumstances.

What I will say is that as part of the disability education strategic plan—the minister mentioned this earlier—that we have commissioned, one of the recommendations out of the Shaddock report—which, again, was picked up in the Legislative Assembly inquiry—was to, in fact, look at using the individual learning plans and marrying them with the SCAN process so that we could be more directly targeting the actual activity that we needed to be doing in schools rather than a perception of relative need.

That is called in this area a funding through educational adjustment process. And that is a very complex area that has been studied in a number of different jurisdictions around the world. We are commissioning as we speak an external consultant to come in and provide us with timely advice around what models are feasible in regard to our jurisdiction in regard to that. So that will inform us throughout the course of this next year.

**MS HUNTER:** So that is a part of reviewing SCAN?

**Dr Collis:** It is reviewing the funding model, and it will therefore look at SCAN. The model may actually say, “Well, actually, SCAN in and of itself achieves a function.” I do not want to pre-empt what—

**MS HUNTER:** But it might be part of bigger, broader model?

**Dr Collis:** Yes, I do not want to pre-empt it. But, you see, it is very difficult to describe for people so they can understand how the funding model works. That was one of the pieces of information that came out of the community feedback—it is difficult to understand how that happens. So what we have asked for the consultant to do is to make sure that, when they come back with the recommendation of models, it is transparent and it is clear to—

**MS HUNTER:** Which is very much something that parents have been raising for quite some time—that lack of transparency and understanding of how it works. So Dr Collis, you are saying that that will be a result of this work you are doing?

**Dr Collis:** Yes, I hope it will be much more transparent.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Dr Collis, one of the reasons for asking that question is that I had occasion to write to the minister on a particular issue, which you may recall. There was one constituent whose child required a nurse at the school. It seemed to fall in between all jurisdictions. I think you wrote back to me saying that a nurse was not available. It had to go through Health and then Health had different options on it as well. Yet this child needed a nurse in attendance. I will not go into all the details. What I am asking—and I think you have explained it—is whether some of this methodology that you have described can actually address these situations.

**Dr Collis:** I have, even though it sounds complicated, simplified the funding model. There is actually one other tier to this. This is the SCAN appeals process, which is actually about emergent need. When we look at the levels of need across the nation—in Victoria there are six levels of need, as there are in Queensland—we have, essentially, 14 levels of need in SCAN. Even though we have this expanded scale, if you like, the reality with disability is that no scale is ever going to be able to truly represent every young person. There are currently between 20 and 30 young people in public schools who are receiving, in addition to SCAN, funding which is of a temporary nature for emergent need because of particular issues. I am not sure of the constituent you are talking about, but I am aware that at the moment we are funding, for instance, a nurse around a particular issue in a particular school as a consequence.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I might have a look at the letter that Mr Barr sent back and perhaps refer it back for you to pass on. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** A new question, Ms Hunter, and then Mr Doszpot.

**MS HUNTER:** I think there was a suggestion by the Education Union regarding reducing class sizes, particularly in learning support centres and secondary schools. The ANU recommended, I think, one to eight, where it is currently one to 16. Has this been an issue that has come before you or has it been looked at in any way?

**Dr Collis:** No, it has not. I am aware of the union's desires in this area, but it has not been a dialogue which has been seen broadly as a priority. I think this would encompass a broader discussion about what we mean by learning support centres. If students who are on the inclusion support program receive funding—and this is frequently a surprise to schools when we point this out to them—there would be more resources going into their school than having a learning support class.

Again, it points to what our consultant is going to look at—that is, this confusion about defining the pedagogy that we deliver to young people on the basis of how we deliver funding, which is silly. We ought to be determining the pedagogy that suits the context, the young person, and determining the funding after that. That is part of simplifying the message to families, schools and so forth. It is a message which is clearly one fitting into the school autonomy principles as well.

**MS HUNTER:** Minister, are you confident at the moment that we do have the staff required across the system—teachers that have those qualifications in disability education? We have a bit of a cohort of teachers that will be moving out of the system. What are we doing to ensure that we are going to continue having teachers with qualifications in the system?

**Mr Barr:** Clearly, part of our discussion and dialogue with pre-service education providers, most particularly the University of Canberra, is recognising that, whilst they are our predominant source, they are not the only source of graduates into our system. Clearly, that is a conversation we have with them. Some of the strategic partnerships that link back to our previous discussion about secondary school innovation and, say, the University of Canberra connection with Kaleen and Lake Ginninderra, provide some very useful in-school practical experiences for trainee teachers making their way through the system. There are a number of initiatives that support those who enter into pre-service education through their training.

The recruitment rounds have been encouraging, without absolute confidence at this point that every single position for next year will be filled in May this year. There are always positions that get filled towards the end of the year or early in the new school year, depending on resource allocation. Obviously, the school census is a trigger, if you like, for a final allocation of resources. We make estimations and projections and then you get a true figure. But there is nothing to suggest at this point that what has occurred in previous years in terms of being able to finalise staff positions for the new school year will not occur again this time. I am hopeful, of course, that a successful outcome from the current enterprise bargaining arrangements will facilitate some renewed interest in teaching in the ACT, as will the initiatives we have outlined today in terms of secondary school innovation.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can I take you to page 324 of BP4. Looking at the mainstream school students with a disability, point f—the average cost per student per annum in a public school—if a student getting, say, an allocation of around \$23,758 wants to transfer to a non-government school, what would happen to that amount of dollars that that student attracts in the government school?

**Mr Barr:** There would be an allocation that would go, or notionally, with that student. There is not—

**MR DOSZPOT:** What sort of allocation?

**Mr Barr:** There is not a voucher system for disability education, so it would depend on the setting which they went into. Clearly, the ACT government is the major funder of disability education within the public system in the ACT. We provide, I think, a significantly higher proportion of additional support in terms of students with a disability than the 17 per cent figure you talked about before. My understanding is—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand that.

**Mr Barr:** that it remains fairly consistent at about 33 per cent. The additional funding that was announced a couple of budgets ago that was built into the base for non-government school education has increased that. Obviously there will be a top-up associated with the commonwealth government initiative that, as I say, flows through the ACT government before being passed on to the various—

**MR DOSZPOT:** So can you give me a figure of what that figure would be?

**Mr Barr:** We will be able to in time. We can give you a figure at the moment in terms of the total amount of money that the ACT government provides to non-government schools. That is on page 321 of budget paper 4. It may be possible to break that down in terms of the amount for disability. I am getting a nod that it is, so we can provide that information. I need to be clear, Mr Doszpot, that there is no disability voucher. There is no voucher-based funding system in Australian education.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand that. I am simply asking for you to explain to me how it works, and I think you are doing that quite well.

