



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2012-2013

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2012-2013 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2012-2013](#))

Members:

MS A BRESNAN (The Chair)
MR J HARGREAVES (The Deputy Chair)
MS M HUNTER
MR B SMYTH
MR A COE

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 25 JUNE 2012

Secretary to the committee:
Ms S Salvaneschi (Ph 620 50136)

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

Community Services Directorate.....	796
Justice and Community Safety Directorate.....	738

Privilege statement

The Committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to committees of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution.

Witnesses must tell the truth: giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter, and may be considered a contempt of the Assembly.

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

Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 9.02 am.

Appearances:

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

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Leigh, Ms Kathy, Director-General

Playford, Ms Alison, Deputy Director-General

Crowhurst, Ms Moira, Chief Finance Officer

Purvis, Ms Alison, Courts Administrator, ACT Law Courts and Tribunal Administration

Crowweller, Mr Mark, Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency

Foot, Mr David, Chief Officer, ACT Ambulance Service

Doverty, Mr Mark, Director, Station Upgrade and Relocation Project, ACT Emergency Services Agency

Stark, Mr Andrew, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service

Quaedvlieg, Assistant Commissioner Roman, Chief Police Officer, ACT Policing

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the seventh day of public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2012-2013. The Legislative Assembly has referred to the committee for examination the expenditure proposals in Appropriation Bill 2012-2013 and the revenue estimates in the 2011-2012 budget. The committee is due to report to the Assembly on 14 August 2012.

The committee has resolved that all questions on notice will be lodged with the Committee Office within three business days of receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received. Answers to questions on notice will be lodged with the Committee Office within five business days of receipt of the question, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received. Answers to questions taken on notice will be returned five business days after the hearing in which it was taken, with day one being the first business day after the question was taken.

Proceedings today will commence with an examination of the work of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, with output class 4, emergency services, and output class 3, courts and tribunal, along with EBT 1, ACT Policing.

I am sure you are all familiar with the privilege statement, but I just draw your attention to the privilege statement on the blue card in front of you. Could you indicate that you have read that and are aware of the implications in it.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Please be aware that proceedings are being broadcast today. Before we go to questions from the committee, minister, I would like to invite you to make an opening statement, if you wish to.

Mr Corbell: Good morning, Madam Chair, and good morning to members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear again this morning. I do not intend to make an opening statement, but I and my officials will, as always, try to answer your questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. As I said, we will start off with emergency services. My first question is in relation to page 278. Which elements of the emergency services station relocation strategy are funded in this budget and which will need to be addressed in future budgets? I note that on page 278 there is funding for Charnwood. What other parts of the strategy are funded in this budget and what will need to be done in the future?

Mr Corbell: The government has allocated funding in this forthcoming budget for the construction of the new station at Charnwood. This is because the land use zoning for Charnwood is already the appropriate zoning for the development of a new combined fire and ambulance station and therefore, given that consultation and design is complete or approaching completion, we are ready to proceed to construction at Charnwood in the coming financial year. \$22.6 million has been allocated for the construction of the Charnwood station. This, for the first time, will place an ambulance station in the west Belconnen area. This is an important improvement to ambulance cover for the west Belconnen suburbs and will also allow us to provide the fire brigade with a new modern facility to replace the existing Charnwood station.

The other two stations that are currently subject to ongoing planning, site preparation and design are at Aranda and at Calwell and Conder. Both of these sites require variations to the territory plan before construction is feasible on those sites. The ESA is currently completing the assessments required to request a variation to the territory plan of the ACT Planning and Land Authority.

THE CHAIR: Is there any indication of how long that process will take? You said you are waiting for those variations to be approved. Will we have to wait till next budget to be able to fund those relocations?

Mr Corbell: Yes. The government anticipates that construction funding will be required in the following financial year for those stations. \$1.825 million has been rolled over from the 2011-12 budget to provide for works committed to under phase 1 but not yet invoiced, and this includes the design works to final sketch plans for emergency stations at Aranda and Calwell and Conder.

THE CHAIR: I think there have been some concerns or consternation around the Aranda site. You said that is not included in this budget, so will some of those concerns that have been raised about the site also be addressed in that process?

Mr Corbell: Generally speaking, the response to Aranda by those immediate adjacent stakeholders has been positive. For example, the school, the operator of the nursing home facility and the sports clubs that use the adjacent Aranda district playing fields have all indicated their general support for the location of the station at the proposed site adjacent to the Aranda district playing fields. There has been some commentary from other residents further away from the site in Aranda proper who have raised concerns about the proposed use of that site.

It is worth reiterating that the identified site is mostly a car park and also contains 240 square metres of adjacent grassed area, not actually playing surface, out of the 130,000 square metres of the playing fields adjacent. That is less than 0.2 per cent. Options for replacing all the 59 car parking spaces will be considered and solutions will be identified before construction commences on that site.

THE CHAIR: In previous years there have been some concerns raised about some of the more basic specifications of the ESA sheds, such as walls being too close, not allowing for truck doors to be opened—those sorts of things. How are those concerns that have been raised being addressed through the strategy?

Mr Corbell: Obviously these are not sheds; these are stations for fire and ambulance. They are not the type of facility that is built for RFS or SES capabilities. The design process has been closely informed by representatives of the front-line workforce.

MR RATTENBURY: Can I just ask a supplementary?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

MR RATTENBURY: Is there a commitment to replace those 59 car spaces, minister? Your words were a little unclear. Could you just clarify that?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

MR HARGREAVES: Just a quick one: what sort of relationship do you have at the moment with Emergency Management Australia? I noticed there was an ad in the paper not long ago for an executive director, a CEO or something, and it just sparked my memory. We had a very fine relationship with Emergency Management Australia some time ago and I was wondering if it is still current. Is there any formal connection with them and do you have any sort of exchange training with them?

Mr Corbell: Yes, we do have an ongoing relationship with EMA and with the commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, which is the relevant commonwealth agency that hosts EMA. The commonwealth has also established a dedicated minister for emergency management, who is also the commonwealth Attorney-General, so my federal counterpart. We at an officer level engage with EMA regularly through a range of official forums, particularly through the forum that supports police and emergency services ministers, the council which meets approximately once a year to discuss issues around coordination of national policy settings for emergency response services. So the relationship is a good one and ongoing.

MR HARGREAVES: And the EMA do training modules and things out at Mount Macedon and other spots, if my memory serves me correctly. How many times have our people gone down there to get some training?

Mr Corbell: I might ask Mr Crossweller if he can assist you with that.

Mr Crossweller: Mr Hargreaves, I cannot give you the exact number other than to say that we have a regular interaction with Mount Macedon. They produce a number of quality courses, particularly in the last 12 or 18 months, of interest to the SES around flood and inundation. That has obviously been the topic of discussion in the last two natural disaster seasons.

We have a jurisdictional relationship with the capability division within that area of federal government as well and that is manifested in terms of Superintendent Richard Woods being at the forefront of leading the bushfire arson programs in Australia. We have a roundtable discussion with the staff from the capability division twice a year to look at the capability development and the policies that they are developing and its relationship with the jurisdictions and the services. With EMA we meet at least once a year prior to the season and we take a brief on what is coming up and what the world might look like. Mount Macedon is of great benefit and of great use to us, particularly around hazards, risks and the broader planning issues around emergency management.

MR HARGREAVES: The EMA also had an incident control room or something like that over in Bruce, if my memory serves me correctly. One, is that still there and, two, what is the relationship with your own incident control room in the event of a major incident?

Mr Crossweller: The EMA has what is called the CCC, the Crisis Coordination Centre, which is now located in the AFP building in Barton. The role of that centre essentially is to be the single point of contact for the commonwealth for any assistance that is required by jurisdictions and also to synthesise a range of information and data that comes in across the country to brief the government and the senior bureaucracy at the federal level.

That single point of contact is of great benefit to jurisdictions, particularly the ACT; where that additional level of assistance might be required in a major incident it is one phone call. They also provide liaison officers dedicated to jurisdictions. There is a relationship that builds over time so that we know whom to call and when to call in order to activate that assistance. It is a different control centre from, say, Fairbairn. It has a different role. It does not dispatch resources for response. It really coordinates the government's resources to provide assistance in the jurisdictions.

MS HUNTER: On page 277 of budget paper 4, the farm fire wise program, going down those accountability indicators, points i and j seem to indicate there will be a move away from measuring the number of rural properties adopting the program towards measuring the number that are approached. This would seem to be a little less meaningful. Could you explain the rationale behind changing those accountability indicators?

Mr Crossweller: I might ask the chief of the RFS if he will join us, if that is okay.

Mr Corbell: Could you just indicate the page number again, please, Ms Hunter?

MS HUNTER: Yes. I was referring to page 277 of budget paper 4, the accountability indicators. Note i is the percentage of rural properties adopting farm fire wise and it is going to be replaced with j, which is the percentage of non-participating properties

approached to implement the program. I am just trying to understand the rationale behind changing those indicators.

Mr Corbell: What that reflects—and I am sure Mr Stark or Mr Crossweller can assist shortly—is that there is now quite a good level of penetration of the farm fire wise program into rural leaseholders and the target now is to engage those rural leaseholders that have not previously engaged in the program. We have been able to reach out to quite a large number of rural leaseholders through our farm fire wise—that has had a good response—and now the objective is to engage those leaseholders who previously have been approached and have not indicated interest or have not been able to be engaged, to see whether we can get them engaged. I assume that is the change in the measure, but Andrew can help you.

Mr Stark: The program has been going for over five years and we wanted to develop an accountability measure that would reflect that. We will continue to go back and try to engage with those people who had previously declined to participate in the program. There are some valid reasons why people do not participate; they may have sought that bushfire management plan commercially or professionally from some other source as part of their land management agreement. But in general it was a process to go back and to ensure that where a leaseholder changed or people's circumstances on their property changed we were going back to re-engage and see if we could assist with developing an appropriate farm fire wise plan for their property.

MS HUNTER: So what is the penetration at the moment?

Mr Stark: We have spoken to 145 out of 176 leaseholders. The earliest of those plans is now five years old, so part of the cycle is to go back and make sure that those plans are still valid and up to date and to give advice or support to those leaseholders where appropriate.

MS HUNTER: So when you say 145 out of 176, is that 145 who have adopted it or 145 who have adopted it and who have been approached and have had discussions?

Mr Stark: We have 123 lessees who have signed, so approximately 22 have declined to participate after being approached. But, as I say, we will continue to move through that because it is important as a five-year program that it remains engaging and fresh with the community. The total being achieved would start to slow in its growth after five years, so that was the reason for the change in the accountability indicator.

MS HUNTER: Okay. Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: A follow-up on that just for a moment. I am unclear, then, what you are actually trying to achieve. You have got a certain number signed up, and then you said you are moving to an accountability indicator of approaching them. Presumably you want the remaining ones who are not signed up to sign up?

Mr Stark: As I said before, there are legitimate reasons why some people have not, but it is a matter of continuing to work with those people. They have a legal responsibility with the LMA to have a fire management plan; we work closely with TAMS to understand whether that is through farm fire wise or through some other

mechanism of their land management agreement.

MR RATTENBURY: I am just trying to understand what the value is of an accountability indicator around the approach, because there is sort of no outcome around the approach.

Mr Corbell: The outcome around the approach is not within the control of the ACT RFS, because it is down to the agreement of the landholder, the leaseholder. So putting in place an accountability measure where the decision maker or the controller of the outcome is not the RFS is probably not a good performance indicator. The best performance indicator is to demonstrate that the RFS is continuing to engage, approach and contact leaseholders to encourage their cooperation and their engagement in the program.

MR SMYTH: Minister, on page 124 of budget paper 3, there is an “ESA—maintaining operational capability” initiative which has \$3.7 million for the coming financial year. What will that \$3.7 million purchase for ESA?

Mr Corbell: This budget initiative provides recurrent funding for the coming financial year to assist with a range of cost pressures, including productivity offsets from prior wage agreements and other wage and salary cost pressures, including overtime and allowance pressures. It also is designed to assist the ESA with increases in its workers compensation premium, which have been above inflation, and assist with the cost of fuel and oil, which is also moving above inflation.

MR SMYTH: Could we have the breakdown of those costs, please?

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

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice.

MR SMYTH: You seem to have a list of it there. Is it not there with you?

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

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice.

MR SMYTH: How much of the cost is for employee costs? How much of the \$3.7 million goes to paying for employees?

Mr Corbell: The advice I have is that \$2.2 million is for wages and salary cost pressures, including operational overtime and allowances and including productivity offsets from prior wage agreements.

MR SMYTH: How will you fund that \$2.2 million worth of employee expenses in 2013-14, or will you be sacking people?

Mr Corbell: No; I do not expect the government will be sacking people. The government will be working with the ESA and asking the ESA to undertake more detailed assessments of its base funding arrangements to bring its base funding

arrangements in line with the budgeted provisions.

MR SMYTH: We have heard answers like that for several estimates now. In the past we have seen ESA getting supplementation from the Treasurer's advance because they have not been able to meet budget. Is it true that you are just setting the budget too low and there is no hope that they can meet it?

Mr Corbell: That is a rhetorical question.

MR SMYTH: No, it is not. Have you set the budget too low to meet operational capacity, minister? It is quite a simple question. It is not rhetorical at all.

Mr Corbell: Mr Smyth, the government wishes to ensure that each of its agencies works within the budget that is allocated to it. The government will continue to engage with the ESA around a further assessment of their base funding to ensure that services can continue to be delivered, but delivered as efficiently as possible.

MR SMYTH: Has ESA asked for access to a Treasurer's advance in this financial year?

Mr Corbell: I might refer that to Moira.

Ms Crowhurst: We are currently going through our end of financial year requests with Treasury. We expect to have a request for a Treasurer's advance this financial year relating to ESA for cash requirements.

MR SMYTH: How much will that be for?

Ms Crowhurst: The Treasurer's advance has not been approved as yet.

MR SMYTH: What have you requested?

Mr Corbell: That is yet to be determined, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: There are five days to go in the year. It is not unreasonable to ask what the size of the Treasurer's advance is.

Mr Corbell: And the acquittal of the Treasurer's advance is reported to the Assembly, as is required under legislation.

MR SMYTH: So to meet your obligations, ESA will need a Treasurer's advance this financial year?

Mr Corbell: Due to a range of cost pressures, yes, that is correct.

MR SMYTH: What are those cost pressures?

Mr Corbell: Similar cost pressures to the ones that I have outlined to you, Mr Smyth. Issues around overtime, allowances and movements in fuel and oil prices have all contributed to cost pressures on the ESA budget.

MR SMYTH: So standard operational costs?

Mr Corbell: A range of operational costs.

MR SMYTH: Standard operational costs. I have received a letter, minister, from a firefighter who says:

I wish to respectfully draw your attention to an article published in the Canberra times last Wednesday ... regarding the intention of the government not to proceed with the proposed next Fire Fighting College due to commence later this year ...

He goes on to say:

There are drastic problems with regards to the lack of personnel. We have fire fighters being forced to volunteer to cover shifts on their days off, not being able to take annual or long service leave due to staff shortages. As stated in the article a large number of the existing personnel are due for retirement and others simply leaving the service because of frustration with senior management and the ACT government.

The government cannot simply pull professional fire fighting personnel out of thin air when an emergency situation occurs.

Minister, why are professional fire-fighting staff being forced to cover shifts on their days off, not being able to take annual or long service leave due to staff shortages?

Mr Corbell: The government is maintaining its recruit college arrangements. There will be a recruit college undertaken later this year.

MR SMYTH: So is this gentleman—I assume this gentleman—who has written this wrong? Are there dramatic problems with regard to the lack of personnel?

Mr Corbell: The government has supplemented ACT Fire and Rescue capability. In particular, we have provided funding for a range of recruit colleges. Indeed, a recruit college commenced on 20 June this year—so just last week—for 16 new recruits to ACT Fire and Rescue. Fire and Rescue also anticipates conducting a further recruit college later this year. This one is the one for this year. And ACT Fire and Rescue will be implementing strategic planning for further recruit college arrangements.

It is worth highlighting, too, that pressures on the ACT fire brigade budget and also the ESA budget overall are required pending the outcome of commonwealth negotiations in relation to the commonwealth fire payment. As members may be aware, the commonwealth fire payment is currently in dispute between the territory and the ACT, to the tune of approximately \$6 million. This is having a significant impact already on the ESA's budgeting.

MR SMYTH: Does that payment go directly to ESA or does that payment go to Treasury?

Mr Corbell: It goes directly to ESA.

Ms Crowhurst: It is recognised as revenue within the Emergency Services operating statement.

MR SMYTH: How many recruit colleges will there be in the 2012-13 financial year?

Mr Corbell: One.

MR SMYTH: And the union would like two?

Mr Corbell: You would have to ask the union.

MR SMYTH: Again, let us go back to the question: why are firefighters being forced to volunteer to cover shifts on their days off, not being able to take annual or long service leave due to staff shortages?

Mr Crossweller: Mr Smyth, the ESA, in conjunction with Fire and Rescue and also with ACTAS, is undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the strategic HR needs for the next five years. There are drivers, for example, in the collective agreements base. There are issues around attrition. And, of course, there are the demand pressures going forward, which were recognised by the government in the station upgrade relocation strategy.

All that is being brought together to paint a total picture of recruiting needs for the next five years. Rather than implementing a piecemeal year-by-year recruitment program—the pressures that will be placed upon the workforce in the next five years are far broader than that. There is a cohort of ageing firefighters, particularly, that is moving through. That does not just drive the need for more firefighters on the ground, but will drive the need for promotional programs into the levels of command, the levels of superintendent and the like. So there is a—

MR SMYTH: If I may interrupt, that is fine for the future but you have not addressed the question. Are firefighters being forced to volunteer to cover shifts on their days off, not being able to take annual long service leave due to staff shortages—now?

Mr Crossweller: There has been a significant commitment by the government in the last three years to implement additional recruit colleges. My understanding is that Fire and Rescue are now up to their full complement of firefighters, and that accords with staff, generally speaking, being able to access most of their entitlements—perhaps not all. Overtime is a routine and standard part of running a 24/7, 365-day operation, and that is generally welcomed by the workforce.

We understand the pressure on the workforce. That is being addressed through proper strategic planning. That advice will come forward to government in the near future, in due course. I am confident, Mr Smyth—we are well aware of the problem, and we have full context of the problem in terms of firefighters doing overtime, but we have a broader context in terms of what the cohort of ageing firefighters looks like going through. If we do not start to plan for that now, then yes, we will see pressures on firefighters that perhaps is unacceptable.

MR SMYTH: That pressure is not there now?

Mr Crossweller: Because we are ahead of the game, we are on top of the issue. I do not believe that that is an issue.

MR SMYTH: How much of the service is delivered through overtime?

Mr Crossweller: I will have to take that on notice.

MR SMYTH: Could we have that, say, for the current year and the last two financial years, please?

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice.

MR SMYTH: Could you find out on how many instances staff have not been able to take their annual or long service leave?

Mr Crossweller: I will take that on notice.

MR SMYTH: And could we have it for the last two financial years, please?

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice also.

MR SMYTH: Minister, is this part of the reason why the UFU has chosen to cut its links with the Labor Party, which you would have to admit is a pretty dramatic step given that there seems to be no faith in your leadership of the emergency services portfolio?

Mr Corbell: Mr Smyth, in my time as minister, ACT firefighters, their rank and file, are the best paid in the country. They have the best wage outcomes in the country, and they will continue to have the best wage outcomes in the country after the completion of the current certified agreement for those rank and file firefighters. During my time as minister, we have maintained the best response times in the country for ACT Fire and Rescue. The ACT fire brigade leads the nation when it comes to containing fires to room of origin, at just over seven minutes at the 50th percentile and just over 10 minutes at the 90th percentile. This a very significant maintenance of a high quality of emergency response for the Canberra community.

During my time as minister, and indeed prior to my time as minister, whilst Labor has been in government, the government has spent over \$80 million on equipment, vehicles and facilities, to support our fire brigade, including replacement of all of the pumper fleet, new four by four rescue vehicles, four new CAFS vehicles, three new heavy tankers, one new Hazmat appliance and a new Bronto aerial fire-fighting appliance as well as upgrades to personal protective equipment in 2006-07 and 2007-08; upgrades to road rescue equipment in 2007-08; \$1.34 million over four years for specialist chemical, biological, radiological and urban search and rescue capabilities; upgrades to communications capabilities; again in 2011-12, upgrades to personal protective clothing; and, in 2011-12, upgrades for new specialist breathing apparatus equipment.

The government has also provided funding for a range of improvements in rates of pay, which, as I indicated previously, maintain our rank and file firefighters as the best paid in the country. I am very proud of the work I and my predecessors in this portfolio have put into supporting our firefighters, and we will continue to do so.

MR SMYTH: One of the concerns raised by Mr Livingstone was:

We are concerned about the habitual closing of stations for training purposes.

What is the closure rate for stations?

Mr Crossweller: Mr Smyth, in broad terms ACT Fire and Rescue conduct training skills maintenance whilst on shift. Whilst that is being undertaken, stations are not closed. The station that may be undertaking training will come to Hume for its skills acquisition training; it is available to be returned for response if required. That is for skills maintenance training. For skills acquisition training, it is not done on shift; it is done outside the shift arrangements. Unless I have got that wrong—that is correct. Skills maintenance training is a routine part of fire-fighting; it is a routine part of being on station. If they need to go to Hume, they are still available for response. The network is adjusted to allow that appliance to go to Hume, but it can turn out at any time. Skills acquisition is a more detailed process of training, and we do take them off line for that purpose.

MR SMYTH: Could you provide the committee with the number of times a station has being closed for a shift over the last 12 months?

Mr Corbell: It depends on the question. If the question is whether or not the appliance is available for response, we can certainly advise of instances where appliances were not available for response.

MR SMYTH: If you can take both on notice, that would be kind.