**Mr Barr:** Sure.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I guess the inconsistency is that that child has the disabilities to contend with—or the parents of that child. If they move that child to a non-government school then the parents are up for a substantially bigger amount.

**Mr Barr:** Any child who moves out of the public system into a non-government school is up for a substantial amount. Because it is private education, you make a payment. That is the nature of it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure. This is getting down to, I guess, a philosophical approach to it, but we are talking about people who have far more call for assistance than an average student—a student without any disabilities who transfers.

**Mr Barr:** They are funded at nearly twice the level of a student who does not present with a special need within a non-government setting. More money is being provided, both in terms of ACT government funding through our initiative in this term of the Assembly—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Which would still be probably less than half what they would get in the government system.

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, yes. That is correct. But if you enrol in a non-government school, implicit in that are school fees. The level of those school fees depends on the non-government school that you enrol in.

**Mr Whybrow:** Just clarifying the question: obviously it will also depend on the assessment of need—the SCAN assessment that Mr Collis has already identified. We have a 14-tier structure. So the amount of money will depend on their level of need. While that is an average, the other experience that we have within the government school setting is that there is a more pronounced level of complexity in the government setting at the moment.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So roughly one-third of all students with a disability are currently in non-government schools?

**Mr Barr:** No. I think you might be talking more like 20 per cent.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I thought it was about 418 or something.

**MS HUNTER:** No, it is 20 per cent. I think it is 11 per cent in Catholic schools.

**Mr Barr:** There are 2,348 students with a disability, of whom 500 are in the non-government school system. So it is not a third; it is 21.3 per cent.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So there is a margin of error there.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, a significant one.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Alternatively, there are 80 per cent in the public system.

**Mr Barr:** It is much closer to 20 per cent than one-third.

**MR HARGREAVES:** What about the 80 per cent in the public system?

**Mr Barr:** As Mr Whybrow pointed out, those with the most significant need are within the public special school setting, obviously.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I guess we are drifting into the next session, so I will stop there.

**THE CHAIR:** I have one question to go. Minister, as chair, I am concerned with the good order of the conduct of these estimates meetings. One of the ways that we have good order is through the provision of accurate information of those officers from the department who will attend these sessions. I note that the lists in regard to the Education and Training Directorate have been inaccurate on both days, which I think is concerning. Mr Whybrow's name does not appear on either day as having attended the sessions. I was just wondering if you were aware that he is actually on long service leave. I have never seen somebody do long service leave in an estimates committee. That is normally done as a punishment. On behalf of all the members here,

I would like to pay tribute, Mr Whybrow, to your dedication and commitment to your department. I think it is a good thing that you are doing what you are doing there.

**Meeting adjourned from 3.46 to 4.07 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will recommence the session and go back to output class 1.4, disability education in public schools. I know Ms Hunter had some questions, and I am sure she is racing down here to ask them, but we will start with Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Here she is.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, we are looking at the non-government sector at the moment, obviously, so the question is related to—

**THE CHAIR:** We are still on 1.4.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I will pass it—

**Mr Barr:** You will pass over to Ms Hunter. Okay.

**MS HUNTER:** I just wanted to follow up with a few things around the response inquiring into students with a disability. It was stated that there was going to be a system-wide set of guidelines on appropriate roles for learning support assistance and that they would be developed. Can you advise how that is progressing?

**Dr Collis:** Yes. We are forwarding that. This we are seeing as part of a combined achievement across two goals—building better processes but also building capacity. We are investing into the training of learning support assistants over the course of this year. The first part of that is developing a clear role statement around that. That work has commenced. In fact, we have already a draft copy of that.

One of the issues we have is that the delivery model that we are looking at is at the moment sort of binary teacher learning support assistants. However, with our trial of therapy assistants, for instance, there is a third dimension there. With Therapy ACT's trial of 6.5 therapy assistants, we are looking at needing to relook at our roles and guidelines for learning support assistants in relation to differentiating what we mean between therapy assistants and learning support assistants.

But I can assure the committee that we have furthered that work. We have a very complete draft document, and we are hoping to forward that. We have already started the training. In relation to that, we have got 20 places for CIT cert IV for learning support assistants now. We want to ramp that up across our system, but to really ramp up we have to do that work around making sure the role statement is accurate and comprehensive.

**MS HUNTER:** How many of those positions across the system have a cert IV? Do some have cert III and some have cert IV?

**Dr Collis:** Cert III and cert IV. I cannot answer—

**MS HUNTER:** But a minimum is a cert III?

**Dr Collis:** I think for learning support assistants the minimum is not measured. We were building to cert III level of training, as I understand it.

**MS HUNTER:** So at the moment you do not have an idea of qualifications?

**Dr Collis:** For learning support assistants?

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**Dr Collis:** No. There are no qualifications as such for learning support assistants.

**MS HUNTER:** Sorry—

**Dr Collis:** The number of people with qualifications?

**MS HUNTER:** The number with qualifications in your workforce?

**Dr Collis:** No, we do not have that information.

**MS HUNTER:** You were saying that you were working towards that and supporting it. How are you doing that? Is it a goal to ensure that all people in those positions do go through and get a cert III or cert IV?

**Dr Collis:** Yes. The first part of this is to ensure that the training we deliver in house is actually meeting the needs. We have been informed that learning support assistants' training internally for disability education has not been effective or as comprehensive as possible. Yes, in the program at the moment, we are moving to supporting people to cert IV in our first tranche of training. We will go through and increase that and roll that out, wanting as many of our people as we can to be certified to at least cert III.

The issue we have in that is that the training, as I have been led to believe, is quite generalist for learning support assistants at the CIT. So we are embarking on working to have modules which are specifically identified to meet the needs of disability education staff.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. That leads into the next question. The special education advocacy group made a recommendation in the inquiry process about specialist short courses being developed for not just LSAs but also principals, teachers and so forth across the system. Has any work been done to progress that idea? Has it been taken on board in the first place, and has it been progressed?

**Dr Collis:** Yes. In this report, earlier, the essential skills for disability education, there is a package that has developed. I believe that 47 teachers have opted for that, and we are going for the second lot of training at the beginning of the second semester for that. That has proved very popular. We are exploring online learning capabilities. As the department's online learning capabilities have become more sophisticated and robust

with the CLC, we are looking at establishing connections. At the moment, we are in discussion with New South Wales, who have trialled across 7,000 staff short courses across six areas of disability education. There seem to be some really powerful outcomes out of that. We are, at the moment, looking at either that model or a very similar one to move on so that we can deliver—building the capacity of our staff as one of the major priorities under the strategic plan.

**MS HUNTER:** My final one is—sorry?

**THE CHAIR:** We might go to Mr Doszpot with a new question. Yes, Mr Doszpot. Thank you, Ms Hunter.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. I would like to talk about an issue that we have had quite a few discussions on regarding people with disability and the educational impact that the budget cuts were going to have on them last year. If you recall, vision-impaired teachers in particular were going to be cut from the sector. I believe there were five vision-impaired teachers within the education sector. Have those five teachers been maintained—the positions of those five teachers?

**Dr Collis:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Has one retired?

**Dr Collis:** I believe one person has retired. I believe we have one person on leave. We are recruiting and doing what we normally do, but the five full-time equivalent positions still exist in there.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So the five full-time positions exist but currently we have three working?

**Dr Collis:** I would need to take that on notice, but this is a fairly typical space we are in—in this area. We recruit. I think I would have to take that on notice. I believe we actually have four people—we have been able to pull someone in to cover for one of those—but I would need to look at that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I would appreciate a response on that, Dr Collis; that would be good. On the same topic, the government previously funded \$24,850 for a 10-week pilot program in blind sports in schools. Is that still going ahead? Has the program finished?

**Dr Collis:** Sorry; can you mention the program again?

**MR DOSZPOT:** The blind sports in schools program.

**Dr Collis:** I am not aware of any program that has been funded out of—we will have to take that on notice.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I believe VISACT are providing some of the services for it.

**Mr Barr:** We will check which ACT directorate it is in. It may well not be education;

it may be through disability. I know there is a grants program where we just went through an application round within the sports portfolio targeted at the participation of disability groups in sport and recreation, but we will look at that and find out.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We will appreciate some feedback on that as well. And also—

**Mr Barr:** We will also be making an announcement around the successful applicants in that grants round in the very near future.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Good. I will look forward to seeing that very soon.

**Mr Barr:** Quite possibly. I will have to look at my adviser and ask how soon. Yes, very soon.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I would like to see the outcome of that. And while we are on that, could we also look at the hearing-impaired teacher situation. There were some issues there as well. I would like to make sure that all those teachers are still in place. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** And while we are on the hearing impaired—the Shepherd Centre: how is it faring with funding from the government?

**Dr Collis:** The Shepherd Centre was a successful tenderer for the provision of language and hearing services for cochlear implant students. They received a two-year contract with a potential rollover, as we were attempting to do through that tender process.

**THE CHAIR:** How long would that contract be for?

**Dr Collis:** That contract is for two years, with a rollover capacity for one more.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter. Then, Mr Doszpot, we might move to wrap up and move to output class 2.

**MS HUNTER:** I am just looking at the accountability indicators on page 324 of budget paper 4, under early intervention. It was the parent satisfaction with their children's progress and early intervention, the annual survey. Very neatly, we had a 2010-11 target of 90 per cent, and we met that 90 per cent target. Maybe you can give a little bit more detail. Ms Wilks might be able to fill that detail in around how many parents—I think there were 450 eligible children or so—participated in the survey and what was the outcome of those surveys in broad terms.

**Ms Wilks:** In terms of the numbers who replied to the survey, I would have to take that on notice. We are doing a little bit of work at the moment going a little bit further into parent satisfaction—and not just about parent satisfaction, which is what we have asked before. Basically, it has been, “Are you happy with the service?” et cetera—those fairly standard questions. What we are now doing a bit of work around is “Are you happy?”, “What do you think we could differently?”—things around “Is the time allocation right?”, “Is the location right?” We have made a commitment to drill further down to get some real issues around parent satisfaction, knowing that the

satisfaction level is high.

**MS HUNTER:** That is more around, as you said, digging down to get more qualitative information and also I guess more individual information about families and their needs?

**Ms Wilks:** Absolutely; yes.

**MS HUNTER:** And that will be ready for next year when the survey goes out? Have you trialled it? Where is that at?

**Ms Wilks:** We are at present doing some work around it, and we could report on that, yes, at a later date.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have a supplementary on that same early intervention area. The target in the estimated outcome for 2010-11 is 450, and for 2011-12 it is also 450. So you do not expect an increase?

**Ms Wilks:** Yes; 450 is the figure of throughput that goes through, because the students do not necessarily stay in the program at the same time. We have really a continuous movement through. We are currently meeting demand, so we do not see that that number needs to expand at this time.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So there is no waiting list then?

**Ms Wilks:** We have no waiting list.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay.

**MR HARGREAVES:** That has upset you hasn't it, Jeremy? No waiting list, mate.

**MR HANSON:** I will find a waiting list somewhere, mate; don't you worry.

**Mr Barr:** He is waiting to find one.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Will I move to my substantive question, Mr Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** Go for your life.

**MR HANSON:** Mr Barr was not brave enough to take on Health in the reshuffle.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It could still happen. It could still happen.

**Mr Barr:** How many portfolios do you want me to have, Jeremy? That is very kind of you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It could still happen, Mr Barr, I understand.

**MR HANSON:** Maybe we could have given it to Mr Hargreaves. He could be the fifth wheel.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Take that chalice from me.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, come on.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Mr Chair; when everyone is ready. My question relates to special needs teachers. Can we get an indication of the current total number of teachers engaged in special needs education?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, I am presuming our HR system can provide that answer?

**Dr Watterston:** Yes, we will have to take it on notice.

**Mr Barr:** We will take it on notice, obviously. Yes, we will.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure, and I have got other supplementaries to that. What is the vacancy rate at the moment?

**Dr Watterston:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And what processes does the government utilise to ensure there is a pool of casual specialist teachers for special needs students?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, happy to provide all of that information.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And is there a shortage in this area at the moment?

**Dr Watterston:** Again, we will take that on notice, but it is not my understanding that we have positions vacant that we cannot fill. However, the question might be about whether there is a shortage of people with appropriate qualifications; so we will have to take that on notice.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. I think that probably closes that sector for us.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter has one or two more questions to close?