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice. Just one final one.

MR SMYTH: How often does ACT Fire and Rescue respond to non-fire or rescue call-outs? They often back up the police. How many times in this current financial year have they responded to non-fire or rescue?

Mr Corbell: Fire and Rescue do not respond in lieu of police. Fire and Rescue will respond in what is called a medical assist if an ambulance is delayed. Or if it is taking longer to get to scene and there is a closer Fire and Rescue vehicle available, a Fire and Rescue vehicle will be dispatched, because firefighters are trained to an advanced level of first aid and we believe it is appropriate to get assistance to someone suffering a medical emergency as quickly as possible. Often Fire and Rescue will be responded pending the arrival of an emergency ambulance.

MR SMYTH: Mr Livingstone says that the difficulty is that you have got firefighters being sent to more and more jobs that are not fires and therefore there are fewer and fewer available to respond to fires. What is that number?

Mr Corbell: That is not backed up. Mr Livingstone's claim in that respect is not backed up by the facts. If you look at the report on government services, you will see that our response times remain the highest in the country. If Mr Livingstone's claim was accurate, you would see deterioration in our response times to fire-related incidents. That is not the case. The ROGS data indicate that fire response times remain the best in the country for containing a fire to the room of origin.

MR SMYTH: Can we have an answer on the number of events?

Mr Corbell: Sorry, on what?

MR SMYTH: I thought Mr Crossweller was going to tell us how many times they have responded to non-fire type activities.

Mr Crossweller: Those statistics will be produced at the end of the financial year as part of the annual report process.

MR SMYTH: You have not got a year to date figure?

Mr Crossweller: No, because we wait to the end of the financial year to aggregate and ultimately disaggregate the statistics. There has been a long-term trend that, with urban services particularly, the incidence of fires per se has reduced. That is largely because of the efforts of the community and government around fire prevention, better design, fire engineering and the like.

We have seen over many years a move by urban services to a more multiskilled, multiple level of capability in order to utilise the resource that is available. So they do have a broader scope now; they do provide a greater level of service to the community in a range of other areas. That is because the decisions taken by governments over many years to move from simply a response to a more a prevention and preparedness model—through better planning, urban planning, construction and design, and fire engineering—do see the odd shift, if you like. It is a reasonable proposition that they are going to things other than fires, because fires themselves, over many years, have declined.

MR SMYTH: Just to conclude, are the firefighters not paid allowances for skills levels that are paid in other jurisdictions?

Mr Corbell: No, that claim is not correct. Those issues were addressed in the work value case that was undertaken in 2006, which resulted in an average increase of income for firefighters of 7.12 per cent across all classifications.

MR SMYTH: But there are allowances that are paid in other jurisdictions that are not paid here?

Mr Corbell: They were recognised in the increase in overall work value and the 7.12 per cent wage increase on average across the board for all classifications.

MR SMYTH: But there are allowances that are paid in other jurisdictions, for

whatever reason, that are not paid in this jurisdiction?

Mr Corbell: It is not paid as an allowance. It has been built into the base salary of firefighters.

MR COE: Could we please go back to the proposed development in Aranda. I was not here for the first couple of minutes to hear your comments then. Regarding the study and the strategy, which has been published, is the current site actually a more optimal location than what is proposed in Aranda?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR COE: Because attachment D and attachment C of the strategy do seem to suggest that the optimum location is far closer to where the existing station is than the potential location in Aranda.

Mr Corbell: No.

MR COE: How can it be denied, given attachment C in the strategy?

Mr Corbell: I rely on the advice of my firefighters and my fire-fighting leadership in relation to these matters. Aranda is the optimal location.

MR COE: Is it simply the optimal location if you are committed to leaving the existing site? If the existing site is included in the list—

Mr Corbell: No, it is not.

MR COE: What is it based on?

Mr Corbell: The reason for moving the fire station from the existing location in Lathlain Street is similar to the rationale for moving the existing fire station from Greenway: fire stations in the heart of town centres actually impede operational response times because it takes longer for those vehicles to get onto main roads to move promptly to the location where they are being responded. You will see that in both Tuggeranong and Belconnen the station relocation strategy recommends moving the fire stations from the heart of the town centres out onto the periphery closer to the main arterial road network, to enable faster, safer and more efficient response.

MR COE: With regard to the ambulance station in Belconnen, it says:

Study indicates that Belconnen AS—

ambulance service—

station should remain but there may be commercial advantage in its relocation.

How does that sit with what you just said?

Mr Corbell: I might ask Mr Doverty to come to the table. The relocation of

Belconnen fire and Belconnen ambulance are both justified in terms of improving response times, because the location of stations is not a stand-alone proposition. The location of any one station is not a stand-alone proposition that can be adjusted. It has to be done in the context of the location of other stations. The reason for that is that stations have to provide a certain level of overlap of coverage to maintain response times consistently across the city, so moving or adjusting one station requires subsequent adjustment to maybe two or three other stations. It is a complex web of coverage that has to be maintained, and quite a complex calculation goes into doing that. I will ask Mr Doverty to talk further about the issues with Belconnen ambulance.

Mr Doverty: In relation to the existing station at Belconnen, both for Fire and Rescue and for ambulance, a number of factors were taken into the assessment process. We looked at 10 different sites in the Belconnen and south Belconnen area. One is the actual location itself—proximity to arterial roads for speedy emergency response, which is a key operational requirement. An operational assessment that was conducted by ambulance officers and firefighters as part of that process determined that the existing sites are sub-optimal and will not lead to expedient responses for the general public.

MR COE: So why is it that attachment C and attachment D have the location in an area which is shaded yellow or green, towards that end of the spectrum, whereby that is going towards some impact or significant impact in terms of the desired location?

Mr Doverty: The shading that you are referring to was theoretical modelling shading that relates to perceived impact on emergency response times. The yellow shading has little impact. It did not take into account all the factors that were required in an operational assessment. As in all modelling, everything is relatively theoretical until you bring operational firefighters and operational ambulance officers into the assessment. The need to be on or very close to major arterial roadways to expedite response was one of the key driving factors in the assessment process.

Mr Corbell: It is worth reiterating that in the ACT, generally speaking, we have not located our fire and rescue stations on main arterial roads, mostly for what are planning and conceptual reasons which bear little relationship to the function of a fire and ambulance station, which is to allow a vehicle to get onto a main road and travel to a response site quickly. We are now changing that paradigm and doing what other major cities have done for a long time—place our fire and emergency facilities, fire and ambulance facilities, directly onto main arterial roads.

This means that we improve response times or maintain response times as the city grows. That is a very important consideration. Moving the fire and ambulance stations out of the town centres, out of the congested centre of town centres, where road speeds are slower and where it takes longer to get on to arterial roads, is a significant decision but an important one. That is why it is happening in both Belconnen and Tuggeranong.

MR COE: The displacement modelling must be quite inaccurate if it has not taken that into account.

Mr Crossweller: No, that is not correct. The modelling is a gross modelling study, so

it does not take the specificity of the sites that are picked. As the minister pointed out, the modelling is not refined enough to pick up the congestion of a town centre in terms of pedestrians and in terms of the traffic that flows in those centres. It simply says that within the limits of the isochrone modelling, which looks at assumed rate speeds and distances, it would pick points for testing.

When the model produces a result, it is not the end result; it is a place to look and then do further testing with the operational services to see whether it is appropriate. That is why there are many shades of red, yellow and green on the map—because, particularly in red and yellow, it does open up the possibility for a whole range of other sites to be considered as well.

The other important point is that, of course, because it is a network of stations, they all have interdependency. The model actually maps out the interdependencies and shows you where the stations should be in principle, but it cannot take into account those other more refined aspects of the study that Mr Doverty and the minister have just pointed out.

Mr Corbell: It is also worth highlighting that that study, the station relocation analysis, has been the subject of detailed consultation with operational front-line fire and ambulance officers. The government has not proceeded to choose a site without the explicit endorsement of operational front-line firefighters and ambulance officers. Both services' industrial representatives, their unions, have come out and strongly and publicly supported these sites, saying that these are the best sites for operational response. So the government believes it is on very strong ground in identifying sites which are the most effective sites and the most feasible sites for maintaining or improving operational response.

MR COE: So why—

Mr Corbell: And that is the primary—

MR COE: Why does table 5 on page 20 of the strategy say that the study indicates that the Belconnen ambulance station should remain but there may be commercial advantage in its relocation?

Mr Crossweller: Quite simply, the existing site for the Belconnen ambulance station needs significant upgrade, and the leveraging benefits from co-locating ambulance and fire in terms of the cost of upgrade and the operational synchronicity, if you like, outweigh the initial or the original study outcome. So I come back to the point that that advice was given on the massing study and, if you like, the broad indicators that the model produced. When you look at it in a more refined way and start to look at the overall costs of the infrastructure and the synchronicity between fire and ambulance, it makes eminent sense to put them at the one site. So the commercial advantage is that the capital works costs of providing those facilities, if you were to do it separately, would far exceed what it would cost to do it in a co-located way.

MR COE: When did the ESA begin searching for other potential sites?

Mr Crossweller: I am sorry?

MR COE: When did the ESA start searching for other potential sites for an upgrade in Belconnen?

Mr Corbell: The government has been undertaking a detailed assessment of sites for the past two to three years.

MR COE: In that time, were any other appropriately sized blocks, around the 7,000 square metre size, sold that would have made a better location than Aranda?

Mr Corbell: I think this issue has been raised by a number of objectors to the Aranda site. The suggestion is not correct. It is not the case that the government freezes all of its land release program operations whilst this assessment is ongoing. The assessment occurs and the assessment occurs at a particular point in time. You look at what is available. You look at what sites are available at that particular point in time.

MR COE: Does it not make a mockery of this notion of open government when there is, from what I took out of the consultation at the Belconnen Community Council, a better site on or around Eastern Valley Way, near the town centre, that the ACT government recently sold—in fact, after this consultation began?

Mr Doverty: To briefly attempt to answer that, when we actually commenced the formal assessment process of sites—we formally started in September last year—we looked at 10 different sites. At the very start of the process we gathered all the other key government agencies or directorates together to map out what land was available, what land was not available. And from that we developed the site selection process, which was operationally driven. So every available site that could have been developed was properly assessed.

MR COE: Was one of those ones that were perhaps preferable sold in that time?

Mr Doverty: No.

MR COE: In the last couple of years, it has not been sold?

Mr Doverty: Since we started the assessment process—

MR COE: You said you assessed 10 sites.

Mr Doverty: We assessed 10 sites.

MR COE: When did those assessments start?

Mr Doverty: The formal assessments started with operational firefighters and operational ambulance officers in September—

MR COE: And when were the 10 sites identified?

Mr Doverty: At the beginning of September—7 September, I believe, 2011.

MR COE: So those 10 sites were not known to ESA before September?

Mr Doverty: The full 10 sites, no.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to go back to the relocation upgrade program. On page 183 of budget paper 3 there is \$1.65 million set aside for due diligence on that program. Can you explain to us what that entails?

Mr Corbell: Yes. I neglected to mention this element of the funding for station allocation when Ms Bresnan asked her initial question on the program. There is \$1.650 million in 2012-13 for due diligence for phase 2 of the program. This includes site investigation for potential new stations at Campbell and Pialligo for ACT Fire and Rescue, and within the city centre itself for ACT ambulance. It also includes site investigations for a potential major upgrade to the existing Fyshwick station to become a co-located ACT Fire and Rescue and ACT Ambulance Service station, options for a minor upgrade to Majura, which is at the Gungahlin JESC, to accommodate the Rural Fire Service, options for the adaptive reuse of Greenway fire station to be converted to an ambulance station and site investigations for a new SES base in Tuggeranong.

MR RATTENBURY: That is interesting. I am interested that you have mentioned a central city site for the ambulance station, in light of the conversation that has just been had about Belconnen.

Mr Corbell: It is because the areas that drive response are different. In fire, a lot of response is suburban; whereas in the Ambulance Service, particularly during the weekday, obviously you have got a lot of people working in buildings in the city centre and other commercial locations, therefore, you get an increase in the requests for ambulance response from those locations.

MR RATTENBURY: So that due diligence funding is really about looking at new sites in that continued investigation?

Mr Corbell: Site investigation for new sites or upgrades to existing facilities.

MR RATTENBURY: What risk management strategies are being put in place to try to avoid project overruns and cost increases in the program? I assumed that was what that was about.

Mr Corbell: No, there have been no cost overruns on this project to date. All the project to date has been delivered within its budgeted appropriations.

MR RATTENBURY: On page 184 and over the page, there is a reference to ESA facility upgrades. It is a capital allocation of \$350,000. Can we have some information on what is being done with that money?

Mr Corbell: These are upgrades for minor capital works, occupational health and safety works and facility equipment replacement of equipment that is reaching the end of its useful life. So this is a standard upgrade of the existing ESA facilities portfolio, identifying minor new works or upgrades or replacements of equipment and facilities.

MR RATTENBURY: And that appears to be a one-off. There is no further allocation in the outyears. I presume that sort of requirement is an ongoing requirement. Why is there no funding in the outyears?

Mr Corbell: The government is making appropriations consistent with the capacity of the budget to meet the needs of all territory agencies. It is a capital upgrade, and decisions about capital upgrades are made on a year-by-year basis.

MR RATTENBURY: On page 263 of budget paper 4, turning to some of the accountability indicators, there is an indicator about reduced loss of life. There is a percentage of the number of people who survived out-of-hospital or pre-hospital cardiac arrest incidents. I note that the target has reduced from 34—

Mr Corbell: Sorry, which page are you on?

MR RATTENBURY: Page 263. I note the target has been reduced from 34 per cent in 2011-12 to 25 per cent in 2012-13, yet there is funding for new cardiac monitors and defibrillator units in this year's budget. Why has the target been decreased?

Mr Foot: Essentially the target has been lowered because the percentage of cardiac arrests pre hospital in the ACT is so low, compared to some of the other jurisdictions due to the population base, that one death, for example, pre hospital has a dramatic effect on the statistics. So it was felt that it probably was not a true reflection of what was happening out there in the community.

MR RATTENBURY: Is it an indicator that is worth keeping?

Mr Foot: We are constantly refining it. At a national level right now we are looking at clinical indicators. This is with the Council of Ambulance Authorities. As you know, traditionally we have always reported with a really large focus on response times and the 50th and 90th percentile. Whilst that remains integral to what we do out there in the community, it is also important to look at the impact we are having clinically—reduction in pain, reduction in asthma, reduction in haemorrhage, childbirth statistics and all these things where we really do make a large difference.

I am not saying response times do not vary. They do. But also there are other areas from a clinical perspective that we need to start looking at from a national perspective, and that is what we are doing right now at a national level.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask also about the ESA strengthening 000 backup capability. The aim of this project is to upgrade the current telephone infrastructure. Can you please advise us what business continuity plans and disaster recovery plans you have in place at the communications centre in the course of that process? It is JESC. What are the prospects of a loss of capability?

Mr Corbell: Mr Crossweller perhaps is best placed to talk to you about that, so I will ask him to deal with it.

Mr Crossweller: The initiative in the budget papers seeks to enhance what is called

the Genesis telephone system. We have approximately 50 per cent capability at Curtin and then we have 100 per cent capability at Fairbairn. The Genesis system sits across both those sites. What the Genesis system does is sort out the calls that come into the comm centre from urgent calls to non-urgent calls. Particularly on the ambulance side of the room, it will send calls to the call-taker, for example, depending on where the call is coming in from. 000 calls are one source of information that we get, but we get calls from a whole range of other sources as well. So the Genesis system helps to disaggregate that and send the call to the right desk.

What we find, because it sits across two sites, is that from time to time the server gets a little confused and when it does we have to shut it down and reboot it. So there is a period of about 15 to 20 minutes where that capability is not available. It does not stop any calls coming into the room at all; it simply makes it a little more complex about how we manage them. The initiative seeks to simply put two servers in, one in each site, so that we do not get that problem occurring in the room.

Curtin has approximately a 50 per cent capability, and we are moving towards that. The comm centre upgrade, which is also part of the initiative, helps to bolster that 50 per cent capability so that we can always step back. If it was a long-term outage we would build from 50 per cent to 100 per cent in the space of about a few days to a week. Our continuity plans were tested and well and truly tested in the flooding event, some 18 months ago, and again we made a seamless transition from site A to site B. We had gone from Curtin to Fairbairn without losing a call. We had that event; the continuity all works. We were able to go back to Curtin without losing a call and then we migrated back to Fairbairn without losing a call.

We could not do that unless we had thorough business continuity and disaster recovery processes in place, not only in the planning context but in the technology context as well. So we have actually been through a number of experiences that other jurisdictions can only exercise because they have not had that experience. We have had it. So I am very confident that what is in place in terms of continuity and recovery is robust.

MR SMYTH: To follow up on that, what training is provided to the 000 operators? I have had it relayed to me that on Thursday, 31 May a GP at a surgery rang and said that a patient had had an aneurysm, could they have an ambulance urgently. The doctor was asked, "What's an aneurysm?" Then to add insult to injury, it took 30 minutes for the ambulance to arrive. What training is provided to the operators and how do they triage what is urgent and what is not?

Mr Corbell: Mr Foot can provide you with more details, but the government has invested significantly in boosting the clinical capacity of the call-taking centre. You might recall—you should recall—that a year or so ago the government provided additional funding to recruit ambulance clinicians to work full time in the comm cen. That supports the call-takers who use an algorithm within a response program to assess calls. We do not just rely on the algorithm process. It is similar to a health call centre-type model. We also have specialist clinicians physically present in the comm cen, who can deal with more complex or difficult calls, or indeed with calls where the call-takers themselves are unsure how to assess and rate the priority of the call. We have made a very important investment in that it has capacity, but Mr Foot can

provide you with some more information.

Mr Foot: Officers working in the communications centre, that are actually taking the calls, undertake a certificate III in call-taking. ACTAS actually restructured its qualification and governance framework in the room some years ago. So those officers actually undertake an extended period of both practical and theoretical training to achieve that certificate III and are trained in areas like medical terminology, phone management techniques and obviously the medical aspects, to prepare them to enter those 000 calls, when they come into the room, correctly. The dispatcher, because we have separated the two roles, undertakes a certificate IV in dispatch, and both those qualifications reside within the health training package at a national level.

MR SMYTH: Is it not unreasonable to expect a 000 operator to know what an aneurism is?

Mr Foot: Mr Smyth, I honestly could not comment on the specifics of one call that has allegedly come into the room.

MR SMYTH: It happened on 31 May.

Mr Corbell: If you want to provide more details of that call, Mr Smyth—

MR SMYTH: I will get you some more detail.

Mr Corbell: we can certainly look into the matter.

MR SMYTH: Is it reasonable that it took 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive when a GP requested a vehicle for a very serious instance?

Mr Foot: Once again, without knowing the call or the exact details of what the physician requested at the time, it is quite difficult to pass judgement here.

MR SMYTH: All right. Just one last question: I have also been contacted by an intensive care paramedic who has concerns about the ESA's private-plated vehicle policy. Does the ESA have a policy on the use of private-plated vehicles for mainly the executives, and is it being enforced?

Mr Crossweller: Yes, it does, and, yes, it is.

MR SMYTH: I am told that these vehicles are also for on-call use if necessary but that, for instance, vehicles are going interstate without the express authorisation from whoever the authorising officer is, such that they are not available for on-call duty.

Mr Crossweller: Are you relating to a specific case or a specific situation?

MR SMYTH: I am just asking: against the policy, are you aware of vehicles going interstate without express authority?

Mr Crossweller: I am not personally. I am aware of one situation where there was some confusion or complexity around that in the Ambulance Service, but that was

dealt with by the chief officer and the person concerned.

MR SMYTH: How confusing is it that you have to get permission to go interstate?

Mr Crossweller: I am sorry?

MR SMYTH: How confusing is it that for potentially an on-call vehicle you have to get permission to go interstate?

Mr Crossweller: I would have to refer that to the chief officer of ambulance, if I could but, having said that, I was satisfied as commissioner that the matter had been dealt with appropriately. I do not know whether you wish to comment any further, Mr Foot.

Mr Foot: Mr Smyth, both ambulance and fire have specific guidelines in place which regulate the use of non-executive private-plated vehicles in the territory. If there are deviations to that guideline and that is brought to my attention then we will pay that the appropriate attention it deserves.

MR SMYTH: Have any instances been brought to your attention?

Mr Foot: There have been. The TWU have brought an incident to my attention. I have spoken to the officer involved in that incident. I have also reminded the officer involved of their obligations in writing as well but, as I said, we do have a very clear guideline that is in place for my general managers, and I believe the fire and rescue superintendents, and if officers choose to deviate from that guideline then we will deal with it.

MR SMYTH: Is it one of the conditions of having these vehicles that they are available for call at any time? Are you aware of any instances where managers have been non-contactable during the shift and, therefore, the vehicles have not been able to be used?

Mr Foot: One of the conditions of the provision of the vehicle is undertaking the role of what we call the DAC, or the duty ambulance control. I have been in the job since 1986. I have been doing on-calls since 1994. I am the chief officer and I have missed calls occasionally. I believe it is totally unrealistic to expect that someone will answer every single phone call that goes through to their mobile phone. You can be in the shower, you can be out the back or you can be on the phone to someone else and your phone is ringing.

The important thing is that when the call is made and the call is missed the call is returned. But, yes, I do have an expectation that my staff be available out of hours. That is one of the provisions of having that vehicle. If they are not going to comply with that guideline then I deal with it appropriately.

MR SMYTH: I think we have all have missed calls—we are in the shower or on the line or whatever—but are the calls returned? How many instances have there been where staff have been uncontactable and have not offered to you a valid reason?

Mr Foot: We had a concern raised by the TWU—I believe it was in November last

year—alleging, I think, 10 specific instances over a 12-month period where a particular officer could not answer her phone or did not answer a call on the original call. We have written back—I personally wrote back to the TWU—asking them to provide me with specific information about that and I am currently awaiting that advice.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will you update this committee, if it has not reported—or indeed the Assembly—on what the outcomes of this inquiry are by the chief officer?

Mr Foot: Can I just reiterate: it is not an inquiry.

Mr Corbell: This is a personnel management issue. It is not—

MR SMYTH: It is not if it affects operational capability.

Mr Corbell: It is not affecting operational capability.

MR SMYTH: You will give me the guarantee that this does not affect operational capability?

Mr Corbell: As Mr Foot has indicated, there are guidelines around this that place expectations on officers. Where officers are not acting consistent with the guidelines, there are standard procedures to deal with those circumstances.

MR SMYTH: Will you give the committee a guarantee it has not affected operational ability?

Mr Corbell: I rely on the advice of my chief officers in this regard and they have indicated to me that it is not compromising that issue.

MR SMYTH: All right. Could you take on notice the number of incidents and provide those to the committee, please?

Mr Foot: Can I just reiterate: I wrote back to the TWU in November last year, asking them to provide me with specific information about the incidents they have alleged and to date I have not had a response to that letter.

MR SMYTH: If you could take on notice—perhaps it is for Mr Crosweller rather than just Mr Foot—any breaches of the private-plated vehicle policy and any correspondence about those incidents to the committee, please?

Mr Foot: I am sorry; what am I actually taking on notice?

Mr Corbell: What are you asking for, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: The number of incidents where there have been breaches of the private-plated vehicles policy and any correspondence concerning those breaches.

Mr Corbell: I will take advice on the issue of correspondence. Correspondence is generally treated as staff-in-confidence, for obvious reasons. In relation to the number

of incidents, I will take that question on notice.

THE CHAIR: You are clear that you understood that question? Yes? Thank you. Thank you, Mr Crossweller and Mr Foot.

We will now move to ACT Policing. You are probably very familiar with it but I just draw your attention to the privilege statement on the blue card in front of you. If you can just indicate you are aware of that. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement in relation to Policing?

Mr Corbell: No, thank you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: Then we will go straight to questions.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about the annual contract for ACT Policing. The payment by the ACT government towards the annual contract with the AFP is projected to be \$145 million for the next financial year. Are there projections for the outyears for the government payment for this contract?

Ms Leigh: I might need to get some advice on the totals over the next few years. What I have before me is the additional money allocated in this budget for each of those years, if that is of assistance.

MR RATTENBURY: Sorry; what do you mean by “additional”?

Ms Leigh: In this budget there was additional money allocated to that contract.

Mr Corbell: An additional \$45.278 million over four years has been allocated to ACT Policing. This recognises increases in salaries as a result of the new AFP enterprise agreement, which was entered into earlier this year for the 2012-2016 years. In 2012-13 the increase is \$5.755 million, in 2013-14 a further increase of \$7 million, in 2014-15 a further increase of \$9.8 million and in 2015-16 a further increase of \$9.8 million.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. Is that in the budget papers?

Mr Corbell: Yes, it is.

MR RATTENBURY: And is that increase entirely due to the new wage agreement?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. Are the broader projections for the outyears not available? They are not in the budget?

Mr Corbell: The budget would reflect that increase.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. I note the commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department 2012-13 portfolio budget statement has a table for revenue from independent sources, and that fairly closely aligns to the income, so they have those

outyear projections. Does that accord with the ACT government's projections?

Mr Corbell: Without knowing exactly what you are referring to, Mr Rattenbury, I am not really in a position to assist.

MR RATTENBURY: It is program 2.1, expenses, on page 170 of the portfolio budget statements.

Mr Corbell: Of what—the commonwealth Attorney-General's Department?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, the commonwealth Attorney-General's.

Mr Corbell: I am sorry; I do not have that document in front of me. I would have to take the question on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: That would be fine. Thank you. I guess my question is: do those figures accord with ACT government projections? That is taken on notice. That is fine.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: I also want to ask some questions about the recent announcement on the taser cams—

MR HANSON: Could I just have a supplementary on the—

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR HANSON: The increase then is simply linked to the salaries? There is no increase anywhere else in the budget?

Mr Corbell: That is correct.

MR HANSON: Thanks.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about the recent announcement on taser cams being rolled out in the ACT and the need for purchasing and training that goes with them. How far away are the cameras from being operational on the street?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Mr Rattenbury, the decision to move from an X26 model to an X2 taser has only recently been made. I can advise that the procurement of the devices has been completed. What will happen now is that a project needs to be designed in terms of the implementation to design some governance and some training. My estimation of when those new devices will start rolling out in the ACT is that it is probably some months away yet.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. So these are actually different devices? It is not a retrofit?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: It is not a retrofit. They are new devices.

MR RATTENBURY: What is happening to the old devices?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: They are being phased out as the new X2 model is being phased in.

MR RATTENBURY: How long have the current devices been operational?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: We have had the X26 in place for about seven or eight years.

MR RATTENBURY: And there was a recent increase in the number of devices for the broader usage by ACT Policing?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Thirty-four.

MR RATTENBURY: How recently were those 34 purchased?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: They were purchased in July 2011.

MR RATTENBURY: So they have had a 12-month operational life?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: And those new ones will continue to the end of the phase-in of the new X2 model.

MR RATTENBURY: And how long is that phase-in period?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: It will probably take two years.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. There have recently been similar calls for lapel cams to be issued as a way of obtaining footage of, I guess, general police operations. That was a call from the AFP Association. Is that something you are taking on board and looking into?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: The decision to go to a body-worn video camera will be one for the operational safety committee of the AFP. The operational safety committee was commissioned with a task in early 2011 to examine the viability of body-worn cameras across the AFP operational domain, including ACT Policing. That body of work is still ongoing and has not yet been completed.

MR RATTENBURY: Do you have an expectation of when that will be completed?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I do not.

MR HANSON: I have a supplementary on tasers. The current rollout is down to sergeants, and I assume you are reviewing that as it goes.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Yes.

MR HANSON: At some stage I imagine you are going to have a decision to either

maintain that, to withdraw them or to expand it further.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Sure.

MR HANSON: When does that decision come and have you got any sort of view on that at this stage?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I do. The taser implementation to sergeants in the ACT has now been active for almost 12 months. At the 12-month mark we will have a full evaluation of that model. We will make decisions based on what the findings of that particular review will be, but at this point in time I can indicate I have no intention of rolling out tasers beyond sergeants unless the review reveals that there is a compelling need to do that.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about the general issue of the gear that police are required to carry. I have seen reports in the media out of New South Wales that there has been an increase in occupational health issues for police because they are carrying so much gear now. Is that an issue that has arisen for ACT Policing?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Yes. It is actually an issue that has arisen more broadly across the AFP, particularly in uniform operations, including ACT Policing, of course. The issue predominantly has been one of the weight that is carried on the accoutrement belt. Over time an increasing number of accoutrements on that belt have led to some lower back injuries. What we have done across the AFP to mitigate that is introduce a load-bearing vest. We have just started the procurement and the implementation process of load-bearing vests. They are essentially a tactical vest that is worn over the body and in which the accoutrements are more evenly distributed.

MS HUNTER: Have you also particularly looked at that for female officers, because of the difference in bodies and size, and how that impacts? I saw the article on the weekend about how we have moved from the 1970s, carrying the handbag, to the vest. So are you particularly looking at female officers, because we do want them out there?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: We have not had a higher proportion of lower back injuries in women as a result of heavy accoutrement belts; it has been relatively even. However, the new load-bearing vests—and they come in all different visibility standards—we believe will go a long way to reducing that lower back injury manifestation.

MS HUNTER: Okay.

Mr Corbell: Coming back to the question about the increase in the costs for the EBA, it has been pointed out to me that I read from the wrong line. So I am just going to correct the record and read from the correct line. The increase in the territory's budget for ACT Policing as a result of the EBA is \$5.755 million in 2012-13, \$9.562 million in 2013-14, \$13.707 million in 2014-15 and \$16.254 million in 2015-16.

MR RATTENBURY: On which page are those figures?

Mr Corbell: We will come back to you on that.

MR RATTENBURY: Perhaps we can deal with that in the break, if you like. That is fine. Can I just ask a supplementary, back on the tasers and the rollout policy that Mr Hanson was asking about? Mr Quaedvlieg, are you able to confirm that no officer below sergeant has ever used a taser in the ACT?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: That is correct.

MR RATTENBURY: And how do you record who physically has them?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Let me qualify that answer. In general duties no officer below sergeant has activated a taser. However, we do have tasers in our specialist tactical units—

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, of course.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: and it is quite conceivable that in those units someone below the rank of sergeant has used a taser. And your second question was accountability?

MR RATTENBURY: What is the mechanism for knowing who has them or who is carrying them at a certain time? How does that work?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: In general duties the tasers are not personally issued. They are held in the armouries of stations and they are on a sign-in and sign-out register.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. Thank you.

Mr Corbell: The answer to your other question, Mr Rattenbury, is budget paper 4, page 279.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

MS HUNTER: I turn to budget paper 4, page 292. I want to explore commonwealth costs. There was a review in the 2010-11 ACT Policing annual report. It noted that one of the activities provided by ACT Policing is ceremonial support for foreign dignitaries, government visits and major ceremonial events. I also note that there appears to be an arrangement where ACT police conduct commonwealth duties and that these costs are not included in the charges to the ACT for the policing. Could you advise whether all commonwealth-related duties performed by ACT Policing were met by the AFP or the commonwealth and not by the ACT government?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: That is correct. In fact, as an example of that, when we had the visit by the United States President late last year, there was a cost blow-out in relation to that. During the mid-year review process on the budget with AFP National, I sought the top-up for that and received it.

MS HUNTER: Okay. It was quite a busy time around then. We also had the Queen.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: We did. All those costs were factored in and attributed back to AFP National operations.

MR SMYTH: Just on the staffing level, what is the full-time FTE for the AFP for the ACT?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Currently it is 931, which is made up of 831 staff plus 100 enabling. I qualify that by saying that the enabling staff come from areas such as forensic services in AFP National. They provide forensic services to the AFP. Sorry, 950 is the current staff number we have. Our affordable is 831 plus 100; so 931. So we are 19 above affordable.

MS HUNTER: I wanted to follow up on that enabling staff—

MR SMYTH: Sorry, if I could, is the 831, is that uniformed?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: No, we have 689 sworn staff, 261 unsworn currently.

MS HUNTER: With enabling staff, you mentioned forensic services. Is that the hundred or so in that area—

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: It is not the hundred, but it makes up the critical mass of that 100 enabling. There is also ICT support, administrative, HR and that type of thing. But it is predominantly forensics.

MR HANSON: On staffing, you rolled out a program of ACT-specific recruitment. It was not sort of linked necessarily to AFP National. Have you tracked that through to see if there are improved retention rates or whether that has worked as a model?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: The answer is that we are tracking that through, but it is very early in the tenure of those people that we took on. That ACT recruitment campaign was run at the end of 2010. We took three or four courses out of that. They have only just attested in the last 12 months. You will have seen recently another recruitment campaign, which was a joint AFP National-ACT Policing recruitment campaign. We are running currently three courses in the college with another six or seven scheduled for the next 18 months. So we are tracking that data, but it is too early to tell whether those retention rates have actually been realised.

MR HANSON: Those people who were recruited under the ACT-specific campaign, did they sign a different contract that precludes them from going to AFP National or are they exactly the same in terms of their contractual arrangements?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Then are exactly the same—the same terms and conditions.

MS HUNTER: Could we go back to the FTE? As I understand it, there were about 934 staff in 2009-10. It went up to 991 in 2010-11 and now we are at 931, which you just mentioned, in 2011-12. Can we just understand the changes in the staffing and

what you are going to have in the next year?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Let me clarify that the current number at the last count is 950.

I always urge caution in terms of doing comparisons across financial years because it depends on what time of the year you actually take the cut of data. Our numbers fluctuate depending on attrition rates, depending on courses coming on et cetera. Whilst we are currently, as an example, at 950, we have got a course of 25 attesting on 27 July. We have got two further courses coming out on 7 September and December respectively. If you did a count, say, at the end of the calendar year, you would be back up to around the thousand mark. So it depends on what time of the year you actually take the cut.

But in fundamental terms, what we negotiate each year is a certain number of staff. This year it is for 931 in total. We run slightly higher at most times in any event because our experience levels are slightly lower than what we negotiate, which means we can put more police on the street. So my estimation of where we will sit at any given point of time is somewhere between 950 and 1,000 staff comprised of around 750 sworn police and 250 unsworn police. That is the rough figures, but it will fluctuate above or below depending on where you take the cut.

MR HANSON: Just on the numbers, I have heard you make comments previously that you are reasonably satisfied with the numbers that you have got. Have you done any studies or projections in terms of the longer term—how long you can maintain that sort of stability with numbers? Is there going to be a need to increase over the coming years or can you manage with what you have got? Have you done a body of work like that?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Yes, Mr Hanson, we have done that work. About 18 months ago we did some fairly in-depth analysis in terms of what model I had in the future. We had briefings from ACT planning in terms of what was the population demographic increases and where those demographic increases were going to occur. I am still of the view that we have sufficient police, and I think we will have sufficient police for the next number of years.

If you ask me do I think I currently have sufficient police for what we might be facing in 10 years' time, the answer is no. That is not an exact science. We are working through with the directorate of justice and community safety in terms of what a model might look like and calculating how one may project how many police we need in the ACT. That model is not yet fully developed but like any model it will depend on the data that we put into it in terms of the answers you get out of it.

MR HANSON: The research that you did last year or the year before, can we have a copy of that, please?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR HANSON: Why not?

Mr Corbell: It is used to inform government budget decision making.

MR HANSON: Well—

MR SMYTH: So much for the era of openness and accountability.

MR HANSON: Can I just question that, please?

Mr Corbell: Documents that are prepared that will inform the government's budget decision making are invariably, as you would appreciate, cabinet in confidence.

MR HANSON: This seems to be a piece of work that the Chief Police Officer has done. We have the budget that has been put forward. The document was done a couple of years ago. I see no reason why this would not be provided to the committee. If there are pieces that are sensitive in terms of operational requirements, then I am sure that could be done in camera or they could be blacked out, but I can see no argument whereby a body of work that is completed by the Chief Police Officer to inform the number of police required in this jurisdiction would not be provided to this committee in budget estimates.

MR SMYTH: Hear, hear!

MR HANSON: I think that any decision to withhold that would be just inappropriate and would be against this new charter of openness and accountability.

Mr Corbell: Well, that is your view, Mr Hanson.

THE CHAIR: And it will be for the committee to determine what documents we call for.

MR HANSON: I am asking the committee to—

THE CHAIR: The committee can discuss that, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: When will the committee do that—in a private meeting?

THE CHAIR: I do not actually need to tell you that, Mr Hanson.

MR HARGREAVES: In its deliberative meetings, of which you are not going to be a part.

THE CHAIR: We will break for morning tea. I will come back to Mr Coe to have the first question. Thank you.

Meeting adjourned from 10.32 to 10.48 am.

THE CHAIR: We might start again then. Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg, I will go to you with Mr Rattenbury and then Mr Hanson.

MR RATTENBURY: I noticed recent media reports that the AFP are undertaking a

review of police pursuit policy. Can you tell us how that review will be undertaken and what the objectives are?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: The police pursuit policy was last reviewed, I believe, around the mid 2000s. As per good governance, all our governance instruments are reviewed from time to time. This one is currently under review. The review will be a joint review conducted by AFP National and ACT Policing. The review will have a number of representatives from our driver training areas, from our operational areas, from our communications areas on it. It has no objective in particular but it is just ensuring that the policy is still contemporaneous and is cognisant of developments on a national level in relation to police pursuits.

MR RATTENBURY: Do you work with external stakeholders? For example, I am aware that the Australian Institute of Criminology has been undertaking research in this area. Is part of the consideration looking at some of those external bits of work?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: They will not be part of the formal process. However, we do have regular contact and liaison with the AIC and, in fact, tertiary institutions in relation to alternative methods of vehicle pursuits and interceptions.

MR HANSON: When is the review due?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I do not think it has got a date but it cannot be far away. It was commissioned earlier this year. I suspect it will be delivered this calendar year. I do not have an exact date, though.

MR RATTENBURY: What happens? It comes to you and you consider any changes that need to be made?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: There will be a number of recommendations that will be consulted with me but ultimately the decision to sign off on a governance policy of that nature would lie with the commissioner, on my recommendations and advice.

MR HANSON: In terms of the issue of random roadside drug testing, I saw some media reports that that has completed its first year and has been successful and you are now looking at an expansion of that capability. Can you give me a bit of an update of how that has gone and where we go from here?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Yes, I am happy to do that. Our intention for the first year of operation, this financial year, was to achieve 750 random roadside drug tests. We have achieved that target to date, noting there are a few days left in this financial year. We have conducted 809 random roadside drug tests, of which 25 have returned positive tests. A handful of those have gone through the courts. The rest are at various stages of the judicial process.

We have now fully tested and rehearsed the capability. We have now integrated that into our road safety operations team. So our random roadside drug tests will be conducted with random breath tests and other road enforcement operations. Our objective from next financial year is to achieve somewhere in the order of 2,000 tests

per year.

MR HANSON: I have done some quick maths there, and correct me if I am wrong, but that is one in 32 people that you have tested have proved positive. I remember looking at the academic research for this and the experience from other jurisdictions, and it suggested one in 60 would be driving under the influence of drugs. Does that mean that we have got a higher proportion of people driving under the influence of drugs in the ACT or does it mean that your targeting is more effective? What is happening there? Is the sample size too small?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: It is probably a combination of all of the above. I think the data set is relatively small and I would be hesitant to make a ratio judgement based on 809 tests. Once we get 5,000 or 10,000 tests under the belt, my suspicion is we will get back to a ratio of about one in 60. The reason I think for having a ratio of one in around 40—and I know one in 32 is about right, but it is around one in 40—is that we seem to have had a spike in the last 50 or 60 tests. We have had about five or six, which has brought the average up; hence the danger of the small data set. I think whilst the capability is random in nature, the way our team has gone about establishing the capability and being selective in terms of whom they conduct the tests on has probably led to a higher ratio than would be ordinarily in place.

What we have found in comparison to other jurisdictions is that when they stood up their capabilities—and some of these capabilities have been in place now for a number of years; they also had high hit rates for the first 12 months of operation—then it evened out over a period, once the sample set got much larger.

MR HANSON: Obviously an important part of this is the awareness, just like it is with random breath testing, that if you drive under the influence of drugs you stand the risk of being caught. Are you sensing that the awareness is out there in the community that this is a capability that you have or is there a need to provide further education to let people know that they will be caught if they are using drugs when they are driving?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Anecdotally, talking to the team that is actually conducting these tests on the roadside, they are being advised by motorists that they are well aware of the testing capability and they have been very supportive. In fact, it has been quite positive. There have not been too many complaints or grievances about people being held by the roadside for up to 10 minutes whilst these tests come back.

Should there be further campaigning and marketing around road safety? You are asking a police officer whether that ought to be the case. I think any advertising and marketing around drink driving or drug driving can only help but I get a sense that there is a broad understanding and appreciation of what the capability is.

MR HANSON: Minister, you were part of a government in which the Chief Minister previously described this capability as “red neck” and voted against it every single occasion, based on concerns on human rights grounds. Do you still view this legislation as red neck?

Mr Corbell: Those were the comments of the former Chief Minister, not me. The government has, of course, voted to support this legislation and indeed the government had to introduce significant amendments to this legislation to actually make it operational on the ground because the bill proposed by you was unworkable.

MR HANSON: But you still voted against it and opposed those recommendations. I suppose I am just trying to form a view that you are now supportive of this legislation and this capability.

Mr Corbell: Our support is on the record. We voted for it in the Assembly.

MR SMYTH: After seven years of fighting against it.

THE CHAIR: I want to ask a question about the mental health professionals being based in the call centre, which we know has been very successful. I understand there is some money in this budget to expand that. Is that correct?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: No.

THE CHAIR: I am wondering: is it to make the service available across more days or what expansion will actually be serviced?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: No. Our intention on the mental health community policing initiative is to maintain it at its current levels. However, having said that, we recently completed an evaluation of that particular program. I have sent it back for some additional metrics around how it may have liberated some front-line capacity. However, early indications are that it is a very successful program leading to better therapeutic outcomes for mental health consumers. So our intent is to maintain it.

One of the recommendations of the evaluation was to extend it outside the peak hours. Currently they run from Thursday through to Sunday. We are considering extending that across a 24/7 operation, but, until I have those metrics back in terms of where the capability is best placed, I am not in a position to actually make a judgement about whether it should go 24/7 because I want to get the best bang for buck.

Mr Corbell: The funding for this initiative, which has my strong support, is delivered through the existing purchase agreement payments. So there is no supplementation or additional funding as part of the overall purchase agreement and the chief police officer has given priority to the initiative within this budget.

THE CHAIR: When do you think you will make a decision about those?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I am expecting those assessments back in the very near future, but I should indicate that we made a deliberate decision to have stand-up clinicians in our operations centre during peak times, from Thursday through to Sunday, and whilst I think, on the evidence we have to date, there may be some value in extending that capability across a broader range, I am loath to make it 24/7 because it may be not be the best use of those resources. I want to know when, outside

those peak times, is best to place clinicians in our ops centres.

So until I have that back, I am not in a position to make that judgement. But I am a very strong advocate of the capability. It has achieved, I think, some very good health outcomes and certainly I feel, intuitively, it has led to an increase in front-line capacity, releasing police back out on the road. It is those metrics that I am after to give me that hard evidence to make those decisions.

THE CHAIR: I was able to go out to the centre and have a look and see how that works. I got very positive feedback from police. That was great.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Thank you for your visit.

MR SMYTH: When, for instance, the CAT team cannot send an officer for a mental health incident, often the AFP have responded. How many incidents occurred in this calendar year where you have had to send AFP without the support of a mental health worker?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I would have to take that on notice. I do not have that available.