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, thank you. I think I did ask something about staff earlier on, which you might have taken on notice. Now I have missed my spot, but I am back again. Under disability education, the accountability indicator is the individual learning plans being completed for those in special and mainstream schools. The target was 97 per cent and you met 97 per cent. Although it is a small number, it is still a number; so who makes up the three per cent that do not have ILPs completed? What sort of circumstances are we looking at there and how can we turn that around?

**Dr Collis:** I have looked at that this afternoon, in fact. The three per cent is made up of people who leave our system quickly in that they come and go. Also, the largest group of that—we are really talking three per cent; we are not talking about a large number. The largest group, however, are young people who come to a school and

present with very little information from their previous setting. They have quite complex needs and the development of an individual learning plan takes longer than a month to achieve. So when we capture the data, there will be a small group of young people for whom we are really coming to terms with the nature of their need.

I am aware of one young person who came and during the time developed a complex medical condition, which required people to recalibrate their thinking around the individual learning plan. That young person did not have an individual learning plan for the statistical purposes of this study.

**MS HUNTER:** Those that take longer will fall outside the time you collect the data for and—

**Dr Collis:** That is right.

**MS HUNTER:** also there are some exceptional circumstances? You are pretty confident that that is what makes up that group?

**Dr Collis:** I am very confident, yes. I have seen all of the entries for that three per cent and those two categories would make up all of those numbers.

**THE CHAIR:** It sounds like we have finished with output class 1.4. We will now move on to output 2.1, non-government education, and I might start. At the bottom of page 321, minister, there is a chart that details the grants paid to non-government schools. I notice that for the budgeted year it is about \$24 million less than the current year. The note says that the decrease is, of course, due to the building the education revolution program. It says “mainly”. What is the difference?

**Mr Whybrow:** The value of the program in that estimated outcome is \$32.7 million.

**THE CHAIR:** But it says “mainly due to BER terminating”. So how much is it?

**Mr Whybrow:** I guess the reason for the “mainly” is that the \$32.7 million is more than the \$24,000 reduction. There is actually an increase, which is due to indexation of the grants, both from the commonwealth and the ACT. It was trying to explain why there is a significant down. The significant down is because of the BER, but that BER is actually more than the total difference. It is a down and then there is an up for indexation of grants and enrolment movements. They are the differences.

**Ms Sharma:** And as well, there are national partnership programs for non-government schools. The reduction mainly relates to BER offset by increases in indexation as well as the other national partnership program for the digital education revolution and trade training centres. The details for non-government schools and national partnership programs are provided on page 268 of budget paper 3.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Ms Sharma, can I ask what the indexation factor is? What percentage is it?

**Mr Whybrow:** It is 3.2 per cent. That is the ACT indexation factor for non-government school grants.

**Ms Sharma:** That is for the ACT.

**Mr Barr:** That is a CPI figure of 2.5 plus our adjustments where we built into the base increase another 0.7 per cent. It was an initiative that again we made that rolls on year on year. One feels the sense from time to time that I need to re-announce that every year as a reminder that it is there and was provided as a certainty in the long run to increase funding. It would appear that I need to re-announce that every year and perhaps I will do that in future.

**MS HUNTER:** Minister, that extra 0.7 per cent—

**Mr Barr:** Is on top of the CPI figure.

**MS HUNTER:** is on top of the CPI figure?

**Mr Barr:** That is correct, yes.

**MS HUNTER:** And are there other states and territories—what happens around other jurisdictions? Do they do CPI indexation or do they add more on top? Where are we sitting with other jurisdictions in that regard?

**Mr Barr:** It would vary depending on the different formulas that are used. That might be a difficult comparison to draw. Mr Whybrow might be able to shed some light on it—no?

**Mr Whybrow:** No, I am not familiar with that. I should just correct myself for the record. The 2011-12 year is a three per cent indexation rate, plus the 0.7. The outyears are 2.5 plus the 0.7; so it is 3.7 and then 3.2. I apologise for that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is fine.

**THE CHAIR:** The notes to the statement of income and expenses on page 339 are on page 341 of budget paper 4. They seem to have a different summary. You spoke of \$34 million. They are saying the increase from the federal government is \$27 million offset by additional ACT government funding of \$2.46 million.

**Mr Whybrow:** Sorry, what is the—

**THE CHAIR:** Page 341 of budget paper 4.

**Ms Sharma:** The additional funding from the ACT government of \$2.5 million is made up of indexation on 3.7 per cent, which is around \$1.7 million, plus the enrolment of \$0.8 million; so that is the make-up of the 2.5.

**THE CHAIR:** But if you compare that to page 268 of BP3, I can find the \$32 million of the education revolution, but how does that become \$27 million on page 341? Take it on notice if you want to.

**Ms Sharma:** No. Page 341 differentiates between the commonwealth grants; so the

27.3 is there and the 2.466 relates to the ACT. If you look on page 321, the ACT government funding is 46.8 versus 49.2; so it is an increase of around \$2.4 million. That explains the ACT funding. The commonwealth one, which I referred to on page 268 of BP3, is for the commonwealth grants.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Whybrow mentioned \$32 million from the BER money. How does \$32 million become a decrease of \$27 million? What is the difference?

**Ms Sharma:** That 32.1 is in 2010-11 and the BER money for 2011-12 is 3.1; so if you look at the difference between the two, it is around—

**THE CHAIR:** No, that is okay.

**Mr Whybrow:** So there is still an amount in the 2011-12 year.

**THE CHAIR:** To come through, okay.

**Ms Sharma:** So it is the incremental movement.

**THE CHAIR:** Just going to the statement of income and expenses on page 339, there is a line there under the payments for expenses of taxes, fees and fines. What taxes, fees and, particularly, fines do the non-government sector pay?

**Ms Sharma:** That relates to the fees and charges for accreditation and registration of vocational education and training—

**Mr Whybrow:** Vocational education and training providers, such as Quest or non-CIT providers in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. And fines?

**Mr Whybrow:** It comes under that overall heading—so taxes, fees and fines.

**Ms Sharma:** So some is fees—

**Mr Whybrow:** So it is not a fee, it is not a fine, it is not a—

**THE CHAIR:** So there are not necessarily fines?

**Ms Sharma:** Yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I thought it was a swear box.

**THE CHAIR:** Only in your classroom, Mr Hargreaves. Ms Hunter and then Mr Doszpot.

**MS HUNTER:** No, I am happy to go with Mr Doszpot first.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. Minister, the government's budget funding for non-government schools suggested there was an increase by \$5.4 million, but

\$3 million of this funding was commonwealth government support for the building the education revolution and the digital education revolution and non-government school sector share of national partnership funding, and the \$2.4 million, as we just heard, from the ACT government related to indexation and changes in enrolment numbers—neither of which resulted in a real per student increase—compared to the budget delivery of \$193 million over four years in funding for initiatives for government schools. How do you address that issue?