MR SMYTH: If you are going to take it on notice, can we have it for the last couple of years?

THE CHAIR: So it is taken on notice.

MR SMYTH: Are you aware, anecdotally, whether there is a trend that you are attending more of these incidents that, strictly speaking, are not police incidents but you are the response vehicle when nobody else is available?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about the performance measures and the reporting of those. In the purchase agreement for ACT Policing, there are quite detailed performance measures on page 8 to 10 and they are quite interesting. This committee last year recommended that performance measures or accountability in the case of ACT Policing be put into the budget.

Minister, the government did not agree to that and made the argument that because there are requirements for performance measures under the AFP Act and they are in the agreement, there is no need to reflect them in the budget papers but, given the level of community interest, is the government prepared to reconsider that decision? It seems surprising that there are not accountability indicators in the ACT budget.

Mr Corbell: I think the government has made its argument on that issue, and its position is as you have stated.

MR RATTENBURY: So you are not prepared to reconsider it?

Mr Corbell: I think this is an issue around how the budget is presented. Obviously the delivery of policing services is different from the delivery of services by ACT government-owned agencies. So the reporting and the accountability and the measurement of those services are in a different context. We are not delivering policing services in the same way as, for example, we deliver fire and rescue services or ambulance services. Therefore, the most appropriate way of reporting performance is through the annual report. The annual report is subject to detailed scrutiny by an Assembly committee, it is placed on the public record and it goes through the same process as we are going through now, albeit at a different time of the year.

MR SMYTH: But you have got a strategic objective about community safety and reducing the level of crime. Why would you not have an accountability indicator?

Mr Corbell: Because that is a whole-of-government objective; that is not just a function of policing. It is a function of justice services; it is a function of corrective services; it is a function of a range of agencies within the government as a whole.

MR RATTENBURY: I would like to ask a specific question about police patrolling of bike paths. I have had a constituent asking about this. I want to ask first of all whether there is any less of an impediment to police using motorbikes to patrol bike paths. Is that something that is allowed, not allowed, viable?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: It is a very good question. I think it is a question more about whether that is an effective use of police motorcycles and traffic branch operations. I think that is more the question. We do do patrols of bike paths—foot, vehicle, and bicycle patrols. But my sense of it is that I would not put a police officer on a motorcycle on a bike path.

MR RATTENBURY: I should not have asked the silly question first. How do you go about patrolling bike paths and are you seeing particular crime hot spots?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: No, we are not seeing particular crime hot spots. Bike paths are just like any other public—

Mr Corbell: Inappropriate lycra or—

MR RATTENBURY: We should not comment on Mr Hanson's cycling habits.

MR COE: That would be a deterrent.

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: No, bike paths are like any other public amenity in the ACT. We monitor that through our intelligence function. If there are hot spots, we will divert resources there appropriately. We can and will increase patrols, and have increased patrols on foot or bicycle, if there are particular trouble spots. But in general terms, bike paths are no more hot spots than any other public amenity in the ACT.

Mr Corbell: Police also have trail bike capacity; so we do from time to time—certainly, my office receives complaints about people at some locations riding

unregistered trail bikes on areas of open space and so on. Police will usually—certainly, on the advice that I have received from police, police will use trail bikes from time to time to go off-road and try to detect and apprehend people who are doing that. Obviously, it is very difficult because of the immediacy of the offence and whether or not police are in a position to respond in that time frame, but they do have that capability which is deployed from time to time as well.

MR COE: A supplementary on this, if that is okay. With regard to trail bikes and hooning, what options are available to the police to try and clamp down on this? I think it can be an issue which can destroy the serenity of some neighbourhoods. Are there any strategies in place that specifically target this and are they successful?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Traffic enforcement is one of the mainstays of our business. Our road enforcement is obviously done in conjunction and in partnership with Road User Services. We have a very strong focus on driving behaviours. Last financial year we wrote 28,000 tickets in total. This year we are on target for about 30,000 tickets. That is a 25 per cent increase from 2009-10.

In that category, for speeding alone we wrote some 6,618 tickets. We have a RAPID team out there, which is the automotive numberplate recognition system. For this financial year we currently have written, I think, 852 tickets, 1,200 of which are for unregistered vehicles and motorcycles, 500 of which are uninsured, and about 200 unlicensed.

I have already given the figures on the random roadside drug testing, and on random breath testing this year we are edging up to 80,000 tests for something in the order of 1,200 positive hits. When you look at that effort in combination and you look at the outcomes from that, last year we had the least fatalities in half a century—50 years. We had only had six fatalities last year. In fact, spanning across a period of 13 months, across two financial years, we went without any fatalities at all.

Our collisions with injuries this year are down by 10 per cent. Even on drink driving, the ratio of hits has gone from 1 in 60 to 1 in 66, which does not sound like a great deal but when you take those in combination, it shows that our road safety efforts are actually starting to take some traction and effect. For next year, one of our areas of focus for consolidating on those good road results is looking at antisocial driving behaviours. These are the ones you are referring to in terms of how they affect the quality of life of people's neighbourhoods.

MR COE: What is the nature of those strategies? How do you target that sort of behaviour?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: It will be, again, intelligence led. Obviously, we do receive a lot of information and intelligence from constituents around particular areas of travel or particular groups of people. We will target those areas. We will have particular strategies from month to month in terms of targeting particular behaviours, whether for speeding, mobile phones or antisocial driving behaviours. We will step up patrols and we will supplement our traffic units with general duty patrols. So there are number of practical operational things that we can do to target these sorts of behaviours.

MR COE: And still on antisocial behaviour but of a different sort, the city centre on Friday and Saturday nights, how is the beefed-up presence affecting safety and overall crime statistics?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: I have to report that from a police perspective it is very positive. Obviously, the liquor reforms involved many more elements than just policing. However, with our dedicated alcohol crime targeting team, we are doing approximately 10 to 12 visits per week of licensed premises. Industry has been very collaborative, very supportive. When you look at the statistics again, alcohol-related arrests for the first 12 months of operation of the alcohol crime targeting team are down by 17.2 per cent and alcohol-related assaults are down 3.4 per cent.

If you look at it on pure statistics alone, it is a success story. But my pleasure comes from the amount of cooperation and collaboration that we are getting from not just industry but also from partners in terms of government agencies, directorates and private industry fora. We are all coming together and we will come up with solutions to alcohol-related crime problems.

MR COE: In terms of the relationship with the licensees, do you find that when you need to request CCTV footage you have to do so by warrants or by simply asking and they are pretty willing usually?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: It is very rare that we actually have to use compelling powers to obtain evidence such as CCTV footage. We have established very good relationships with our major licensees across not just the Civic precinct but also the broader ACT. Those licensees are either represented or are personally represented on a number of committees, liquor task force and liquor advisory boards, and we have got an unprecedented level of cooperation from industry.

MR COE: That is good to hear.

Mr Corbell: Just in relation to alcohol-related reforms, the government is building on the issues around drink-driving. We anticipate later this year to release an exposure draft to establish requirements for alcohol interlock systems on motor vehicles of high risk ACT drink-driver offenders—particular repeat offenders—and establish a legal requirement for those drivers to have an alcohol interlock installed on their vehicle so that they will not be able to drive their vehicle if they are over the limit.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, did you have a substantive question?

MR SMYTH: I will defer to Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thank you. On page 260 of budget paper 4, under the area of priorities for 2012-13, the last two points relate to continuing to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice agreement and continuing to provide restorative justice, including the support of an Indigenous guidance partner and extended ACT Policing pilot for the referral of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Could you give me a bit of a heads-up on how you are progressing with those two priorities and what your plans are to make them priorities?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Yes, thank you, Mr Hanson. We have a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison team consisting of six people. We run a number of programs with the ATSI community, particularly targeting youth, juveniles. But, more importantly, what we have recently agreed on the back of a trial for restorative justice—we ran a trial earlier this year in terms of referring all eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander juveniles to a restorative justice program. We have now agreed to extend that for another 12 months.

Of our drug diversions in the ACT, 50 per cent of those are actually in relation to juveniles and of our alcohol diversions in the ACT, we have diverted 152 juveniles in this financial year alone. We run a range of programs for the PCYC, which we sponsor and subsidise. The PCYC currently has 900 youths at risk, many of which are ATSI or of ATSI background. But it is still unfortunate that when you look at arrests in the ACT, we lodged 389 juveniles in custody this financial year to date, 29 per cent of those are juvenile ATSI with an ATSI background.

MS HUNTER: I wanted to follow up on that diversionary stuff, particularly around the after-hours bail service. Are all police officers aware about that service? Is it being used to divert those who may have breached bail conditions, minor breaches? Are they being sort of sent that way rather than put into Bimberi overnight?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Yes, the centrepiece of our bail decisions at a police level is in the watch-house by our sergeants, who are acutely aware of these options. In a broad sense, are police aware of those options? Yes, but I can say quite clearly that the decision around police bail sits squarely with the watch-house sergeant, and they are acutely aware and receive training on a regular basis in relation to the options that are be available to them.

THE CHAIR: Did you want anything further on that, Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Just a follow-up on bail: I speak to police officers, as I said, out and about—and not on duty, I might add. There is, I suppose, a frustration when they see bail. They do a lot of hard work to arrest an individual, go through the process and there seems to be a revolving door of bail. That is a frustration. Have you had that frustration raised to you by your members?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Not directly, no. Look, bail matters are matters for the courts. We obviously have an initial involvement with bail when people are lodged at the watch-house. We do not question the judiciary in terms of their bail decisions. What we do have, though, is a fairly assertive bail compliance enforcement program. That is part of our property crime reduction strategy in terms of targeting high risk recidivist offenders. We work with the bail conditions that are set by the courts and we deal with what happens out on the street.

MR HANSON: But your officers through the prosecution process will obviously argue for an individual not to get bail. In a lot of cases, that does not come to fruition and then you will see people—I know that there have been a number of high profile cases lately where people on bail have then committed further offences. That does not cause a level of concern to your members?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Look, this is a perennial issue for police. Police by default will always seek stricter bail conditions because of concerns about offenders fleeing, victims being revictimised, witnesses being intimidated or evidence being tampered with et cetera. That is our default position philosophically. But ultimately we are part of the justice system. We accept that these decisions are made by the courts.

Mr Corbell: Considerations around bail have to balance two competing elements. One, obviously, is community protection; the other is the presumption of innocence. The need is to balance those two competing considerations. So an independent judicial officer is best placed to make that assessment.

MS HUNTER: I have a supplementary around the numbers of youth liaison officers. How many youth liaison officers have we got?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Six.

MS HUNTER: Six, and they are different to the Aboriginal team?

Assistant Commissioner Quaedvlieg: That is right.

MS HUNTER: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team?

Commissioner Quaedvlieg: Separate teams.

THE CHAIR: Any further questions? That seems to be the extent of questions. Thank you, Assistant Commissioner, and Ms Kendrick.

We will now move on to output class 3, courts and tribunals. Thank you, Ms Purvis and Ms Pope, for joining us. I am sure you are familiar with the privilege statement which is on the blue card in front of you. Can you both indicate that you have read that and are aware of the implications of it?

My first question relates to budget paper 4, page 587. I note there that the full-time equivalent staff numbers in JACS increases from 1,711 in 2011-12 to 1,728 in 2012-13. However, I note that employee expenses in courts and tribunals reduce by 3.5 per cent in 2012-13. I wonder whether you can give us some background on whether there are staff reductions in that 3.5 or do other efficiencies make up that 3.5 per cent in courts and tribunal.

Ms Leigh: Ms Bresnan, would you mind just clarifying which page you are on?

THE CHAIR: I have not got a specific reference for 3.5, but on budget paper 4 at page 587 the FTEs are listed there.

Ms Leigh: That is the FTE—

THE CHAIR: Yes, the numbers in JACS are going up, but we note that employee expenses in courts and tribunal are reducing by 3.5 per cent. I am just trying to get an

indication of what that 3.5 will account for in courts and tribunal.

Ms Leigh: Is that the decrease in total expenses, Ms Bresnan?

THE CHAIR: Yes, for courts and tribunal employee expenses are reducing by 3.5 per cent. That was by our calculations. I am happy to be corrected. If that is the case, I just want to get an indication of what will make up that 3.5 per cent and if there would be any staff reductions in that.

Ms Crowhurst: Ms Bresnan, you are looking at the difference between the 2012-13 budget and the 2011-12 estimated outcome; is that correct?

THE CHAIR: As I said, as per our calculations the employee expenses in courts and tribunal appear to be reducing by about 3.5 per cent. As I said, I am happy to be corrected on that, but if that is the case, what makes up that 3.5 per cent?

Ms Crowhurst: The main reasons for the reduction are one-off expenses in 2011-12. There was a non-cash long service leave provision adjustment this financial year of about \$300,000. There is the Supreme Court blitz this financial year of \$243,000. That is partially offset with the new initiatives in next year's budget. There is a new initiative of \$243,000. Then there are savings and other net adjustments from one year to the next of about \$300,000.

THE CHAIR: So there are no staffing implications in that?

Ms Crowhurst: There are savings overall, but not necessarily specific staffing as such at this stage.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: I have a couple, just to make sure my understanding is right. BP4, page 261, talks about the percentage change in the number of cases and the backlog of civil cases in the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court. In 2011-12, the target was minus 4.8. Does that mean that your target was to reduce the backlog by 4.8 per cent in the target for 2011-12 for the Supreme Court?

Ms Leigh: Yes.

MR HARGREAVES: I am trying to understand what the target actually is.

Ms Leigh: The greater than 24 months?

MR HARGREAVES: Yes.

Ms Leigh: That is correct.

MR HARGREAVES: How on earth did you do it by 32 per cent? That is a rather large jump.

Ms Leigh: The government has put in place a number of measures to improve

efficiency in the Supreme Court. I think what you are seeing is that that is starting to flow through. I think you will see it flow through even further as we go forward. You would be aware that there have been a wide range of legislative measures that the government has put in place changing the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Magistrates Court. Significant work has been done on how listing is managed in the Supreme Court to ensure that more cases can be heard because we are not losing time to matters being listed that do not actually run. I think the benefits of that will increase.

So far you have the significant benefits that have been achieved in the blitz. You have seen in the blitz exactly what I have just mentioned—that is, more than half of the cases that are listed do not actually run. That is how we have managed to address so many cases in such a short period of time—by simply recognising that and overlisting. Going forward, the court is changing the fundamentals of how it manages its court listing system so we should have an ongoing improvement in the handling of cases by the Supreme Court.

The blitz was a short-term measure to deal with some of the backlog to enable the court to move to a new docket system where judges will be better able to actively manage cases and, when parties bring matters to court, they will be fully prepared and able to proceed at that point rather than having matters listed and then having them fall through when, on later examination, they decide that in fact they are willing to settle that matter or, in a criminal matter, to plead guilty or to plead to a lesser charge. All of those things should be brought forward and the court's valuable time will not be allocated to matters that are not, in fact, going to run.

Mr Corbell: So in terms of the numbers, Mr Hargreaves, the first six-week period of the blitz—it is occurring in two six-week periods—saw 93 civil matters listed. Forty-five were settled, 13 were completed with the decisions reserved, six of which have been subsequently delivered by the court, five were vacated, two were adjourned, one was sent to referee and 27 were not reached. So it was a very good outcome on civil.

What it highlights is that when parties know they have got a hearing date that they have to be ready to go, for invariably about half of the matters settle out of court without proceeding to court. So pulling forward that decision making by the parties, by saying, “Your matter is going to run on X day; you need to be ready,” really focuses the minds of the parties on getting things sorted and deciding whether or not they can resolve their dispute out of court.

On the criminal side, in the first six-week period there were 40 criminal matters listed. Over half—21—were resolved with a plea of guilty, six were discontinued by the DPP, four were vacated, only nine were heard—so the remaining nine were heard—and decisions reserved, of which three have now been delivered. Again, what this highlights equally on the criminal side is a more effective listing process that makes it clear to the parties that a matter is going to run and it is going to run soon. It focuses people's minds on whether or not—on the criminal side—they want to plead guilty or accept a lesser charge or whatever it might be or, on the prosecution side, the prosecution deciding that they are not going to proceed or they are only going to charge for a lesser offence where there is going to be a plea of guilty and so on.

This is a really useful precursor to an ongoing level of case management in the courts

that we have not seen previously which should ensure that parties are able to reach decisions about whether or not the matter actually needs to be heard in court and the grounds on which it needs to be heard sooner. That is a good thing in terms of the efficient use of the court's time. The second six-week period of the blitz actually commences today.

MR HARGREAVES: That is very dramatic, in my view. Correct me if I am wrong, but what I am hearing you saying is there has been a paradigm shift in the way things are happening. This is a recurrent initiative. Quite apart from the blitz knocking off the backlog, the change in the way in which business is done will have that recurrent benefit going forward. Am I right in understanding that?

Mr Corbell: That is our expectation, yes. Obviously, it will not be at a pace that the blitz imposes on the profession and other parts of the justice system—the DPP, Legal Aid and so on. That pace is very strenuous and cannot be sustained indefinitely. But what can be sustained is an ongoing level of proactive case management that we have not seen previously. The implementation of the docket system enables that to occur with the judge that the case is allocated to managing the case from start to finish and being quite clear about when matters are going to be heard, when certain dates need to be met and so on, so that there is none of this laying over of matters to a future date and then not being ready to go and so it is laid over again for another period of time. That sort of practice needs to change in our courts. The court's time is valuable. We should be utilising the court's time as efficiently and as productively as possible, and the docket system is designed to provide for that.

MR HARGREAVES: Just on these numbers, I can see a general reduction clearly in the backlog and quite significant ones heading into six-week blitzes, but I am trying to get an idea as to the level. Ultimately, there will be, I presume, a level of backlog that is just going to be with you forever, but what you are getting rid of is the—how do I put it?—unreasonable amount of backlog. What I was interested in knowing is this: in the time line for a case, what actual criteria give it the tag of a backlog? When does it become one?

Ms Leigh: For statistical purposes, normally backlogs are measured for matters that are over two years and matters that are over one year. They are the two. That is in the Supreme Court. In the Magistrates Court it is usually for matters that are over six months and over 12 months.

MR HARGREAVES: Let us take the 12-month period of time. I would assume that the complexity of the matter before the court might contribute quite significantly to whether it goes over 12 months or not. Is that the sort of case where you are going to get that backlog? There is nothing you can do about that and we are trying to come up with what is an acceptable level?

Ms Leigh: Yes, Mr Hargreaves. There is a wide range of complexity in cases. Clearly, in the Supreme Court they are dealing with the most complex matters. Of course, they require longer to finalise. That is partly reflected in, as I said, the difference between the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court time frames. As you say, within the work that goes to the Supreme Court there will be a range of complexity and that will certainly contribute to the length of time that any particular matter takes.

MR HARGREAVES: My final question is: have you got any sort of a handle on what you would define to be an acceptable percentage as a backlog?

Ms Leigh: It is a small jurisdiction and, therefore, the data is always lumpy. I think that the court is constantly striving to deliver its matters in a more timely way. I think that we will keep building on those significant improvements and I think you will see further significant improvements in the coming years.

MR HARGREAVES: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, you had a question?

MRS DUNNE: Just a follow-up on this. Referring to the strategic objectives and indicators on page 261 for accessible justice, the timely completion of civil cases in the Supreme Court is 550 days, and that is constant. If we are supposedly making inroads with the backlog and the blitz and a docket system, why would we not be seeing a reduction in that figure over time?

Mr Corbell: I would refer you to note No 1, Mrs Dunne, which provides some explanation of the issue that you raise, in particular, the note which says:

With the change to jurisdiction where civil matters less than \$250,000 are now heard in the Magistrates Court, it is likely over time that the civil workload of the Supreme Court will comprise a higher proportion of more complex matters that will take longer to resolve.

MRS DUNNE: So for all the changes we are not going to see a change in the time taken to complete matters?

Mr Corbell: Again, I refer you to the note: “The average number of days is 614 as at 30 April 2012.”

MRS DUNNE: The target was 550. That note says that you have not met your target and that you are hoping to meet the target by the end of the financial year.

Mr Corbell: I am advised that we anticipate meeting our target because of the blitz.

MRS DUNNE: You anticipate meeting your target because of the blitz?

Mr Corbell: Yes. That is the estimated outcome, as you can see there, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I can see that. Your target and your estimated outcome are the same. The target for next year, despite the blitz, despite the docket—the new approach, the docket system et cetera—is still the same. So we are not going to see any improvement?

Mr Corbell: No, we have seen an improvement. We have seen an improvement of, on average, 64 days.

MRS DUNNE: But your target has not changed.

Mr Corbell: The target is the estimated reasonable assessment of the time taken, but it is worth stating it is an improvement—

MRS DUNNE: You were doing worse than the target—

Mr Corbell: on performance to date by, on average, 64 days.

MRS DUNNE: But you set a target that you were not meeting until recently. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Corbell: We have set a target that we anticipate meeting, as is indicated there in the estimated outcome.

MRS DUNNE: So why did you find it necessary to put in a note that said, “Actually, we’re not meeting this target, or we haven’t until recently been meeting the target”?

Mr Corbell: That is not what the note says.

MRS DUNNE: It does say that, effectively. It is saying that until 30 April the average number of days was 614, so you were 64 days out on your target. Even though on 1 April you are 64 days out on your target, you are telling the committee that you are going to come in on target?

Mr Corbell: What is your question, Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: I am asking you: even though you are admitting that you were out by 64 days on your target as at 1 April, by 30 June you are going to be in on target?

Mr Corbell: I am sorry, what is your question?

MRS DUNNE: Is it the case that, even though you have said that on 1 April you were 64 days out, you will come in on target on 30 June? That is your commitment to the committee.

Mr Corbell: Yes; it is reflected in the budget papers.

MRS DUNNE: And you are going to meet that target?