**Mr Barr:** The government sets priorities year by year for education expenditure. I outlined a series of commitments to the non-government education sector in the 2008 election, and, in fact, have delivered on those in the first two budgets. So I brought forward a range of initiatives, including an ICT grants program, the indexation question and also the matter of the disability and student equity fund within non-government schools. So, rather than delivering them one initiative at a time over four budgets, I delivered them all in advance in the first two budgets.

So the point I would make in response is that it would appear that you get punished, Mr Doszpot, for delivering early on commitments in this context. Some comments that were made seem to reflect a negative response to delivering early on commitments which, I must confess, surprised me.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We are not very used to that sort of activity, so—

**MR HARGREAVES:** Not going to do that again, minister, are you?

**Mr Barr:** It did surprise me a little, Mr Doszpot, but, nonetheless, we have provided through that initiative around the 0.7 on top of CPI increased funding. I do note that, through national partnerships and through a number of commonwealth initiatives that flow through the ACT in those national partnership arrangements, we have been able to provide some targeted assistance. As I think we have debated ever since you have been shadow minister, I have indicated very clearly that I support a needs-based funding model, and so new resources in education will be targeted to the highest areas of need. That has been a policy that we have held very firmly for a long period of time—devoted resources through national partnerships, for example, and signing up to those areas to provide additional resources targeted to non-government schools in particular areas focused on disability and ICT grants. And we have delivered on those commitments.

Of course, we will have one further budget in this parliamentary term and then, of course, the opportunity to have the contest of ideas again around where priorities should be in education for the next four-year term of the Assembly. I note also in this context that, with the Gonski review of education funding, it will potentially be a very changed landscape. I will not pre-empt, of course, his work, but he has reported to education ministers and outlined the broad direction that his review team are looking at making recommendations back to Australian governments.

I think there is a need for greater clarity in terms of the different levels of government contribution to education. There may be a variety of different models that are put forward. The commonwealth may wish to pursue a funding model not dissimilar to what they have in the national health agreement. So the question of who puts the label

on the jam jar for the money could be a very different picture. They may decide that they want to quarantine a proportion of GST revenue, for example, as they proposed initially in the health agreement. There are a variety of different options. I do not think that is the direction they are heading, but until the process is complete, it is difficult to say with absolute assuredness.

What I have indicated to non-government schools is that we deliberately did not pick up the SES funding model that the Howard government used, and we have maintained the funding model for our allocation of funding to non-government schools based on the Keating government funding model. But if we are happy with the outcome from Gonski then it would make sense for the ACT to align its funding model with a new commonwealth funding model, and I certainly reserve the right to do that. But, equally, I reserve the right to disagree if what emerges from Gonski is not something that I believe meets that needs test.

But an area that I am certainly encouraged to hear Gonski talk about in his public statements so far has been a recognition of a base level of funding required for all students, regardless of their education setting, and then a significant additional allocation based on need. That would potentially provide an incentive for non-government schools to enrol more students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and funding would assist that to occur. I think that would be a desirable outcome as well out of a federal funding review. We look forward to hearing and seeing the draft report and then, of course, having the discussion and a final report. I think that is anticipated in the next 12 to 18 months.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure. So can you give any further indication to the 40 per cent of the students in the non-government sector as to what they can expect out of the Gonski report, further to what you have said?

**Mr Barr:** It is not really for me to say at this point, other than what they have read and the consultations that their peak bodies would, of course, have undertaken, all having contributed to his review. I can advise at an ACT level that we worked very closely with the CEO and the AIS in the development of submissions. We have a number of issues in common in that the Howard government funding model does not serve the ACT well. I think our schools overall are disadvantaged. All schools—public, Catholic and independent—are disadvantaged, and a more sophisticated analysis of student need would, I think, be of benefit to the ACT.

The example I have used—and you may have heard me use this before—is that within the postcode of 2603—one of the top 10 richest postcodes in Australia—are significant pockets of disadvantage contained within a number of areas within that postcode, and yet all students under the Howard government model are treated equally because they reside in that postcode. That is a weakness and a significant weakness of the current federal funding model and needs to be redressed. I think we have the more sophisticated level of data with ICSEA that provides information around the individual circumstances of students broken down even beyond census collection district level of data now, so that should be deployed in future funding models in my view.

**MR DOSZPOT:** You gave us a commentary on the Howard model. You do not think

it suits the ACT landscape. How would you compare the Howard model to the Latham model that was mooted?

**Mr Barr:** That is history.

**MS HUNTER:** We do not have the Latham model.

**MR HANSON:** If I can add about the data collection, you are saying below CCD. Who has got that information and how is it used?

**Mr Barr:** ACARA obtains that information from a variety of data sources. Obviously individual schools undertake data collection in relation to their school communities. ICSEA is a complex calculation that takes into account a number of factors. It is more sophisticated than just parental income; it goes to assess levels of education of parents and things like whether there is a home internet connection. There are a range of variables that feed into the calculation of that particular index. It is much more sophisticated than you reside in this postcode or that postcode.

**Mr Whybrow:** I might just add something. We have tabled earlier that national equity in government schooling report—just confirming the information the minister has provided. In relation to non-government schools in the ACT—this is 2008 data—the ACT in the receipt of commonwealth per capita grants was the lowest in the country at \$4,741 compared to a national average of \$5,241.

**Mr Barr:** So Howard's model did not do the ACT very well.

**MR HANSON:** Is that information publicly available?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, it is in the schools Australia report.

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes, table 23.

**Mr Barr:** I am surprised non-government school lobbyists have not brought that to your attention.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is why I asked the question, Mr Barr. But you told me that my figures were wrong.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, because you were making a point about ACT government funding. I am referring to commonwealth government funding under the Howard mob.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I see, okay. Well, ACT government funding is not—

**THE CHAIR:** All right, a new question from Ms Hunter and then back to Mr Doszpot.

**MS HUNTER:** This touches on the students with a disability who are going to non-government sector schools, and there has been an increase—and I think it has been acknowledged—as we said earlier, and it has risen to just over nine per cent in independent schools and just over 11 per cent in the Catholic system. So what has

happened with the funding around that along the way? If we can just get a bit more information about that. You have talked about some money going into the budget to increase the amount of money from the ACT government's end into disability education in those sectors.