Mr Corbell: That is the estimated outcome.

MRS DUNNE: And your target for next year is unchanged, despite the blitz, the new docket system and the changes to jurisdiction?

Mr Corbell: It is important to stress that the blitz is a one-off measure designed to deal with a backlog—

MRS DUNNE: Is there a blitz in this coming financial year as well?

Mr Corbell: If I can answer your question, the blitz is only for part of this financial year. It is not an ongoing measure. The blitz started today and runs for a six-week period, but then that is it. The blitz is designed to remove the backlog of long-wait cases, bring them forward. The issue of ongoing performance of the court is reflected in those strategic indicators we are referring to on page 261.

MS HUNTER: I want to follow up on that. As you mentioned, the blitz will start today and go for six weeks; there are a couple of weeks in that next financial year. And then the money for that work disappears. How are you going to ensure in the coming years that the backlog does not build up again?

Mr Corbell: First of all, the establishment of the docket system, Ms Hunter. The establishment of the docket system is an ongoing change to the work practice of the court that will see the court more actively manage its case load than it has to date. The government will support the court in the operation of that new system. Funding is ongoing in this financial year to provide additional capacity in the registry to assist the court in the proactive management of the docket system—and also, if I recall correctly, some IT support.

So the government is providing ongoing resources to the court to allow it to implement the docket system process. The docket system is about bringing about a paradigm change in the way the court does its work. It is important to stress that this is not just a case of inputs in in terms of money and inputs out in terms of performance. I know some would like to characterise it that way. There are, as the paper prepared by Ms Leigh and Justice Penfold demonstrates, a very broad range of measures in work practice in case management, which are not necessarily about extra dollars but about different ways of managing your workload, that can allow a court to hear more matters and therefore hear matters in a more timely fashion. That is the change that we are trying to implement, in partnership with the courts and the broader profession.

The blitz is designed to allow the court to start off the docket system without a big backlog of cases sitting on its books. We are clearing out that backlog and then allowing the court to start with a pretty clean slate on its ongoing new case management system, the docket system. Combined, they will have a considerable impact, we are hopeful, in terms of the performance of the court in terms of timeliness.

That is what we are doing. It is not just about throwing more resources at the court; it is actually about changing the way the court manages its workload and how parties to a matter in the court prepare, get themselves organised and focus on the decisions that need to be taken before a matter is heard. As the blitz has indicated, having clear dates about when a matter is going to be heard, and given the relatively impending nature of those dates, certainly focuses the minds of parties on whether they wish to proceed to hearing or not.

MS HUNTER: I want to go to budget paper 4, page 275, the accountability areas for this output class. If you go down to d and e, the estimated outcome in 2011-12 for d is 230 per cent and for indicator e is 150 per cent. Given these results, how are we going to meet that target for 2012-13 on both indicators, which is 115 per cent?

Mr Corbell: Again, Ms Hunter, I refer you to our previous discussion on changing to case management practice. What we are dealing with is, through the blitz, a backlog in cases. We are clearing that. But obviously those cases have already, in a number of instances, been on the books of the Supreme Court for a considerable period of time. We are bringing those forward and clearing them off the books. Then we are putting in place a docket management system that will allow the court to deal with matters in a more timely fashion.

Obviously this will come down to how individual judicial officers operate their docket system. We will have to watch closely how the court actually, in practice, does undertake its case management. This is not a matter which the government has control over. The courts are ultimately responsible for their own operations in this respect, and we will have to watch closely. Certainly, I have had strong indications from the court of their commitment to more proactive case management and more effective use of the court's time. We look forward to the results of that work.

MR SMYTH: The issue of probate filing fees—what is the budget revenue for 2012-13 from for the new tax?

Mr Corbell: We do not have a breakdown of that.

MR SMYTH: You do not at all or you just have not got it with you?

Mr Corbell: We do not have one.

MR SMYTH: Why do we not know how much it will generate?

Mr Corbell: I am advised that it is a very small component of matters and cannot be anticipated.

Ms Purvis: The issue with probate is, of course, that we do not know how many matters are going to come to our court and we do not know the level of the value of the estates, so it is very difficult to put a price on it.

MR SMYTH: So we do not have any historical data?

Ms Purvis: We have data, certainly, on how many matters are coming to us in probate.

MR SMYTH: How many, for instance, in this current year? How many probate cases?

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

MR SMYTH: Could we have the data on the number of probate cases for each of the last three years?

MRS DUNNE: And also could you give the committee an indication of the time it takes to clear a probate matter?

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice.

MRS DUNNE: By that, I mean how long a probate matter is listed for—an hour, a day, three days, whatever.

THE CHAIR: So both of those are taken on notice.

Mr Corbell: We will take the question on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Just to follow up on the probate issue, these are new taxes this year.

Mr Corbell: It is not a tax; it is a fee.

MRS DUNNE: Okay; it is a new fee this year, if you must be so picky. What consideration was given and what consultation was undertaken before you set these fees at this rate, and was consideration given to the capacity of estates to have cash to meet the probate fees?

Mr Corbell: Probate fees will be charged on the basis of the value of an estate rather than a flat fee. This will benefit people who are administering smaller estates. It will also discourage a deceased estate within the ACT with ACT and New South Wales property from applying for probate in the ACT due to the cheaper fee, when it may not be the most appropriate jurisdiction. Previously the fee for probate was \$750 for all applications. From 1 July applicants with estates valued at less than \$50,000 will not pay a fee for probate. From \$50,000 upwards, the fee will scale with the value of the estate, ranging from \$735 to \$1,866.

MRS DUNNE: So there was previously a \$750 flat fee?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: For lodging of probate?

Mr Corbell: So the fee structure is actually more progressive now than it was.

MR COE: In the overall budget of the directorate, I was wondering why the total cost is reducing by 7.6 per cent or \$2.8 million in 2012-13.

Mr Corbell: Could you please speak up and ask that question again, Mr Coe; I did not quite hear it.

MR COE: Sure. Why has the total cost of the directorate budget been reduced by 7.6 per cent, or \$2.8 million, from the estimated outcome of 2011-12 to the budget for 2012-13?

Mr Corbell: I think this question was asked in the hearings the other day when we dealt with the substantive output.

Ms Crowhurst: May I ask which budget paper you are referring to.

MRS DUNNE: It is 269, BP4. There is a reduction in government payments for

outputs, but there is a more substantial reduction in the total cost for the item.

Mr Corbell: This is output class 3, courts and tribunal? Is that what you are referring to?

MRS DUNNE: Courts and tribunal, yes.

Mr Corbell: Mr Coe said he was referring to the directorate as a whole.

MRS DUNNE: No, I do not think so.

MR COE: Sorry; I did, but that was not my intention. I apologise.

THE CHAIR: Is this in relation to my original question about the 3.5? I think it might be.

MRS DUNNE: No. It is a \$2.8 million reduction in the total cost of the courts and tribunal output.

MR COE: It is 3.1.

MRS DUNNE: And there is a smaller, half-million dollar, reduction in government payments for outputs.

Ms Crowhurst: The reduction in government payments for output is about \$700,000, shown on 269. That primarily relates to the cessation of one-off funding in 2011-12, including the blitz on the Supreme Court waiting time. That was 338. There was increased funding for the revised wages; that was included in the second appropriation.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, increased funding for what wages?

Ms Crowhurst: The revised wages in the second appropriation, the difference between the original budget for 2011-12 and 2012-13. And—I am just making sure that my note is right—the one-off funding in 2011-12 for the improved courts and tribunal case management system, \$560,000. These are partially offset by the savings measures that are introduced in 2012-13 as well, \$400,000—

MR COE: It sounds like a bit of a mixed bag in terms of contributing factors.

Ms Crowhurst: Yes.

MR COE: Are you able to take that on notice?

Ms Crowhurst: Yes, that is fine.

MR COE: That would be a much better way of—

Ms Crowhurst: There are a number of adjustments that make up the total.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice.

MRS DUNNE: That would also include the total costs? Presumably there are fees. There seem to be reductions in fees, or what would be—

Ms Crowhurst: In the total costs?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Ms Crowhurst: The main one is an assumption of transfer of the old forensic medical centre land. That is valued at \$2 million. This financial year that will transfer to TAMS. So that is a one-off expense recognised in 2011-12 that will not be recognised in 2012-13. That is one of the big movements there. And then there are a range of other measures that relate to government funding as well, which I can put in with the question on notice.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice.

MR RATTENBURY: There is money in this budget to set up the ACT sentencing database, which I think is a positive initiative. The description on page 185 of budget paper 3 indicates that the database will be used in the courts by lawyers and judges on a case-by-case basis but also to support evidence-based policy. I want to ask: who will have access to the database? It seems from the budget papers that it is the profession only. But will there be broader usage for education of the community and access, for example, by the Assembly in the context of law reform in the Assembly?

Mr Corbell: The database primarily, first and foremost, will support the work of judicial officers themselves in making assessments about sentencing decisions and drawing down on relevant precedent in past cases. The database will also be available for use by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate to access data to assist in policy development.

MR RATTENBURY: And will the database be filled with historical data? It makes reference here to the fact that it will summarise historical sentencing data. Will that be for both the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court?

Ms Playford: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Will it be exclusively ACT data or does it bring in information from other jurisdictions for the benefit of the judiciary?

Ms Leigh: The judiciary already have access to the New South Wales data. That was an initiative last year to gain access for them to the New South Wales Judicial Commission database for New South Wales, because, as you would be aware, there are so many provisions that are the same or similar. They were given access to that last year. And now this will provide the specific ACT data.

MR RATTENBURY: And my understanding is that the New South Wales database does not allow for disaggregation by date, so it is hard to pull trend data out of the database. Am I correct in that understanding and, if so, will the ACT one have that capability?

Ms Leigh: I would need to take that on notice. The New South Wales one is a very impressive database. I have had it demonstrated to me, and you are able to pull out by not only the offence type but all of the incidents of the offence and of the offender. It is a very complex database, but the precise question you have asked I would need to take on notice.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice.

MRS DUNNE: I have got some questions that flow out of this into the other ICT issues.

THE CHAIR: Did you have any further questions?

MR RATTENBURY: Perhaps we can flow with that for the time being.

MRS DUNNE: I want to ask generally about the ICT. There has been money in a couple of budgets for upgrading various parts of the ICT. There was money, I think last year, for the DPP, and I am wondering, when these systems are being built, is thought given to the interconnectivity of them and how much interconnectivity is there between the case management system database, the sentencing database and the database that, for instance, the DPP's office runs?

MS HUNTER: And I would like to add to that the security for all of this is to ensure that inappropriate access does not occur.

Mr Corbell: I will ask Ms Purvis to answer your question.

Ms Purvis: Certainly at the present time the ICT system that the courts and tribunal have, locally known as MAX, has interconnectivity between a variety of people—DPP, police. And the security that is around that is very tight. We lock it down so that they can only see the parts that they need to see, and we have a whole process around them agreeing to the conditions that we put on that access.

With the new system, we are looking at maintaining those links and enhancing those links so that we can continue to take data from the police when they arrest somebody, straight through to the courts so that we do not have to double-entry things, and provide that back to variety of parties, including corrections for sentencing matters.

MRS DUNNE: Could you give the committee some idea of the efficiencies that the new system will generate?

Ms Purvis: Certainly. There are a variety of areas that we are expecting efficiencies in. Perhaps I will explain them in terms of the different people that will benefit from the system. For the judiciary, it is expected there will be greater visibility and tracking of cases, more readily accessible information and improved in-court facilities. For the ACT community, it is expected there will be greater access to e-services, minimising visits to court, saving time and resources. This will also include the ability to pay court fees and fines online. For the ACT legal community, the same benefits apply, including increasing confidence in the timely progress of cases.

For our staff, it is expected that there may be savings in work effort due to e-filing, e-searching and less effort in preparing statistical reports. For the other criminal justice agencies, there will be less duplication of administrative effort, access to timely information and more streamlined and efficient business processes. And the final one, for the people who work with me in the executive group, it is providing us with management information.

MRS DUNNE: And have you been able to quantify the administrative savings this will amount to?

Ms Purvis: We have not as yet. The program for the new case management system, as outlined in the budget, is around four years. As we go along, we will determine what effect that has on our business and we will work towards making the businesses as efficient and as effective as we can.

MS HUNTER: Why is it taking three to four years?

Ms Purvis: The time frame for the progress of that project includes making sure that we are moving from one system to the other without disruption and making sure that we carry across information in an effective manner so that there is a continuity of service. The time line that we have set out includes getting the system in place, and that takes us to the end of 2012, installing hardware and infrastructure, configuration, data migration and testing. That all happens in 2013. Training and deployment will be at the same time, and there is a large training component for the staff. And then we are going to do configuration and deployment, as we call them, releases across the business.

There is no order to this yet, because it depends on how we go with those first few steps, but we may start, for example, with ACAT and deploy it into ACAT to start with and then move to the civil area, the Magistrates Court perhaps, then into the criminal area and the Supreme Court. But we have certainly a deployment timetable so that we are sending it out to the organisation in a prepared and proper way.

MRS DUNNE: Just to follow up, if I could, one of your descriptions there does not seem to fit the capital expenditure. We have still got substantial capital expenditure in 2014-15. Your description there is that there is a lot of work on the formulation of the system in the next couple of years and then the rollout. I am not quite sure how that marries with the capital outlays.

Ms Purvis: Certainly in the timetable that I have got, the two major deployments and releases are in 2014-2015, the larger areas of the business.

MRS DUNNE: So the money will be spent then. When you say “deployment” it is not just turning it on for particular users at that stage, it is actually rolling out the—

Ms Purvis: Rolling it out.

MRS DUNNE: And what are we talking about? Is it software, is it hardware, is it a combination of both?

Ms Purvis: There is a combination of both, mostly software, but certainly there will need to be communication and coordination with InTACT in terms of networking and security.

MRS DUNNE: And why is there no depreciation until the third year?

Ms Purvis: My understanding is depreciation usually starts when it is turned on and being used. And we will not be doing that until—

MRS DUNNE: You will not be turning it on until 2014-15?

Ms Purvis: We certainly will not be depreciating it until then, yes.

MRS DUNNE: If somebody could take on notice why there is no depreciation in the first two years, I would be interested in that.

Ms Leigh: Perhaps Ms Crowhurst could answer now, if you would like.

Ms Crowhurst: As Ms Purvis said, the depreciation commences when the asset is functional. There is an estimate, based on the time frame of rolling out the work, that depreciation will commence in 2014-15, with the first full-year impact in 2015-16.

MS HUNTER: Is the software off the shelf? Has it been tested and used in other jurisdictions, for instance, or have we developed our own?

Ms Leigh: We are still working through exactly what will be the best option for the ACT. We have looked across the Australian jurisdictions at the different systems that they have, the functionality of those systems and what possibilities there are for us to enter into an arrangement in relation to those systems. And we have done quite a lot of detailed work, but no final decision has yet been taken on that.

MS HUNTER: Who is involved in working on this issue? Who are the external consultants or experts you have got involved and what is the time frame?

Ms Leigh: Until now, you mean? Is that right?

MS HUNTER: Yes.

Ms Leigh: We engaged Tony Lansdell to assist us. He is an expert in court case management ICT systems, and he has been assisting us to define the capability that we require and to assess the options for us in terms of achieving that.

MS HUNTER: What is your time frame for working through this and coming to the decision point? That is obviously going to impact on when all this starts rolling out.

Ms Leigh: We have already done a considerable amount of work. Money was allocated in last year's budget, and that is the basis on which this budget initiative has now been provided. We did a considerable amount of detailed work over the last year and we need to finalise that now that we have the funding provided. We are now in a

position to finalise that work.

MS HUNTER: When are you hoping to finalise that work?

Ms Leigh: I do not think I can give a precise answer but, as I said, we have been doing a lot of detailed work over the last year and now that we have the money allocated for the year ahead—we obviously could not do anything to lock in government before the government had decided whether to provide that funding—now that that funding is provided, we will move to finalise that work. I think it is in a reasonably short-term period that we will be making that decision.

MRS DUNNE: I wondered how you came up with the figure of just over \$8 million if you did not know what it was that you were going to do.

Ms Leigh: That is based on the work that has been done over the last year. As I say, it has been quite detailed work defining the capability that we require and what the options are for acquiring such a capability.

MRS DUNNE: Do you have a short list or do you have a finalised decision which you were actually waiting for an appropriation to tick off on?

Ms Leigh: There is no finalised decision but we certainly have got a lot of detailed information, and from that we can tell that some approach is going to be more viable for the ACT. We are a small jurisdiction. The approach that larger jurisdictions might have taken will not necessarily fit for the ACT. You cannot just cut down the solution that might work in a large jurisdiction and apply it in a small jurisdiction.

In terms of whether there are options for entering into an arrangement with another government to take advantage of the work they have already done, clearly that would be desirable in terms of being sure of the functionality of the system. Clearly, developing a system up for ourselves would involve far greater risk in doing that. So we have had a lot of that work done for us, but the final work to test the viability of the options and to be assured, to do all the final due diligence to be assured that the proper decisions are being taken now, needs to be done.

MRS DUNNE: And when it is all done and chosen, there will be reasonable interoperability with the databases that other agencies like Legal Aid and the DPP currently use?

Mr Corbell: Yes, as Ms Purvis has already indicated.

MRS DUNNE: Could I ask about the \$4 million that was originally budgeted for the Supreme Court building, for design? There is nothing in this budget for the Supreme Court building except the rollover of most of that money into 2013. What has the \$1.3 million been spent on and what will be done by the end of 2012-13?

Mr Corbell: Design and due diligence on the Supreme Court project is ongoing. \$2.7 million in forward design funding is to be rolled over to the 2012-13 financial year. As a bit of background, in July last year the government took the decision that due diligence and forward design planning for a proposed new Supreme Court facility

was to proceed on the site of the existing building with a link to the Magistrates Court building. The project is currently in due diligence and concept design phase, which has delivered a business case, including user requirements, functional design brief, site investigations, conservation management plan, cost of risk analysis, procurement strategy, preliminary project plan, communications and consultation plan, temporary accommodation strategy, concept design and condition audit of the Magistrates Court building.

The \$2.7 million rolled to the 2012-13 financial year relates to the next stage of the new Supreme Court facilities project, including the refinement of user requirements, functional design brief and concept design and, subject to the outcome of the procurement strategy, the development of preliminary sketch plans. This work will optimise the proposed building to provide an efficient outcome for our courts. To date there has been extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including the judiciary, legal profession, victim services groups, disability access groups, DPP, Corrective Services, ACT Policing and ACT Human Rights Commission. There have also been a number of discussions held with other authorities, including the NCA, ACT Planning and Land Authority, the Government Architect and the ACT Heritage Council. The current concept has in principle support of the NCA and the Government Architect.

MRS DUNNE: So what is going to happen in the next year to account for the balance which has been rolled over?

Mr Corbell: As I said, next year includes refinement of user requirements, functional design brief and concept design and, subject to the outcome of the procurement strategy, the development of preliminary sketch plans.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about some of the accountability indicators, particularly on page 276 with ACAT. Indicator o talks about a reasonable cost of lodgement at the ACAT. Can you take us through what “reasonable” means in that context?

Mr Corbell: “Reasonable” means what is considered appropriate in the circumstances.

MR RATTENBURY: Is there some benchmark for it?

Ms Purvis: Yes. The reasonable cost indicator is based on the reasonable cost indicator that the courts use also. It is a nationally-set benchmark.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you. That is the answer to that question.

MRS DUNNE: Who sets that benchmark?

Ms Purvis: It is the report on government services, so the Productivity Commission.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. Thank you.

MR RATTENBURY: And will this figure be impacted by the new day use fees, or is this entirely about simply submitting the paperwork in the first instance?

Ms Purvis: We are not expecting the new fees to have a great effect on that reasonable cost indicator, because the new fees, where they increase, are generally in the hearing space, and the vast majority of matters that go to ACAT do not have hearings—

Mr Corbell: Of more than a day.

Ms Purvis: Of more than day, yes.

MR RATTENBURY: So the new fees will be incorporated into this, but you anticipate that the increase will be quite small. I see.

MRS DUNNE: Getting back to the hearing fees, you announced, attorney, last week when you were here that you had revised the fees. Under the revision what does “corporation” now mean?

Mr Corbell: Corporations with a turnover of less than \$200,000 will pay the non-corporate fee; that is, the individual fee.

MRS DUNNE: So a corporation is anything with a turnover of more than \$250,000?

Mr Corbell: Not-for-profit corporations or corporations with a turnover of less than \$200,000 in the previous financial year are exempt from the corporate fees.

MRS DUNNE: So does that include unit corporations, owners corporations?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: The budget papers have an estimated expenditure from courts revenue of \$270,000 or something of that order. Since you have revised these, what is now the estimated income from the court fees?

Mr Corbell: As I indicated last week, we do not anticipate any significant change to the estimated revenue from the revised court fees structure.

MRS DUNNE: So you do not.

Mr Corbell: Do not.

MRS DUNNE: So you have moved a whole lot of people, organisations, out of the corporation fees into the individual fees and you think that will have no impact, make no substantial difference?

Mr Corbell: That is correct.

MRS DUNNE: How did you come to that conclusion?

Mr Corbell: Because a large number of the matters, for example in the ACAT, will not attract a sitting day fee because they only run for a day, and the ACAT matters that run for a day are not subject to daily hearing or sitting fees, and the volume of

matters where there are those exempt categories—that is, corporations that are not for profit or which have a turnover of less than \$200,000—is very small, which, I should say, reiterates why the government believed that the existing arrangement, the waiver arrangements, were adequate. But, to put the matter beyond doubt, the exemption arrangements remove any uncertainty that may exist from a waiver arrangement.

MRS DUNNE: Who determines the waiver?

Mr Corbell: The court.

MRS DUNNE: And is there a set of criteria by which the court determines the waiver?

Ms Playford: The legislation sets it out. The basis is hardship, so the registrars make that decision about hardship. I understand that there are guidelines that are currently being updated as part of the single registry project to ensure across both jurisdictions that they are similar and that matters can be appealed to a judicial officer—the waiver decisions of the registrar.

MRS DUNNE: And do you have to pay a fee for that?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR RATTENBURY: On the tribunal, on page 276 at indicator n there is a trending increase in the number of presidential members per hundred thousand of population. Can you give us some insight into that increasing trend, please?

Mr Corbell: The government has appointed an additional full-time ordinary presidential member. No, sorry, I beg your pardon. We have appointed a part-time presidential member and also a full-time ordinary member. That obviously does not come into this calculation, but we have appointed an additional part-time presidential member.

MRS DUNNE: So is the idea that, rather than relying on the panel of people appointed to the ACAT, you are going to rely more on essentially salaried members?

Mr Corbell: We are increasing the number of salaried members. That provides greater flexibility to the ACAT to deal with matters in a more timely manner without having to draw on panel members to the same degree it has had to, particularly for more complex matters and for matters which have been subject to the appeal jurisdiction of the ACAT.

MRS DUNNE: What would you consider more complex matters?

Mr Corbell: Matters that run for more than a day, usually. Often planning matters are more complex, as are a range of other matters—mental health, for example.

THE CHAIR: Did you have any further questions, Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: Could I ask for an update on the court-imposed fines regime and the

collection rate and the rate at which the relatively new legislation has been used?

Mr Corbell: You would be aware, Mrs Dunne, that a revised fine enforcement scheme has been in operation since July 2010.

MRS DUNNE: Yes; I think I was there—

Mr Corbell: In 2010-11 the Law Courts and Tribunal Administration imposed \$1 million worth of fines, court costs, criminal injury compensation levies and victim levies. The amount of fines imposed in the 2011-12 year to date, at the end of May, is \$1.04 million. The fine enforcement unit in the Magistrates Court has been working at clearing the backlog of old files: 6,732 reminder notices were sent out in 2010-11; a total of 1,220 reminder notices were issued between 1 July 2011 and 30 April 2012. In addition, work is continuing between the courts and Transport Regulation, Office of Regulatory Services, to ensure that the courts and RTA computer systems are compatible when matching data in relation to suspending the licences of those who do not pay their fines in future.

In terms of data on outstanding fines, data for the last three financial years shows the amount of outstanding fines, including compensation matters, to be around \$3.2 million to \$3.3 million. The amount outstanding at any one time fluctuates due to the continuous nature of fine imposition and payment. For example, \$1 million was paid in fines in 2010-11, but \$1 million was also imposed during that time.

MRS DUNNE: What I am trying to get at is this: with the changes that came into operation midway through 2010, have we actually cleared up any of the backlog?

Mr Corbell: The exact amount recovered I would have to take on notice, Mrs Dunne, unless Ms Purvis can add anything.

Ms Purvis: The work that the Fine Enforcement Unit has been doing since the change to the legislation has been clearing the backlog of those and getting to grips with how many people and those people who still have outstanding fines—hence the sending out of notices to people. The outcomes at the moment—in doing that, in having replies from people, we have variety of way that we can now get the people to pay those fines. Often they are taking up a direct debit opportunity, which means that they may be paying \$10 a week or \$10 a fortnight towards the payment of that fine. That means that the money will take longer to collect over time. So we are expecting in the future that—

MRS DUNNE: Perhaps, on notice, we could have some analysis of the extent. From recollection, at the time there was about \$3 million in unrecovered fines. Some of those were very old. What progress has been made on that backlog? How much has been written off as people being uncontactable or whatever? What proportion of that are people who have made some sort of arrangements? To what extent are you using payment over time? To what extent are you garnisheeing? And there are other provisions, like the seizing of property, which is probably not very productive. They are all there. So some analysis for the committee on what has actually been done and what aspects of the legislation have been operationalised.

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice. Are there any further questions?

MR COE: I have just got one more. Minister, I think two or three years ago I asked you a question about jury duty.

Mr Corbell: Sorry; about what?

MR COE: About jury duty and the cost to employers. A small business owner contacted me. He employs a lot of casual staff but also permanent staff in retail. He expressed concern about the number of times it seemed his staff were getting called up. I am just wondering if that is a concern that you have heard before. And are there any measures in place to support businesses who lose staff—especially small businesses?

Mr Corbell: No, it is not an issue I have heard before. I would have to say that you are going to be statistically unlucky, if you are a small business, to have more than one member of your staff potentially summoned for jury duty within a short period of time. Those circumstances would be highly unusual. But obviously this is a random process; it can happen, but it is rare.

In terms of the costs for businesses, the government does provide some recompense for jurors who give their time to serve on a jury, but we do not provide compensation to businesses. That is not something that occurs, as far as I am aware, anywhere in Australia—recognising that jury service is a duty of citizenship, and that duty is imposed both on the person serving on a jury and also potentially on their employer in terms of cost.

MR COE: Are you aware of any jurisdictions elsewhere in the world that do give any support to the employer?

Mr Corbell: I am not aware of any schemes, no.

MR SMYTH: Ms Leigh, are you aware of any jurisdictions?

Ms Leigh: No, I am not.

THE CHAIR: Anything further, Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: No.

THE CHAIR: We appear to have come to the end of questions. Attorney and officers of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the committee, for appearing before the committee. As mentioned at the commencement of the hearing today, there is a time frame of five working days for the return of answers to questions taken on notice at this hearing. This afternoon the committee will hear from the Minister for Community Services and officers from the directorate, commencing with its examination of output class 1, disability and therapy, specifically 1.1, disability services and policy, and 1.2, therapy services.

Meeting adjourned from 12.21 to 2.05 pm.

Appearances:

Burch, Ms Joy, Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Women and Minister for Gaming and Racing

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Acting Director-General

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

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Executive Director, Disability ACT

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Acting Deputy Director-General

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

Wyles, Mr Paul, Director, Relationship Management, Disability ACT

Starick, Ms Kate, Director, Disability ACT

Hambleton, Mr Graham, Director, Policy Planning and Business Support, Disability ACT

Fraser, Mr Norm, Senior Manager, Business Support, Disability ACT

Hayes, Ms Ros, Principal Advisor,

Collett, Mr David, Acting Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

THE CHAIR: The Legislative Assembly has referred to the committee for examination the expenditure proposals in the 2012-2013 Appropriation Bill and the revenue estimates in the 2011-2012 budget. The committee is due to report to the Assembly on 14 August 2012.

The committee has resolved that all questions on notice will be lodged with the Committee Office within three business days of receipt of the uncorrected proof of transcript, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received. Answers to questions on notice will be lodged with the Committee Office within five business days of receipt of the question, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received. Answers to questions taken on notice will be returned five business days after the hearing in which they were taken, with day one being the first business day after the question was taken.

This afternoon the committee will deal with the following outputs in the Community Services Portfolio: output class 1, disability and therapy services, being 1.1 disability services and policy and 1.2 therapy services. As I indicated to you, minister, we will go to disability services and policy first and then go to therapy as best we can. We will work through it that way.

I firstly draw your attention to the privilege statement on the blue card in front of you. Can you indicate that you are aware of the information and implications in that privilege statement?

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Before we go to questions from the committee, minister,

would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Burch: Yes, I will, thank you, chair. I thank CSD staff for turning up today. We often do not get a chance to thank them at the end because people scurry out; so at the beginning, I want to thank CSD for their efforts over the year.

I would also like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss the services provided for people with a disability in the 2012-13 budget. The 2012-13 budget builds on the work of the last 12 months in supporting young people with a disability and their families to participate in the community and to undertake activities to achieve greater independence, confidence and inclusion.

There has been a significant increase in funding from \$41.52 million in 2002 to \$84.2 million in 2012-13, an overall increase of 103 per cent in government funding assigned to the provision of disability services. This budget reflects the shift in how Australia will support people with a disability. The ACT is working closely with all jurisdictions in developing the NDIS and cost-sharing arrangements are yet to be determined.

This year we will continue our commitment to work on a national agenda, investing resources, time and energy in preparation for the NDIS. We are contributing to key aspects of the design of the scheme involving people with a disability, carers and the community sector in key forums.

We will continue to engage with people with a disability through a range of strategies such as an expansion of direct funding projects which give people with a disability more control in choosing their supports. Accessible information is provided through the disability information support hub at Oatley Court, or DISH at Oatley, a major achievement in the last year which brings different areas of the community sector together with government delivered services.

One of the resources at the DISH is a housing options coordinator, an initiative underlying our commitment to assist people with a disability to identify and develop housing options that suit their needs. This commitment is also demonstrated through an allocation in this year's budget of almost \$3 million in capital funding to construct homes for people with a disability and a further \$5 million over three years to construct additional social housing with a focus on supported accommodation.

The budget includes \$495,000 over three years to establish a community visitors scheme to provide an independent service for identifying and resolving matters, and with the passing of the Official Visitor Bill we will need to revisit that plan.

Therapy ACT continues to provide high quality professional services to maximise the potential for people with delays in development and developmental disabilities to engage and participate in the community. Demand for services remains high but Therapy ACT continued to exceed the target of 85 per cent for client satisfaction during the year with 91 per cent of Therapy ACT clients either satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received.

Therapy ACT continues to focus on ensuring that clients receive support while

waiting for assistance. This includes providing longer consultations to put interim strategies in place, providing parent information sessions before the child therapy begins and early social work contact for parents with children with multiple or complex needs.

Therapy Act is also continuing to deliver its own intervention programs along with collaborative programs delivered with other government and community agencies. The pilot phase of the therapy assistant project, in partnership with the Education and Training Directorate, has proved successful. We have also purchased new equipment for the children and young people's equipment loan. We will leave it there, chair, and I am happy to answer your questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. You mentioned in your opening statement the NDIS. There is obviously the article in the *Canberra Times* today about the \$25,000 that is going to disability and advocacy groups. This was something that People with Disabilities ACT talked about to the committee when they appeared last Friday on community day.

When did you actually make the decision for that funding to go to these two groups given that this was actually an issue they raised on that Friday, particularly with the NDIS needing to have that individual advocacy for people to be able to manage their funds?

The first part of the question is when the decision was actually made. Also, from what disability groups have been saying, there are quite a lot of people that need this sort of training—not just a couple of people. There could be a couple of thousand people. What are you actually doing to factor in the numbers of people that will need this training?

Ms Burch: I cannot remember when I finally signed off the brief, but there has been some discussion at the ACTCOSS forum. Christina Ryan from Advocacy for Inclusion raised it as well. It has certainly been part of the conversation that—

THE CHAIR: It is just that it was not in the budget. It came out somewhat after.

Ms Burch: No, it was not in the budget. Not everything we do needs to be reflected in the budget. But it certainly has been part of a conversation not only with Advocacy for Inclusion. Also, the service providers themselves recognise that the NDIS will herald in a new way of doing business and certainly families and individuals will have more flexibility and more self-determination in the services they provide.

It goes then to what levels of support can be put in to better prepare individuals and services. So ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion will both benefit from an additional \$25,000. One is looking to research and decision-making models, as I understand. Certainly, ADACAS has a self-determination piece of work in there as well.

Will that satisfy the need? Look, I am not quite sure. The NDIS is not in its final form and I do not think it will be in its final form until, first, the pilot works through its systems—whether the ACT is a pilot or not. But it makes good sense to actually start

this piece of work and to see what benefit it brings.

THE CHAIR: I think that was what I was trying to get. So there is this money that has gone to these two groups but from what they are saying, as I said, there are quite a lot of people that might need to have this sort of training. Has the directorate actually tried to quantify or tried to get some indication of the number of people that are going to need this sort of individual training? I know you asked whether the money given will be enough. But from what these groups are saying there are quite a lot of people. Are you actually trying to quantify the exact numbers so that people can be prepared?

Ms Burch: I am not quite sure. Some of the officials could say whether we are trying to quantify it. But people with a disability who will be purchasing services from NDIS will have a range of complex needs and an ability to be self-determining in their own decision making. So I am not quite sure if we can quantify out of the 4,000 plus clients that we have on our base, on our existing base—not all of them will need support in independent decision making. So I think to put a figure on it is a little hard but I am quite happy for the officials to say something.

Ms Howson: The NDIS is moving very quickly, and with the decision of the commonwealth government to bring forward implementation by 12 months it would be fair to say that we are still trying to get a handle on the degree to which the commonwealth will be investing in the types of supports that we have been talking about and what programs they will be able to make available for state and territory jurisdictions to implement. That is of course tied in to the decision about where the launch sites will be as well.

In terms of our own preparations for the NDIS, we are still formulating our approach, and part of the response is to establish the reference group so that we can get some guidance from the reference group on areas of priority.

I think what we will be talking about with Advocacy for Inclusion and ADACAS is the development of models that can actually be of value to all members of the disability community in the determination of ways in which to train and support people to gain the skills that they need to be able to advocate as individuals. So we expect it will have wide application and we are sure that it will inform further decisions down the track around specific programs for individuals. I think I might also pass to Disability ACT and they can talk a little bit about some of the work they have been doing to develop those skills anyway as part of our own direction.

THE CHAIR: Sure. I appreciate that. Groups have come in and said, “It’s great that those models are being worked on, but.” As you said, minister, it is going to be about self-determination, but some people are actually going to need those self-advocacy skills to be able to get the benefit out of it. So it is the practicality of making sure we are training people to do this. On that, the point that has been made to us is that some other jurisdictions like South Australia and Victoria are more developed. Are we looking to what these jurisdictions have done? Given that Ms Howson says it is moving quickly, it seems that this is a pretty serious thing we need to look at.

Ms Whitten: Sure. Both ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion, as part of their budget submissions this year, asked for some funding towards self-advocacy or

supportive decision making; hence the offer of a grant to each of those organisations just recently. In addition to that, the ACT has been working and has been very mindful of the work that has been undertaken in South Australia, particularly through the Julia Farr organisation. In particular, we have been talking with ADACAS about self-advocacy responsibilities.

In addition to that, in 2011 Disability ACT also funded Women with Disabilities ACT about \$70,000 in relation to systemic advocacy and we also funded Advocacy for Inclusion another \$50,000 in relation to self-advocacy.

The point of the funding that was announced today is to do some additional research for people in the ACT about models of self-advocacy and supportive decision making, recognising that there is also a need for training as well at another stage.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Has the level of funding you mentioned for Advocacy for Inclusion continued for 2012-13?

Ms Whitten: It was per annum, yes.

THE CHAIR: So all this work has been done. I appreciate that you said it is hard to quantify the number of people but, given that we have disability groups saying there is going to be a significant number of people, what practically are you talking about? The systemic stuff is great, but how are we going to make sure that people do have the level of training and that funding is there to make sure they are able to do that?

Ms Burch: There are a few things. NDIS, whether we are a pilot site or not, is a major change, so we need to start working hand in hand with the community providers. I think it is about a fifty-fifty split between those that are a client base of Disability ACT and those that are within the community sector.

Part of convening or establishing a reference group is to look at not only service models and workforce, which will be an important part of this, but how we engage with and empower the client to start to make some of these decisions.

We cannot sit here and give you a definitive answer because we do not know what the reform process is. I am not clear about individual service providers, if they have engaged in their own training and support to their client base as well. We know it is something that we need to do. The establishment of a reference group and these two parcels of funding on top of the funding that has been provided to Advocacy for Inclusion previously clearly show that we are aware of it, we are starting on it, and I think it will be a grow and watch piece of work.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, some months back there was an announcement made that all the treasurers and the ministers for disability would get together on a nationwide basis and have meetings on the NDIS and the progress being made and then those ministers would report back to their respective states and territories. How many of those meetings have there been?

Ms Burch: Mincos on the national disability scheme? It is part of a broader agenda. I know I have been to a couple of discussions.

Ms Whitten: There is a select council, which involves the treasurers and ministers responsible for disability.

Ms Burch: I think there were two, but I am happy to take it on notice. A communique is always put out at the end of those meetings.

MR DOSZPOT: I understood that the Assembly was going to be briefed. When will you be offering such a briefing to the Assembly?

Ms Burch: That must have slipped my mind if that was a commitment of mine, but I am quite happy to provide an update to the Assembly.

MR DOSZPOT: And that would include the treasurer's report as well?

Ms Burch: I think it is a combined report. But we are not looking at this as "what is the minister for disability going to do and what is the Treasurer going to do?" This is the jurisdictional response around looking after our own community, so I would see it as a singular response, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. I would like you to take it on notice and get back to us on that.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice about those meetings.

MR HARGREAVES: Minister, I am aware how over the years there have been synergies between Housing ACT and the disability sector and how those two are inter-related, and I know about the partnership very strongly between Housing ACT and Disability Services. I notice you have got an investment in the budget of about \$5 million for Housing ACT. What I would like to know is: is some of that funding going to go towards supporting disability accommodation in those synergies? If so, how are you going to use the money?

Ms Burch: There are two pieces of capital in this budget. One is a discrete \$3 million over a number of years for disability. One of the officials can talk about that model, which is effectively building additional properties on existing parcels of land next to existing properties. I will go to the officials on that, if I can, Mr Hargreaves, in a moment.

As for the \$5 million in social housing, we always need to grow our social housing stock. A number of social housing tenants are also people with a disability. I have an interest in broadening our base of models of supported accommodation, not only within disability but recognising that these are members of our community as well and to have that reflected in social housing. So we will work on and finalise that piece of work once the budget is passed.

There are some exciting models out there. Just recently through the building stimulus funding we funded the Ross Walker Lodge up at Hackett and that has provided accommodation to a handful of adults. It gives them independent living. They have their own little studio flat, so to speak, but they have got company and friendship in that broader household as well. People are showing a lot of interest in that model and I

think—

MR HARGREAVES: That is a new initiative, that one—over the last few years anyway. That was a bit of a gamble, if my memory serves me correctly, on how it was going to go, having people with like conditions living together and getting that positive feeling of independence going. How successful has it been?

Ms Burch: It is proving very successful and it certainly was championed and supported through St Margaret's. Yes, you have got a built form that supports that collegiate friendship and a small community, but it is part of that broader church community that provides a lot of guidance and support as well. I think it is quite successful and I have a personal interest in that model. Does someone want to talk about the \$3 million?

Ms Sheehan: Yes. Thank you for the question, Mr Hargreaves.

MS HARGREAVES: It is my pleasure, Ms Sheehan.

Ms Sheehan: The \$3 million will be used to construct second properties on large blocks. We call them dual occupancies, and you would be familiar with them. The idea of a dual occupancy is that it provides some great efficiencies for Disability ACT with respect to providing on-site, on the spot, care. There might be a group of people that require 24-hour care or quite a high level of care. If you can locate two houses on the same block that means that people can still have the privacy and facility of sharing with perhaps just one other person or two people but you can also have carers co-located on the site.

So not only does it maximise the use of land which is already owned by Housing ACT, it means that you can construct extra properties and all the money can go into construction because the land is already yours and it means that you have a more efficient and effective provision of care to people with disabilities. So it is a very welcome addition of capital.

The second amount that the minister referred to, which is \$5 million more generally for the social housing stock, will come from the home loan fund. As we can see from the budget papers, in the first year we have \$500,000, which will assist us, in partnership with Disability ACT, as the minister said, to investigate innovative models of provision of social housing to people with a disability, and then in the following two years we will have \$2 million and then \$2.5 million for the construction.

It enables good, sound, solid, evidence-based planning for those models and those properties and then in the following two years construction of the properties. As the minister said, there are many people who already live in social housing or who are on the applicant list for social housing who have a disability. We know that just from the statistics on what is the most common Centrelink benefit that Housing ACT tenants are recipients of, and that is the disability support pension. So it is very welcome again to have those capital funds to assist people with a disability to have safe, secure, affordable housing in Housing ACT.

MR HARGREAVES: So those properties will be in the public housing collection or

the community housing collection?

Ms Sheehan: They will be in the public housing collection.

MR HARGREAVES: Do you know roughly what percentage of your public housing stock is actually let to people with a disability, or is that something you do not collect?

Ms Sheehan: I cannot tell you right at this moment the number of properties that have people with disability in them. The reason for that is that people might acquire a disability, particularly an age-related disability, over time and they would not necessarily notify Housing ACT that they have that disability. What I can say is that over the last few years we have had a particular focus on constructing properties that are suitable for people with a disability, most particularly during the construction program where we had \$86 million for the nation building program. Almost all of our properties were constructed not only to six-star energy efficiency but also to being adaptable and accessible.

MR COE: So how many are on a disability pension? Did you say that you knew that?

Ms Sheehan: Around 30 per cent.

MR HARGREAVES: There are existing public housing tenants that have been tenants since the 1950s and 1960s. It would not be too much of a stretch of the imagination to expect that you would never know about somebody who is an existing tenant who acquires a disability because they are just sitting in the system.

Ms Sheehan: That is right, Mr Hargreaves, particularly if it is an age-related disability. Over time they will approach Housing ACT for a disability modification. I am happy to say that we have a program sitting within our total facilities management budget of around \$1 million a year which we spend on making disability modifications to Housing ACT properties to enable people with a disability to have an appropriate standard of property and also to enable older people with age-related disabilities to age in place.

MR HARGREAVES: In the context of the services that your directorate actually provides, particularly in relation to Housing ACT—I am focusing on that because I know it so well—the thing I am interested in is disability. What kind of level of priority are you and your government actually giving disability in terms of the things that we look at?

Ms Burch: I think we give disability quite a high priority. I made mention in my opening statement that there has been a growth of 103 per cent in our overall disability funding since 2002. We have also grown our accommodation by 64 per cent. We have grown our community support places by 158 per cent. Our community access hours have grown by 140 per cent. We actually see disability as a priority, which is a little bit different from others who say that the provision of disability services is negotiable. I do not think there is anything negotiable—

MR HARGREAVES: Who would say that? Who would be stupid enough to say that?