**Mr Barr:** There are two variables at play, as we discussed earlier—there is the number and then there is the complexity of need.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** It is an interesting observation that, around the time the ACT government provided the million dollar funding boost, you start to see a slight increase in enrolments in the non-government sector. That money has been applied by non-government schools to enhance their capacity to enrol more students with a disability. So to the extent that that funding has achieved its desired goal around equity and supporting students with a disability in non-government schools, you see that within the census data.

Again, I think the observation needs to be made that when you look at the spectrum of disability, those with the greatest need are enrolled in our special schools, and then there is a mixture, but still, within those students who enrol in the mainstream environment, the predominance of those with the greatest need remain in the public system.

I would like to acknowledge that the extra ACT government funding has been put to very good use by the non-government school sector, both in terms of providing increased support for those students already in the system and in terms of allowing an increase in the number within the non-government school system. So it is an example of an initiative that has been effective, and you can directly see the correlation in the enrolments, which is good.

**MS HUNTER:** The other thing I wanted to touch on was something you were just mentioning before around the Catholic and the independent schools and the government schools working together on common ground around the Gonski review and submissions going in and so forth. Maybe you could talk a bit about where those three systems are working together and the sorts of issues they are working on together. It does appear that there are a number of issues out there in education where the sectors are working well together, and I just want to get a sense of what those issues are.

**Mr Barr:** Sure. The obvious one is the implementation of the Australian curriculum. There is collaborative work in that area, both in terms of the input into the documents and through the different phases of development in the different stages of the curriculum—so phase 1 work, the trial and schools' further input into phase 2 and phase 3 as we add more subjects in. I think there has been a really vibrant and healthy collaboration that has been occurring with educational professionals across the territory, regardless of the school sector that they are teaching or engaged in, working towards this important national initiative.

I know we had some discussion on this last week that perhaps some stakeholders in

other jurisdictions are not as supportive of this national move. I have had feedback from both system leaders and staff as I have gone around, and one of the first questions I ask when I sit in a school staffroom and talk with teachers is about their views on the national curriculum and the implementation process. We have some good discussions about what extra things we can do, but there has been almost universal support for the quality of the bridging document and the work to move from the ACT framework to the national curriculum and really strong engagement from teachers and system leaders, which is encouraging.

Of course, there is the work of the safe schools task force that involves collaboration across all sectors. In this budget, the initiative around school sport is again a cross-sectoral initiative, as is the support for the noteworthy program. That is, again, a program that is accessed by public, Catholic and independent school students. So there are some important cross-sectoral initiatives there.

**Dr Watterston:** Can I add a couple more?

**Mr Barr:** Indeed. I will get Jim to add a couple more when I have finished my list.

**Dr Watterston:** Sorry.

**Mr Barr:** Not at all; I am sure I have forgotten a few. The final one I will comment on is in today's announcement in relation to the P-12 curriculum and assessment work—as I say, in short, expanding the collaboration that we see on the BSSS in years 11 and 12 across the entire curriculum and assessment framework. We are announcing the establishment of a cross-sectoral committee to collaborate on that work and to provide a series of recommendations to government to restructure that area. The BSSS has been tremendously successful, and I think there are tremendous benefits in extending the scope of that sort of work across the entire frame of school education from preschool to year 12. The Teacher Quality Institute would be another I would add, but I might throw to Jim, who might have a few more there.

**Dr Watterston:** I do not like to be anxious, but I wanted to add some because there are a number of things which I think make the ACT a jurisdiction that leads the way in Australia. While we were certainly talking about market share and things last week, we are the one jurisdiction where we do have really close relations and we do have a combined moral purpose about all students in the ACT. I think the initiative that brings that to the fore is the youth commitment week.

I think I have spoken before, maybe even here last year, about the students that we lose through the cracks in transitions, whether they come from independent or Catholic schools to government schools or vice versa. We cannot always track those kids, and some of them obviously leave the system well before they should. So we have combined an initiative that involves all schools and stakeholders in government and non-government agencies to make sure that we treat every student or every young person in the ACT as a baton, if you like, in a relay race, and nobody can let go of the baton. They have all signed up—all schools, that is—on a territory-based register where we can track those people and make sure that they go into employment or training out of whichever sector, that we work towards—

**MS HUNTER:** You did mention that last week.

**Dr Watterston:** Absolutely. I think that is a really important initiative, and we have had great buy-in from both other sectors.

School validation for ACT public schools—we use non-government principals on those panels. They certainly assist us and provide some great insights and ideas as part of that process—as well, I think, absorbing a lot of good ideas themselves and taking them back. We have had a lot of feedback about that support for individual principals through that process.

I guess the one that is really prominent in our thinking is the whole issue of national partnerships. As the minister said, it is about improving teacher quality, but also literacy and numeracy. Our reward payments are based on combined outcomes for the ACT, and in that process we have been sharing some of our work and certainly having discussions.

We also have a curriculum committee which is wider than just the Australian curriculum, where all sectors are represented and we talk extensively about our work.

So in lots of different ways we share practice, thinking and philosophy around the needs of all students in the ACT in a way that I have never seen in any other Australian jurisdiction.

**MS HUNTER:** The Safe Schools Taskforce—what is the work that is shared there across those sectors?

**Mr Barr:** Obviously the membership of that task force contains representatives from across the school sectors as well as a variety of government and non-government agencies. I think the key to the success of that particular group has been a willingness to share information, initiatives and ideas, to work with ACT Policing and to work with the community sector around the provision of additional pastoral care and new support programs. An example in recent times was two conferences that have been particularly successful. The combating homophobia conference of last week had representatives from across the school sectors. Clearly one of the major areas of bullying within schools—all schools in this instance—relates to homophobic bullying, so there is—

**MS HUNTER:** Unfortunately, bullying is in all schools.

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, and the willingness of all school sectors to participate and to send students and teacher representatives and system leaders to that particular conference was very encouraging. There was no spare room at all in the centre for teaching and learning; you could not have fitted anyone else in. It was that level of interest. Already, schools are forwarding to me their action plans resulting out of that conference. I am quite encouraged by what I am seeing and I think there is some opportunity in future budgets to provide a small allocation to assist schools in developing materials and supporting school-level programs targeted specifically at combating homophobia. That is something we will certainly be looking at in future budget provisions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. I might just ask a question. In the provision of sites for schools in Gungahlin, how many non-government schools or organisations have applied for sites and where is their progress at?