Ms Burch: The Liberal Party say that.

MR HARGREAVES: That disability services are negotiable?

Ms Burch: They do.

MR HARGREAVES: That services to people with disability are negotiable?

Ms Burch: They do indeed.

MR HARGREAVES: That is outrageous.

MR SMYTH: I think we are being verballed here.

MR HARGREAVES: That is outrageous.

Ms Burch: It is an endorsed Liberal view, as I understand it.

MR SMYTH: You understand it. So you now speak for the Liberal Party. That is fantastic!

MR DOSZPOT: You understand very little, Ms Burch.

THE CHAIR: Members, can we actually keep—

MR COE: You're a very wise woman, aren't you?

Ms Burch: I do have something in front of me here that says, "This means that things local government must do to receive higher priority, such as health, education, public transport and urban services are very, very important things. The rest, frankly, is negotiable."

THE CHAIR: I think if we can actually remain relevant to the question—

Ms Burch: That is a statement endorsed by your community champions themselves. Can I table that?

MR HARGREAVES: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Yes, of course you can.

Ms Burch: Thank you.

MR SMYTH: I am pleased to see you are so interested in this.

THE CHAIR: I do not think it is appropriate to be doing these things.

Ms Burch: I think it is appalling that you think that disability is negotiable.

MR SMYTH: We think you are appalling. We think your handling of kids in care has been appalling. We think your handling of your portfolio has been appalling.

THE CHAIR: Members! Ms Burch, Mr Smyth.

Ms Burch: This is an endorsed Liberal policy.

THE CHAIR: Can I have order, please.

MR SMYTH: If we are going to have a political discussion, it needs to be two-sided.

THE CHAIR: Order! Mr Smyth, can you just let me—

MR HARGREAVES: No, it doesn't.

MR SMYTH: Well, bring the minister back on track.

THE CHAIR: I am trying, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: She has been talking politics for the last five minutes and you have done nothing about it.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, I was actually trying but you were talking over the top of me, thank you very much.

MR DOSZPOT: A very nice set-up, Mr Hargreaves.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, can we actually keep relevant to—

MR SMYTH: That would be a change.

THE CHAIR: to the question, and Mr Hargreaves too. I actually do not think that was entirely relevant. I am going to go to Ms Hunter now.

MR HARGREAVES: I have got the last question on disability, particularly in the housing section.

Ms Burch: Which is a priority of mine, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Yes, thanks. One of the issues around the ageing in place perspective is about taking people out of large houses—three bedrooms and large blocks—and putting them into smaller townhouses and so on. I think I heard Ms Sheehan say, at least in previous times, that all of those houses are built to adaptable housing criteria. How much collaboration is there between the disability services and Housing ACT in actually putting the criteria and the specifications together for those houses?

Ms Burch: In those assets but, additionally, in the new project we have in construction, the intentional community—which is about supporting three to five young people in the intentional community which we funded in last year's budget—

Housing ACT has been working hand in hand with Disability ACT and the intentional community group around what is the built form and what are the arrangements with the other tenants that will move in. It is a very, very close relationship. The fact that we have appointed a housing options facilitator as well just goes to show that we see it as a strong priority to support people with a disability with housing needs.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you.

MS HUNTER: I just want to marry that up with the accountability indicators on page 347 in budget paper 4. If you look at the accommodation support, the number of places, the target in 2011-12 is 500 and the estimated outcome is estimated to be 500. The target for 2012-13 is 500. So we do not appear to be increasing that accommodation support. I also look at respite, which is remaining static as well. I know there are many families that have been on a waiting list for a long time around respite. First of all, I want to move back to the accommodation. We have talked about the money coming in—\$3 million over three years.

Ms Burch: I am sorry, Ms Hunter?

MS HUNTER: Or some over the outyears that you were talking about. Then you talked about \$5 million for social housing. That is on top of the \$3 million?

Ms Burch: That is right, yes.

MS HUNTER: That is not necessarily specifically disability housing. You are saying you are building the housing so that it does not matter who uses the housing?

Ms Burch: Yes.

MS HUNTER: Can you break down a bit into that \$3 million and \$5 million? I am then trying to figure out how that then goes back to the target for 2012-13. That still only has the 500 on it. I understand, obviously, that you cannot just get the money and the house is built the next day; there is a lead-in time. I just want to get a bit of explanation.

Ms Burch: I will have one of the officials talk to the targets within these budget papers, but certainly it is an absolute reality that we have grown respite places. We could probably double it and still have a level of demand, unfortunately. But certainly accommodation, support places, community access hours and flexible respite hours have grown. With the \$3 million, that is absolutely for a built form for disability for clients within disability who need supported accommodation. They will be on site—as you described them, I think, Ms Sheehan—as a dual occ with other properties that are housing people with a disability.

MS HUNTER: How many does that \$3 million get us?

Ms Burch: I did have that written down.

Ms Whitten: Could I answer that, minister?

Ms Burch: Yes.

Ms Whitten: It is about nine properties. No, sorry.

Ms Sheehan: It is nine houses.

Ms Burch: We will take it on notice. I know that the work has been done. It is one of those things where everyone thinks someone has it on a piece of paper and it is not.

Ms Starick: It will depend a bit on the size and type of the properties that are constructed. But the proposal was for three dual occupancies, so three lots of dual-occupancy properties, which would be nine households.

Ms Burch: Three threes.

Ms Starick: Three threes—six properties.

MS HUNTER: I do not know how you would fit three properties on one, but—

Ms Starick: We can come back with another figure if you like, but it is six.

MS HUNTER: So it is how many bedrooms, I guess. Is it more about bedrooms really? As you say, it depends on your property and it depends on what size as to the configuration you are going to do.

Ms Starick: It depends on the needs of the individuals for whom the properties are constructed. Generally the properties are constructed in a way where they can be used flexibly. If people have the potential to share, that will be considered, but it will be on a person-by-person basis.

MS HUNTER: So that is the \$3 million.

Ms Burch: Getting back to the \$5 million, that is from the home loan portfolio within Housing ACT. Once we finalise the work through that first little bit of feasibility and forward planning, that will be a mix of adaptable social housing that can be applied to people with a disability and also, quite specifically, those other alternative models of supportive accommodation.

I made reference to Ross Walker Lodge, for example, which we built not so long ago. People have expressed a real interest in that, but it is not suitable for all people with a disability. People with very high, complex needs need a property that can accommodate harnesses, hoists and all sorts of other things. But for a level of client who is independent, and it suits families, a model such as Ross Walker Lodge will be suitable.

So that is what we will do as the piece of work in the first instance. Abbeyfield and Ross Walker are two quite innovative models, but they are dependent a lot on the willingness and the interest of the client or the individual to move in—and also a level of family governance and other community support around it to make it work.

MS HUNTER: So we are going to have some of these models available out there. We are still going to have our disability group houses that are run through Disability ACT. I just wanted to ask a couple of questions about the current arrangements. I want to understand the legal or contractual relationships that are in group homes at the moment. Does each resident have a tenancy agreement or is it a residence agreement? What are the lease arrangements?

Ms Starick: The lease arrangements vary from person to person, but the majority of people supported by ACT government to live in their home are living in Housing ACT properties that are head-tenanted by Disability ACT; the people that live in the homes are considered occupants. There are some people who are head tenants in their own home. Disability ACT has been going out progressively over a number of years to people whom we support and to guardians to see if people would like to consider becoming a head tenant. That has been taken up by some people, but not by everybody. People who live in Disability ACT head-tenanted properties do have the same rights under the tenancy act. We have also progressed with community providers and with the support arrangements that we have set up with guardians to not perpetuate Disability ACT having a head-tenant arrangement, encouraging people to take on head tenancies and separating that support from tenancy.

MS HUNTER: With the ones where they are the group houses, you are talking about an occupancy agreement. Sorry, I might have missed it, but that occupancy agreement, what sort of rights does it give people?

Ms Starick: It is an occupancy arrangement. My understanding is that the rights of occupants are under the ACT tenancy legislation.

MR HARGREAVES: I have a supplementary on—

THE CHAIR: Meredith, have you finished your question?

MS HUNTER: That is okay.

Ms Starick: There are 168 people that are supported in Disability ACT supported properties and about 279 people in the community.

Ms Burch: Through community providers?

Ms Starick: Yes.

Ms Burch: And community housing?

Ms Starick: Yes.

MS HUNTER: Some parents are a little concerned. They are the champions of and the advocates for their children, and when change happens they obviously have a lot of questions. And the NDIS does bring on a lot of questions for everybody, I am sure—even for the governments who are trying to work it out at the moment. One of the things that parents are wanting to know is about their children who have, say, lived in disability group homes. We are not talking about the ones who are head

tenants but about those in group homes. The parents have put in quite a lot over the years—furniture or whatever to make it a nicer home environment. They want to know, if there are changes to where their children are going to live, whether they can take that with them somehow. I would have thought that was straightforward, but these are the sorts of questions that come through, particularly when there is a bit of concern about “does it mean my child would have to move?” rather than being a choice being made by the family.

Ms Starick: People move for a range of reasons. There are times when, with a property, as people get older or their life circumstances change, they may seek to move. Movements of people within Disability ACT supported accommodations are overseen by the accommodation support and relocation committee, which is an independently chaired committee that has in its membership people from Disability ACT as well as community members and parents of people who are supported by supported accommodation. That committee oversees, and it works with Disability ACT, to make sure that everything that needs to be considered when you move house—it is one of the major life events that people can have—is taken into account. It is not only when people move from their accommodation, but considering who they are going to live with and what their new accommodation is going to be like.

MR HARGREAVES: I have a quick question. It is a supplementary but it is very brief. I do not know whether you have already answered it. We talked about the synergies between Housing ACT and Disability ACT. There is a priority in place. Does that same priority exist within the community housing sector? Are all the properties that CHC are bringing on line adaptable housing as well, do you know?

Ms Sheehan: CHC Affordable Housing was the recipient of quite a deal of money under the nation building and jobs program, and the commonwealth requirement there was that all the properties had to be six-star energy rated and be accessible and adaptable. Those properties certainly have met the requirements.

We are co-located with CHC Affordable Housing at a number of sites. Most particularly, one of the most interesting sites is the old Rex car park in Braddon, which now has about 42 properties on it. It is a mixture of our youth supported accommodation program—we call it our foyer-like program and it links young people who have experienced homelessness back in with Education and Training—and the co-location on that site of 10 properties from CHC Affordable Housing for some older people and general public housing tenants.

You were asking whether CHC Affordable Housing are making disability a priority. I think members here would be aware that we now have a common waiting list for public and community housing called the social housing register. CHC do participate in that common waiting list, and members would be aware that we do have particular priority for people with disability where their natural supports are breaking down. So it is certainly the case that CHC are rising to the challenge of having more properties suitable for people with disability and they do participate in the system which does allow people with disability to have priority access to housing.

Ms Burch: If I can add a comment, going back to Ms Hunter’s question, I am quite happy for the housing options facilitator to have a look at the material, the questions

and answers, and make sure that some of that stuff is included.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a few supplementary questions to Ms Hunter's questions on government-supported accommodation. How many houses does the government operate for supported accommodation?

Ms Burch: I think they just answered that a moment ago.

Ms Sheehan: Currently there are 52 households.

MR DOSZPOT: What is the level of complaints from tenants or their carers in these houses?

Ms Sheehan: I do not have the complaints data with me at the moment. I can take that on notice. I can tell you that about 80 per cent of the feedback that we do receive is complaints either about a service provided or a personal situation and about 20 per cent is compliments. People are also able to raise concerns, either across the community or on ACT government-supported accommodation, with the Disability Services Commissioner and through the Community Services Directorate complaints process.

Ms Burch: But I would point out that the bulk of supported accommodation sits within the community sector.

THE CHAIR: I will quickly say there was something taken on notice. Was that right?

MS HUNTER: The number of complaints.

THE CHAIR: The number of complaints.

MR DOSZPOT: I have got a couple more questions.

THE CHAIR: I had to do that. We just need to confirm when there is a question taken on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: I appreciate that.

Ms Whitten: I have got the answer to the complaints in 2010-11. There were 127 complaints and there were 32 compliments in 2010-11. And that is reported in our annual report.

Ms Burch: And about a 65 per cent satisfaction rate.

Ms Whitten: Yes.

Ms Burch: For government housing; that is not community housing.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Starick, you started talking about the processes available to carers if they do have concerns about the care of their child in these homes. Can you elaborate on that a little?

Ms Starick: Sorry, can you clarify?

MR DOSZPOT: Can you clarify the processes that are available to carers if they have concerns about the care of their child in these homes?

Ms Starick: Yes. The vast majority of concerns are actually raised on an informal basis whenever a guardian has those concerns. That is across the sector and in government-provided accommodation, and many concerns—

MR DOSZPOT: Are these concerns different to complaints or are they the same?

Ms Starick: They would be the same. Many complaints are actually managed informally at the time through the normal course of events, and certainly we would encourage the staff who support people in their own home to communicate on a close basis with guardians as well as the people who live there so that if the people whom we support are not receiving the type of support that they would like, they can actually discuss that with the person who is providing that support. Much of that is carried out on a day-to-day basis.

There is also a formal complaints and client feedback system through the Community Services Directorate, as well as through Disability ACT. Families are also provided with information that gives them the contact details for the Disability Services Commissioner as well as another avenue for complaints.

MR DOSZPOT: Are there appeal mechanisms that are available to the carers if they feel that they have not had their complaints treated appropriately by the department?

Ms Starick: Through the-

Ms Howson: I think it is about the tier of complaints. If it cannot be resolved at a local level or within Disability ACT then parents and carers are certainly encouraged to take their complaint into the central complaints area within the Community Services Directorate and then, as Ms Starick has pointed out, there is also the option for external lodgement of complaints with the disability commissioner.

MR DOSZPOT: How many times have people in those positions taken their issues to the human rights commissioner?

Ms Howson: Have we got that information or would we need to take that on notice?

Ms Whitten: I think we would need to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice.

Ms Burch: In the last 12 months?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, the last 12 months would be fine, thank you. I did hear earlier from both carers and community organisations about high levels of staff turnover in government-managed accommodation. I have been previously advised by the minister

that staff turnover levels are within normal range and she has no concerns. Why then do we keep hearing so many of these complaints from a variety of sources?

Ms Burch: The staff turnover is around 10 per cent at the moment for disability.

MR DOSZPOT: How long has that been at 10 per cent?

Ms Starick: It has actually been reasonably stable for at least the last three years. This is for the workforce across the whole territory. There is a low unemployment rate. We have been looking at our workforce strategies for government-provided services as well as for disability sector-provided services and we have developed a working group which is a partnering between the ACT government service providers and the NDS. I will have to get the exact date when that working group commenced, but it has been going for three years.

That working group has produced, with partnering with NDS, information for service providers to develop a workforce modelling, as well as Disability ACT's workforce strategy which has been rolling out improvements that are now scheduled and known throughout the industry. That has enabled our recruitment to keep pace with our exit rates. We know, through exit interviews, that about 80 per cent of people who leave the employment of Disability ACT are leaving to move interstate.

We have also surveyed the sector to get a profile of the workforce in the sector. The first survey was done in 2004 and it did find a high level of casualisation and a high rate of turnover. We have recently surveyed the sector and I have received the draft results of that. The majority of people in the sector are employed on a permanent basis and have been working in the sector for over five years. We still need to do a bit more analysis but that is the information that we have at this point.

MR DOSZPOT: But your turnover is around 10 per cent, you are saying?

Ms Starick: About 10 per cent.

MR DOSZPOT: And that has been the same, what, for three years, you were saying?

Ms Starick: It has fluctuated between nine and 12 per cent for the last three years.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that normal or is that high or low or—

Ms Howson: That is well within sector standards, yes

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I have a question to you. What steps have you taken to assure yourself that the management of homes within your responsibilities is best practice and operating for the best interests of the tenants?

Ms Burch: I am glad to see that you, similar to me, find that disability services are not negotiable. I would like some of your peers—

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch, if you would just answer the question.

Ms Burch: I am.

MR DOSZPOT: I always have had a great interest in disability. It is nothing different, but I-

Ms Burch: Others appear not to. Management of group homes is one of the core businesses. Whilst there are 50-plus houses—and as I have said, the bulk of supported accommodation is in with the community sector—it is important that we deliver best practice. So there is ongoing supervision and support of staff, there is staff training. Each house has not only the appointed DSO but team leaders that are appointed also and they too, in turn, report to various levels of management to make sure that they have got their skill base and training in needs that they need for their client base.

There is a level of casual work, there is a pool, they go around. They are also provided with support and training, but they will also often go back to the same properties or a number of properties so that people understand faces and know faces and people are known and familiar to them, particularly people with a disability. We continue that work. There are also disability standards that are applied not only to us but to the community sector. We have got a rolling program of audits through services and we regularly review various houses as well.

MS HUNTER: So all those workers are subject to the working with vulnerable people check?

Ms Burch: They would be, yes.

MS HUNTER: And that has all been completed and done?

Ms Howson: It does not come into effect—

Ms Whitten: The working with vulnerable people check legislation commences in November—

MS HUNTER: Regardless?

Ms Whitten: Yes, but the police checks for staff are undertaken and staff do not commence work in group homes without that check.

MS HUNTER: So what happens if there is a complaint from a resident about a staff member? What is the process? What happens?

Ms Burch: I can answer broadly and then I might go to Ms Howson. Certainly all those complaints are reviewed, considered and looked at. You used the word “complaint”. It depends on what that is as to what response is required. But rest assured they are all taken seriously and they are all responded to. Given that the detail sits within the directorate, I might go to Ms Howson.

Ms Howson: Thank you. We take any complaint seriously. Depending on the nature of the complaint it may be referred to the Australian Federal Police for investigation. We would look at the circumstances through an internal process. We have got a very

thorough policy in relation to managing any complaints or concerns that are expressed by families about one of our staff members. The process that would proceed would again depend very much on the nature of the complaint.

I might ask Ms Starick to detail some of the individual elements of our staff management process. Needless to say, if the matter requires an internal investigation any of the recommendations that would come from that would then inform practice and procedure. It might lead to particular counselling for a staff member, or training may be required or, in a worst-case example, the dismissal of that individual.

We would also act with propriety in terms of not interfering with a police investigation if that was underway. We are also very concerned whenever a complaint is made that we act in the interests of the client, so we may make decisions about the immediate environment in which that client lives. We would certainly make sure that the client had access to all the support that they required, and their carers or family, or guardians for that matter.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned that you would act in the interests of the clients, which is obviously commendable. How would you respond to feedback that we are getting that there are times when staff are moved because they are in fact looking after the clients too well; they are establishing a good rapport and that is deemed unacceptable?

Ms Howson: In terms of staff being moved, there would always be a good reason for doing that. We do not take those decisions—

MR DOSZPOT: So getting on well with clients is a reason to move them?

Ms Howson: I would think that if we had moved a member of staff we were acting in the interests of the client. Without talking about a specific or individual situation—

MR DOSZPOT: I am not talking about individuals either.

Ms Howson: No. I would not think that we would—

MR DOSZPOT: So if a client expressed a strong desire to interact with the same staff member that they had been interacting with, that is taken into account?

Ms Howson: We would certainly take that into account.

MR DOSZPOT: How would you respond if I said to you that that is not taken into account?

Ms Burch: Are you talking a specific incident?

MR DOSZPOT: I am talking generally at the moment, Ms Burch. I am not in a position to name people.

Ms Howson: It is very difficult for me to respond in terms of a situation without knowing the details, but I can assure you that we would take the concerns of the client

into account in our decision making. We would take other things into account as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. One final question from me on this: you mentioned the number of referrals on to legal authorities. How many prosecutions have there been of staff?

Ms Burch: To my knowledge, none.

MR SMYTH: Minister, on page 360 of budget paper 4 your total ordinary expenses go up about \$11 million or five per cent. On your disability and therapy services operating statement, on page 372, the total ordinary expenses go up about \$40,000. If you go to page 343 of budget paper 4, why is it that disability services—

Ms Burch: So we are on 360, then we are on 372 and then 343. I will call Mr Hubbard.

MR SMYTH: If you go to page 343 of budget paper 4, why is it that of all the output classes in your portfolio only disability services and policy have an increase in total costs for the 2012-13 year?

Mr Hubbard: I apologise, Mr Smyth, but can you—

MR SMYTH: On page 343, output class 1.1, total costs for the year go from \$86,251 to \$86,026.

Mr Hubbard: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Even if you just assume WPI at 3½ per cent, the \$86,000 probably should have gone to \$90,000, just to be real terms. Why the drop and what goes?

Mr Hubbard: Fair enough; that is a reasonable question. What has happened—

MR SMYTH: I thought it was a reasonable question.

Mr Hubbard: Yes. That is obviously about \$200,000 out of \$86 million. The major reason for that is that there was a one-off adjustment for long service leave. It is quite a technical adjustment but really it was a \$400,000 adjustment based on the fact that the way long service leave is calculated is a present value calculation. There is a stream of long service leave projected into the future. You get a present value calculation for that particular year and part of the calculation is the government bond rate related to the percentage increase in salaries.

What has happened this year, which does not happen very often, is that the 10-year government bond rate has slipped below the increase in salaries, the percentage, and therefore there is about a 102 per cent present value calculation for long service leave and that has had an impact of about \$400,000, so that decrease of \$200,000 has been pushed mainly by that calculation for long service leave.

MR SMYTH: All right. The total cost, though, does not increase. You would expect a factor of call it 3½ per cent just for WPI, which would be about \$3 million. What are

you doing? Are you cutting a delivery of service? Are you letting go staff? Are you not doing something to cover that lack of growth?

Mr Hubbard: As I was saying, when you compare both the difference between the government payments for outputs and the total cost, most things are the same. You have got indexation coming in, initiatives et cetera. The two biggest things that are reflecting in that are the one-off adjustment for the long service leave, as I explained to you, and the allocations of savings across the different business units. So there is approximately \$600,000 allocated there as well.