**Mr Barr:** There is currently a registration process for the Catholic systemic high school; a site in Throsby has been identified and we are going through—there is a dual process. The registration process, I understand, is well advanced. The community consultation phase has been completed. I think there is very strong community support. I have been on the record on a number of occasions very strongly supporting the establishment of a Catholic high school in Gungahlin. Obviously the additional campus for Burgmann at Forde is well advanced. They have got enrolments and they look to expand capacity there over time. I will need to take on notice whether there is another site in the north-western corner of Gungahlin—those additional suburbs around Casey and Moncrieff, I think, from memory.

And of course there are active discussions now in relation to a number of non-government school sites in the Molonglo Valley. I am aware of at least two expressions of interest, and I am sure there will be more. Mind you, I think that now that the Islamic school is located at the old CIT campus, one of those expressions or potential expressions for Molonglo is catered for in north Weston.

There may be some more applications that I am not aware of.

**Ms Young:** No, there are not, minister, currently, at the moment. There are no further applications that you have not stated, minister.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. The Catholic high school at Throsby sounds as though it is the most advanced. When is that predicted to open?

**Mr Barr:** I understand the CEO are keen for 2013.

**THE CHAIR:** All right, the Burgmann campus at Forde is already there, and they are expanding.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, and again I understand that they received some BER funding and they are having the official opening very soon—in mid-June.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Hunter has a supplementary, then back to Mr Doszpot.

**MS HUNTER:** I wanted to follow up. As you know, there was discussion around the former Hall primary school site and the possibility that a non-government school may be going into that site. Where are we up to on that?

**Mr Barr:** I understand that a couple of non-government schools have had a look but have not progressed any further.

**Ms Young:** That is correct, minister; we have had no applications for in-principle approval at that site.

**MS HUNTER:** Has any other work been going on around the site and what the site

could be used for that involves education?

**Mr Barr:** The school and museum component—I thought I saw a recent press report in relation to some activity there. Otherwise the preschool operation continues.

**MS HUNTER:** Is there any talk with the Department of Education and Training around some sort of museum and how that might be incorporated into—

**Mr Barr:** I think that is a Hall progress association—

**MS HUNTER:** Certainly, but I understand they have been talking with various government officials.

**Mr Barr:** Not with the education directorate, no.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Further to Mr Smyth's questions, my supplementary is around—the schools that are being built at the moment I presume are the last ones under the interest subsidy schemes. Is that right?

**Mr Barr:** I am sorry; I am not—

**MR HARGREAVES:** That is dead. The capital interest subsidy scheme was—

**Mr Barr:** I am sorry; I just needed some clarification. The non-government schools that are currently being built—the interest subsidy scheme was closed to new entrants in 2003, I think.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay.

**Mr Barr:** So the schools that are currently being built are not being subsidised under that program. Obviously the BER program has enabled a large number of capital works to occur on non-government school sites across the territory.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can any thought be given to the interest subsidy scheme being resurrected?

**Mr Barr:** Thought can be given to it. I am not sure that that is the biggest priority in non-government school funding at the moment. Obviously I will be talking with the CEO, the AIS and the NG sec in relation to priorities for next year's budget. I know there is some interest in that program, but there is also interest in a number of other programs. We will have that discussion, and next year's budget will reveal all. I cannot say that it is the number one priority from the government's perspective at this time, but I will have that conversation and see whether it is the number one priority that emerges from non-government schools.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am not sure if it is the number one priority, but with about a

4.5 per cent increase in the non-government sector it is becoming increasingly hard for them to work without an interest subsidy type scheme.

**Mr Barr:** I am not sure the evidence supports that. There would appear to be a significant amount of construction activity that has been occurring across. And where the government has been able to facilitate expansion—for example, with the Islamic school moving from the old Watson site to a site that has much greater capacity for them to take additional enrolments—we have on a case-by-case basis been supportive of that.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Wasn't it true, though, that one of the reasons for the discontinuation of that scheme was that about 80 per cent of the moneys were being used by three or four schools, and many of the smaller ones who wanted a new gym or something like that could not get funding to support that so they did not get any interest subsidy at all.

**Mr Barr:** I understand that that is a fairly correct analysis of what was occurring previously. There are a variety of ways that we can seek to target funds. I certainly look forward and have signalled to the non-government school sector an interest in having that discussion around allocation of unspent moneys in that stream. The commitment I have given is that that money remains available for the non-government school sector, and we are committed to ensuring that that money is spent for the benefit of non-government schools. I look forward to a dialogue around—

**MR HARGREAVES:** And spent in an equitable fashion—

**Mr Barr:** Indeed.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And on the basis of need, as I understand it.

**Mr Barr:** Absolutely. Yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, then Ms Hunter.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Mr Barr, can you tell us what progress has been made in the cross-sectoral ACT disability steering committee and the ACT disability working party in dealing with equitable funding arrangements for students with disabilities in all schools?

**MR HARGREAVES:** We have already dealt with that one.

**Mr Barr:** Yes. I think I outlined that in some detail in the previous outlook class.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I thought we had done that outlook class.

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, we did go through that.

**Mr Barr:** If you would like us to go through that again, we can.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a particular aspect relevant to the non-government sector you are interested in?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes. I raised the issue in the previous session about the discrepancy at the extreme end of disability with the special schools; but with the standard schools what funding is allocated to students with special needs? There appears to be a great discrepancy and I guess I just wanted to know whether the discussions have led to any recommendations in that regard at the moment?

**Mr Barr:** We probably need to isolate the issue of the totality of funding available from the individual student need assessment process.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure.

**Mr Barr:** I come back to the point I made earlier that there is not in Australia a system of a voucher for a disability. Implicit in a decision to enrol outside of the government system is a parental co-contribution, an amount of private investment in education. The amount is significantly subsidised, in the case of a student with a disability, by both the ACT and commonwealth governments and that level of subsidy has been increased in recent budgets by both the ACT and commonwealth governments; the commonwealth in their budget of a week and a half ago and the ACT in an initiative from a budget or two ago that flows into the outyears that is now part of the base.

So, as I think Mr Whybrow indicated, the level of ACT government contribution jumps to about 33 per cent for a student with a disability compared to the nearly 18 per cent that we are at, noting of course that Mr Whybrow's calculations do not include the value of land that is granted to non-government schools within the ACT.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Which you did mention before.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Hunter.

**MS HUNTER:** I just have a quick one and then a second question. The quick one was just to get some idea of the numbers of children who are being home schooled in Canberra at the moment, while Ms Young is up.

**Ms Young:** The February census for 2011 states 133, Ms Hunter.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you. And that stayed pretty steady between each census or for the last couple of years—

**Ms Young:** We are seeing a small increase but it is quite a gradual increase over the previous three years.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you. My second one was around the fact that I had recently had a meeting with some parents of children who attend schools in the independent school sector. They were making the comment that there were a lot of parents who wanted to have more of a say, be more involved and so forth in their schools, how the schools run and so forth. As you know minister, you did give some money to, for instance, the P&Cs—

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS HUNTER:** the government school P&Cs—last budget?

**Mr Barr:** No, it was to—

**MS HUNTER:** The budget before?

**Mr Barr:** It was to all P&C and P&F groups. So it was for all schools—

**MS HUNTER:** So it was P&Fs as well.

**Mr Barr:** It was everyone.

**MS HUNTER:** Because they did not seem to be clear about where that had gone—

**Mr Barr:** Aware of that? No, it was for everyone.

**MS HUNTER:** I guess that would be a question in itself. When it was given, for instance, to the P&Cs and the P&Fs, what is the accountability in ensuring it does get spent?

**Mr Barr:** They were required to acquit back their expenditure—

**MS HUNTER:** And those acquittals have all happened? They happen annually?

**Ms Sharma:** Yes, for the ACT P&C and the APFACTS.

**MS HUNTER:** Okay. I am trying to remember back to that budget: the amount of funding was the same between P&Fs and P&Cs?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. From memory it was \$15,000—

**Mr Whybrow:** Yes, \$15,000.

**Mr Barr:** for each school P&C or P&F and then \$1,500 for each preschool parents association—

**Mr Whybrow:** And if it was one and the same thing they got both—

**Mr Barr:** They got 16.5, yes.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Turning to BP 4, page 325, output 2.1, non-government education, point d, talking about satisfaction with the processes of the non-government education sector of 87 per cent, can you just elaborate on what the satisfaction processes of non-government education section measure?

**Ms Young:** That is measuring the satisfaction with the non-government education section as a whole in terms of the processes, so the satisfaction is of 17 independent principals. The instrument includes those 17 principals, one AIS and one CEO survey of satisfaction. We also include a sample of two home education families in that process as well, so it is a total of 21.

**Dr Watterson:** So it is their satisfaction with our department.

**Ms Young:** It is the satisfaction with our department in managing home education and non-government schools—

**Dr Watterson:** And non-government schools.

**Mr Whybrow:** If I refer you back to the annual report 2009-10, the actual result against that measure, rather than being an estimated outcome or a target, was actually 100 per cent.

**MR DOSZPOT:** How many staff are employed in this section?

**Ms Young:** Currently two, plus the registrar of non-government schools.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And how often does it meet with the non-government sector? Is it a continual consultation or is it a—

**Ms Young:** A continuous consultation. That is the primary role of two individuals in our section.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. Are there any other formal processes in place?

**Mr Barr:** In relation to engagement with the non-government sector?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** There is a formal legislative process, the Non-Government Schools Education Council. That is a constituted body that has representatives from across the different sectors—community representatives, parent representatives et cetera—and then obviously I have regular engagements, regular meetings, with both the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools. I also attend, at the invitation of the AIS—generally it has been once or twice a year—forums of all principals, so, if you like, a general meeting of the AIS.

I have obviously had a series of individual visits to schools, just as a number of

members of the Assembly obviously take the opportunity to visit schools. I think within the time I have been minister I have visited about 95 per cent of ACT schools and I certainly intend to have visited them all and hope to achieve that task, Mr Doszpot, by the end of this year.

**Dr Watterson:** Might I add, Mr Doszpot, that I do the same thing. I have been to two AIS meetings on an annual basis and I also go to non-government schools and have quite a considerable interaction with principals.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I appreciate the interaction as well. That was the NG sector you were referring to before?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I commend your work with them. It is good that you have that interaction with both the government and the non-government sector. I enjoy my interaction with the government sector. But for some reason I am not allowed to meet with the NG sector. Is there any reason for that?

**Mr Barr:** It is a government advisory council so you would need to be in government to—

**MR DOSZPOT:** We hope to win government at some stage.

**Mr Barr:** If you are lucky enough, Mr Doszpot, to be the minister for education you will have at your disposal—

**THE CHAIR:** Seventy-four weeks.

**Mr Barr:** two education advisory councils.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I look forward to that, Mr Barr. Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** Good luck.

**THE CHAIR:** Another question from Ms Hunter and then back to Mr Doszpot.

**MS HUNTER:** I am afraid mine is not on non-government schools, so I might put it on notice. It was more about Jervis Bay because we did not actually touch on it—

**Mr Barr:** Sure.

**MS HUNTER:** and of course it is an important school—

**Mr Barr:** Yes. I am happy to take a question on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** All done? Goodness me. And, you see, you get an early mark. I will pass the final comment for the day. I notice at one stage that we had all the Marks at the table and it was beginning to look very much like a law firm—you know, Whybrow, Collis and Huxley.

**MR HANSON:** Mr Chair, I point out to you that we have not exhausted all the Marks. There is at least one more in the audience.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. There was one Mark that did not get a guernsey, which I think is some form of discrimination. The adept handling of committee questions today goes to Ms Joseph, who managed to collect her name, sit down, look demurely at the desk until the crisis had passed and then slip quietly back into the stalls. So well done, Ms Joseph.

Members, thank you for covering your questions so quickly. Minister, that finishes education.

**Mr Barr:** I have the pleasure of being back on Friday afternoon for—

**THE CHAIR:** But we will see you later.

**Mr Barr:** tourism, sport and territory venues and events. I look forward to it.

**THE CHAIR:** For anything taken on notice today, if we could have the answers within the five days, except for the one we have noted which might take a little bit longer.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, if you wish to place questions on notice, you have four days in which to do so. There endeth the lesson. Thank you, minister and your staff, for your attendance today.

**The committee adjourned at 5.12 pm.**