MS HUNTER: For savings?

Mr Hubbard: For savings, yes.

MR SMYTH: All right. Go to page 372 then, to the disability and therapy services operating statement. Your employee expenses are dropping.

Mr Hubbard: That is the impact of that long service—

MR SMYTH: Your grants and purchased services are dropping by three per cent. What is dropping there?

Mr Hubbard: It is dropping by three per cent. When you look at particularly the way that the budget for disability is allocated, there is a movement usually between supplies and services and grants and purchased services, and that movement is usually dictated by the mix of whether you are putting funding into community groups or you are doing the provision of services in-house. If you look at the two line items, being supplies and services and grants and purchased services, there is a reasonable similarity in the movement there.

MR SMYTH: I can see that, yes. Does that mean you are doing more work in-house?

Mr Hubbard: I cannot really comment on that. I can comment on the rationale behind the movement of numbers, but sometimes—

MR SMYTH: If grants and purchased services are dropping—

Mr Hubbard: Yes. Sometimes it is do with where the actual labour for group homes comes from and that depends on the availability of labour. It can either be through a company that provides disability service workers or, when we do have the staff in-house, they are actually full-time equivalents. It really does depend on the market for those disability service workers at the time. And there is a significant movement during the year of those people, so—

MR SMYTH: Right. Then go up one other line to superannuation expenses. If employee expenses are dropping by one per cent, why are superannuation expenses going up by 10 per cent?

Mr Hubbard: That is another technical adjustment and you can see that pretty clearly on page 356, Mr Smyth. If you look at the adjustments down towards the bottom, you

have got the revised superannuation parameters and you have got the revised notional superannuation contributions. Can you see those two lines?

MR SMYTH: Yes, I can.

Mr Hubbard: The first one is really about the churn rates between CSS, PSS and fund of choice. It appears that people who are in the CSS and PSS are staying in the workforce a little bit longer and therefore the cost of superannuation has been recalculated to go up. Also, with the notional contributions, which is the amount which is actually paid to support the different schemes, the biggest movement in the scheme is probably a two per cent increase in the new PSS compared with the old PSS and a slight reduction in the new CSS compared with the old CSS calculations. That is what has pushed those numbers through.

MR SMYTH: All right. Thanks for that.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what does Disability ACT do to ensure that it works collaboratively with other directorates such as Health and education?

Ms Burch: What do we do to make sure we do?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Burch: We have a very good, strong cabinet philosophy that we work together, Mr Doszpot. There are a number of programs that share a common interest—Health, education and us. But it is also how we look to provide a supportive access city through TAMS and transport as well. There is the Canberra plan, the social plan. It clearly sets out our inclusiveness as a community and each directorate then has various aspects of its planning and shared visions and shared goals, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: That is it?

Ms Burch: Do you want to knuckle down into cabinet decisions, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: No, I do not want to knuckle down to cabinet decisions.

Ms Burch: That is a place that you will never have an experience of.

MR DOSZPOT: I am just wondering whether you are aware of the same disquiet, I guess, in the service provider community about the fact that Disability ACT does not work collaboratively. Rather, it works as a silo driving inefficiencies in the delivery of services. Do you have any comment on that?

Ms Burch: Do I have any comment on the feedback that you are getting that Disability works in a silo?

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct.

Ms Burch: I would be interested in those comments because I think, for example, what we have implemented at the DISH at Oakley is certainly Disability breaking

down a silo. That is breaking down the silos in real form. That is a case of us and other community partners co-locating and sharing information to make sure that somebody who walks in that door or who picks up a phone has access not only to government but also to non-government services. I do not call that working in a silo, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: What about the cudgel I asked you to pick up in one of the previous hearings about the young man with disability in one of the schools who seems to keep falling between Health, education and Disability in the services that child gets? Did you look into that? Did you pick up that cudgel I asked you to pick up?

Ms Burch: I do not pick up stick to hit people with, Mr Doszpot. We have been through that before.

MR DOSZPOT: You do not pick up sticks? I asked for you to look into the young man who requires a nurse at a particular school that he attends.

THE CHAIR: I think it was Woden school.

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct. It is Woden school. Woden school is the only school amongst the special needs schools in Canberra that does not provide a full-time nurse.

Ms Burch: You have raised this with both Health and education.

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct and we are getting different answers from Health.

Ms Burch: We do not supply nurses to any schools, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: This is what I am trying to get at. Do you have any contact? There is a disabled child who is in the education process. Should Disability play a part in how that child is looked after?

Ms Burch: Within the school environment? More broadly, if they are a client—

MR DOSZPOT: He is in the school environment. He is also in a home environment where the parents have to look after him, for the transportation that they have to provide, and at the moment the closest school to the parents concerned is Woden. If the child is forced to move then he will have to travel from Tuggeranong to Black Mountain school. So there are social implications arising from disability.

Ms Burch: Look, Mr Doszpot, we can look at this specific case if you like. I think it is appropriate that it plays out here, but you have raised this with me and you have raised this—

MR DOSZPOT: I fully agree with you and I am not going to give up until we get an answer to this one.

THE CHAIR: One person speaking at a time, please.

Ms Burch: You have raised this with education and you have raised it with Health,

Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: And it still is not being fixed.

Ms Burch: I am not going to agree with that, Mr Doszpot, because I do not have the details of every bit of response going into that family.

MR DOSZPOT: That is the cudgel I asked you pick up last time—could you have a look into it. That is about eight months ago.

Ms Burch: Mr Doszpot, work continues with that family. As I said, I do not have in front of me every bit of response that has been provided to that family.

MR DOSZPOT: I do agree with you on that. I do not expect an instant response, but I would appreciate, on behalf of the family, if something was finally done about this. Thank you. Could you take it on notice?

THE CHAIR: Do you have a question, Ms Hunter?

MS HUNTER: I was going to pick up on the DISH, but I am happy for you to start.

THE CHAIR: No, go to it, because we have just mentioned it.

MS HUNTER: The DISH?

THE CHAIR: Yes, and I will come back to my question.

MS HUNTER: I want to ask some questions around the disability information support hub, the DISH, at Oakley. It is a relatively new set-up. I suppose it is a new service, if you like, but there has been co-location of government and community. I do appreciate that it is a pretty new arrangement. It has only been going on for a handful of months, but I wonder whether you can tell me how many people have accessed the service so far and whether you are keeping a list of what the main queries or the main requests for assistance are.

Ms Burch: It is new. I think we officially opened it in February or thereabouts this year. It is exciting, and certainly the feedback I have got from some families and the providers that are co-locating is that it does give a new way and a good way of doing business. I am looking to Graham or Kate to make any comment about the numbers that are coming through.

Mr Hambleton: At this stage I would have to take the question on actual numbers on notice.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice.

Mr Hambleton: However, I can tell you about the type of questions that are coming through, without giving you an exact breakdown, with our information service based out at the DISH. The range of questions is typical of the range of questions we usually have around accessing services, around what is available in the community, what is

provided by government et cetera. But then, because of the proximity to the other services there—the local advisory committees at Woden and Belconnen are based there—we are often able to redirect someone fairly quickly, even literally redirect the phone to the other provider. We have also got our housing options coordinator placed out there as well.

There is a range of questions that come through, right across the kaleidoscope of questions in that area. The beauty has been not only the ability to immediately link people to a service, but also the collaboration that then happens within the workers that are co-located. That is what we found is a real strength. There is a certain amount of best-practice development that is going on as well as making sure that there is not a duplication of services there as well.

It has also provided a bit of a community meeting place. The meeting rooms are used by various community groups. In respect of one of the discussions just before about advocacy and the individual advocacy, there was a citizens advocacy meeting held there and there was a range of people coming to that particular place to discuss those sorts of issues. So it is used for a whole range of issues but I can get those exact numbers and to get back to you on that.

MS HUNTER: That would be great if you could get those numbers.

THE CHAIR: That is taken on notice.

MS HUNTER: I am wondering whether there is some sort of data collection in place. Obviously, if you do have some numbers, you are collecting some sort of data. Also, adding to those satisfaction surveys, can we get some evaluation of this model and how it is going for people with disabilities themselves, their carers but also for the community and government organisations, the actual workers who are sited there too?

I believe there were some real teething issues in the early days around ICT—who had access to what computer system and the fact of having a dot-ACT email address could be off-putting for some people. I know that there were a number of issues that needed to be worked through when you bring different organisations together. But I would be interested in the sort of evaluation mechanisms and what you have in place there. You just spoke about the co-location.

Ms Starick: I would just—

Ms Burch: I would probably make some comment, too. Sorry, I did not want to interrupt.

Ms Starick: I would just make a comment. The DISH has a governance group that has overseen the co-location of services. But it is also working with the members of the DISH to look at what is a way that we can evaluate the impact of this model locally and the benefits of this model for the providers and also the people who are accessing service. We are looking at a range of ways to try and capture that.

MS HUNTER: You also mentioned, Mr Hambleton, those who are working there sitting down to discuss best practice, to ensure they do not have duplication. I have

had one parent who experienced frustration in going out there and still there were people not sitting far apart who were both handling the case but neither had talked to the other. So I am interested in how often that is happening, that they are able to sit down and work through those issues.

Mr Hambleton: They meet weekly on a Monday morning and that is used as an opportunity to sort of explore the various operational aspects of the information service hub. The other thing that they do though—there are particular groups that talk about, say, certain areas that they will focus on. So that is a continuing development process as well. It is still a relatively new concept; so they are still working through how they best can maximise those opportunities.

Ms Whitten: And there is an open day on 5 July, which will be advertised shortly, which has got a focus on funding. That open day is from 10 o'clock till 7 pm. So it is a good opportunity for people to learn a bit more about the DISH and what they offer.

MS HUNTER: That is for current and also potential clients?

Ms Whitten: Yes.

MS HUNTER: How will you be advertising that?

Ms Whitten: It will be in our e-news that is about to go out today or tomorrow—the Disability ACT e-newsletter.

MS HUNTER: Will you be getting it out broadly?

Ms Whitten: And more broadly, yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, you had a follow-up question?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I have got a very brief question on the delivery of services for post-school options out of DISH—the House with No Steps. At the last annual reports hearings we had there was no feedback on the stats that should have been taken on the number of students coming through on post-school options. Has that been rectified yet?

Mr Hambleton: We have got 68 referrals this year for post-school options, of which currently 24 have indicated that they are looking at the transition services offered by House with No Steps and 22 at ongoing community support, the community access programs. One did not meet the criteria and has been referred to mainstream services. Of the rest, a cohort have indicated that they want to continue on their year 12 studies into 2013. We are still expecting some more referrals out of that group as we provide some options that we think they are not necessarily aware of. That is the level of work. At this stage it is 68 referrals.

MR DOSZPOT: What sort of an intake are you looking at next to come in?

Mr Hambleton: In 2013? That is the 68 referrals I was referring to.

MR DOSZPOT: The 68 referrals, yes.

Mr Hambleton: Yes, they finish at the end of 2012.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you feel that you meet all the requirements with that?

Mr Hambleton: At this stage House with No Steps has been very positive. It has had a great impact and the feedback we are getting from families anecdotally is that it has really been worth while. With the community access we continue to work with those families around maximising their opportunities. Straying back to the direct funding process, we are working with a family member at the moment who is taking up one of our direct funding pilot initiatives. That is going to enable her to be very flexible with her responses around her child getting some adult literacy and access to various community things just through funding from there and by managing it herself. Those are the options that we are looking at there.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MS HUNTER: I note that under the accountability indicators—and the minister did touch on this before—(c) was the community access. The hours of service are going up to 245,000 in 2012-13. Has this been worked out on how many new people will be coming into the system? Has there been some systematic way of working through this or has it simply been “this is what we can afford at the moment”?

Ms Burch: There is a demand management model in there. We have done some work on managing demand. I do not think that we will find a jurisdiction that meets every bit of demand, which is one of the challenges with the NDIS. Certainly, our growth and what we are looking at is based on demand, but I am happy to talk to Meredith.

Ms Howson: That particular accountability indicator has certainly been based on our understanding of the expected higher numbers of school leavers.

MS HUNTER: So it has been informed by that rather than just “we know they’re coming; we just need to put some more in there”?

Ms Howson: That is right.

THE CHAIR: We talked about the different housing models for people with disability earlier. Carers ACT had their housing forum here. Mr Doszpot was at that and Ms Burch was obviously at that as well. One of the things Carers ACT have called for—and they put in a budget submission for, I think, \$250,000—is to have that proper study done of the various housing models. There was a lot of support for that on the day. Obviously this proposal from Carers ACT was not successful. I just wanted to get a bit of an understanding of the basis on which it was not successful. I understand there are competing demands, but why was it not successful? Was it a case that it was prioritised but it could not be funded? What actually happened with that proposal?

Ms Burch: There is not a discrete parcel here, but we have done work and continue to do work. Before I bounce to the officials that probably can talk to the detail—

THE CHAIR: I would actually like my question answered about this particular bid.

Ms Burch: That is what I am doing, Ms Bresnan.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Burch: In 2010 we did a piece of work called “house to home”. The question is around looking at how you meet demand and the analysis around supported accommodation. So we have done a piece of work called “house to home”. We have also done demands so we can forward the requirements, and I think there are about 20. We know there are about 20 individuals that come on every year. Both those pieces of work are on our website.

We felt that that was in parallel with the other work that we continue to do in working with the sector about how we grow our accommodation and meet those requirements. We felt that the work that we have done and that we are looking at, particularly with the NDIS, would satisfy what we felt was the thrust of that, which is looking at how do you project the demand and how do you make sure that you do it in an effective manner. I am not quite sure if Ms Howson—

THE CHAIR: The thing which came out of the data was that it was not just about the demand; it was actually about the different sorts of models that are available. You are saying you think that work has been done?

Ms Burch: If you look to house to home, it is about different models. It is about different supported accommodation models. I have just been talking about our approach to the \$500 million in social housing. That will be about alternative supportive models as well for people with a disability. I am not quite sure if Ms Howson wants to make reference to the work that we have already done.

Ms Howson: Just to reiterate what the minister has said, in terms of the carers summit and their supported living options and their call to action, we feel that we have done work with the sector, particularly led by the NDIS, on demand management approaches. As a result of that we are now looking at reviewing our registration of interest and some of the principles around demand management. We feel that we have got a reasonably good handle on that for the time being. We also, as the minister has said, have done work on different housing models.

THE CHAIR: You have groups like Carers ACT and a whole range of parents, families and groups at that summit saying: “We actually think that work has not been done. We need a proper look at what are the different sorts of models and what will be the social demands for that.” When they are saying that, you are saying that that work has been done and what they were saying—

Ms Howson: I think we probably—

Ms Burch: I think that is being far too dismissive, Ms Bresnan.

THE CHAIR: No, I am not being dismissive at all. I am actually saying to you that

you have got Carers ACT and different groups saying, “We want to see this work done,” and there seems to be some feeling, particularly amongst carers, that they do not feel that work has been done.

Ms Howson: I think we have got some work in front of us in terms of communicating the outcomes of those pieces of work that we have done and where we are going with that. That is an area that we are putting a priority on in Disability ACT at the moment. I will refer to Meredith, but we have got some forums coming up shortly where it is certainly our intention to engage with the disability community on those issues.

THE CHAIR: Was it communicated to Carers ACT that that was the response from government to their proposal?

Ms Whitten: The Chief Minister wrote to Ms McGrath after the summit. Ms McGrath has since written to the Chief Minister again seeking further clarification.

THE CHAIR: It is my understanding that there was not a rationale provided.

Ms Whitten: The second response no doubt will have more information in it. Also, I have met with Ms McGrath in the last two weeks. The conversation was around how we could work together collaboratively in terms of what the housing options are that could be available both in the social housing context and also more broadly about what other financial investment could be made in relation to people with disabilities—that is, the private sector. How we could work together in terms of bringing in private sector partners as well as just the government. I think it is fair to say that the concept of collaboration is really important. The house to home report from 2010 is a very important starting base. We should continue that collaboration, particularly given that the national disability insurance scheme is on the horizon as well.

Meeting adjourned from 3.29 to 3.51 pm.

THE CHAIR: I know I had the last question, but I am just going to go to one quick question.

Ms Burch: We have thought of more answers for you, too, chair.

THE CHAIR: Good. Hopefully this is a quick question. It is in relation to this. We had a brief discussion about some post-school options. I am wondering what Disability is doing in terms of social ventures. I know that is being pursued across government, but I just wonder if there is anything particularly you are doing in that, with particularly an interest in post-school options.

Mr Hambleton: Can I just get you to repeat that? I missed it.

THE CHAIR: It is about social ventures for people with disabilities. It is something I have got quite an interest in—particularly if it is something you are looking at doing post school, but in general and then post-school options.

Mr Hambleton: Thanks for that. Currently there are 15 social ventures that are registered through the Social Ventures hub, and there are nine on the books at the

moment. There is one we are working with and there is the Growing Abilities one that is based with Marymead. We have been working with them about the concept of their horticultural social venture they are operating on. There are some out there in the community as well that are not reliant on us but that we have been supporting through some flexible respite options et cetera. That includes Uniquely Us based out at the Holt hub. I do not know if you have become aware of that. That is a cafe run by seven young disabled people that are assisted to do work. They are skill developing so they can move on to further areas in their life.

There is also one that I am aware of where a number of agencies have come together; they are looking at another horticultural option just outside—my geography around the ACT is still a bit poor, but in the south-west part of the ACT. So yes, that is a focus. And we work quite closely with the Social Ventures hub in those sorts of conversations, looking at how we can promote et cetera as well.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned the cafe. The particular thing I asked about was post-school options. The cafe you mentioned—would that be something you would see as providing-

Mr Hambleton: Yes. That is one of those. It is a throughput sort of model. It is basically skilling up people to look at other options. I was meeting with them at the post-school expo that we held the other week and speaking with some of the people—a parent and a couple of people that run it. That is what their aim is—to try and work it up and move it so that people are able to build a skill and then go on to other areas.

MS HUNTER: What work is government doing in this area? You have mentioned, Mr Hambleton, that there are some parents who have got up their own small business, if you like. There are other social enterprises, social ventures, that have been started up with different groups. But as the post-school part of life of young people with a disability has gone to CSD, what work is being done around expanding the options for young people? For some young people there may not be any options there in that work space, but I am just wondering about the different options for different needs and what work is being done there.

Ms Burch: Before we go back to you, Graham, let me say that certainly our quality of life grants also look at some of those ventures into business and how that could be started off as well. But also our Total Facilities Management, in its contract, has a very clear articulation around social ventures and supporting those vulnerable or disadvantaged groups as well. There are numbers attached to that, and there is certainly a requirement to get on and do their work. But I think Social Ventures is now, as it was a few years ago, very much a part of employment opportunities—individual employment opportunities as well. There are a number of things that we are doing. And just as an aside, let me say that I think Communities@Work might be looking at their cafe—taking on a social venture type of approach to that, similar to what happened with Cafe Ink with the Woden community service as well.

THE CHAIR: Is that the one down at the Tuggeranong Community Centre?

Ms Burch: Yes. The last time I was speaking with Lynne, she was trying to explore and learn from the learnings of Cafe Ink about whether she should go down that

stream. Sorry, Graham. Do you want to add something?

Mr Hambleton: The minister referred to the quality of life grants. Let me mention this year's spread of people who applied for quality of life grants. Microbusiness support has been part of those options that people have picked up on with that. We have also been linking people with various volunteering opportunities as part of their community access; a number of people have taken that option up as well. And then, as I say, it is working with particular issues such as Uniquely Us, which is the name of the cafe at the Holt hub; and Growing Abilities—I think we supported them in the funding of their final report from PricewaterhouseCoopers; it is due out this week—in terms of their proposal for that particular area. We will be working with them about how we can help them implement that as well. I have seen a draft, but the final one is out. We assisted them with the funding of that report. As well, we have explored others.

MS HUNTER: Sorry, who was that with?

Mr Hambleton: Growing Abilities is Marymead. They have got a couple of acres of land next to their space out there in Narrabundah.

MS HUNTER: Okay, and that report will be coming out.

Mr Hambleton: Yes. That is the report they are providing to us and their own board as part of their proposal they are pulling together. They are looking at a number of community partners working with them on that particular project as well.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a substantive question, Ms Hunter?

MS HUNTER: Yes. It may require Mr Hubbard to come back again.

Ms Burch: He would welcome the opportunity, Ms Hunter.

MS HUNTER: I think in the last annual reports he got out without answering a question. This is around the savings identified in this area. My understanding was that \$600,000 was to be saved. Where is that to be saved?

Mr Hubbard: At this stage, we are putting our savings in the context of savings from previous years—also the savings that are allocated. If you look at budget paper No 3, there is an allocation of savings into different areas. This is on page 135.

Ms Howson: While Mr Hubbard is getting his numbers together—there have been some prescribed savings for each directorate in the specific areas; they will be allocated as prescribed across our business areas.

MS HUNTER: A percentage of those you will be then allocating to this area under printing consultants, stationery et cetera.

Mr Hubbard: Exactly. The savings have been allocated on the basis of FTE. At this stage I have distributed them exactly on the basis of FTE across the whole directorate, so Disability will have its proportion based on FTE allocated.

MS HUNTER: Okay. That makes sense.

THE CHAIR: Do you have another question?

MR SMYTH: So the full breakdown across the four years—Community Services expect to save \$13 million. How will that be achieved?

Mr Hubbard: As I went through just then, Mr Smyth—what we are doing is this. We have allocated them based on the four years out on the proportions that are laid out here, with each area, or each output class, made up of a number of FTEs. The savings have been allocated on that basis. We will be working—

MR SMYTH: So you just get your share?

Mr Hubbard: Yes, you get your share. And then, as we go through the year, in discussion with the actual area we look at the best way that they fall. Obviously, we have been doing this for the last few years. We find that the most equitable way to do it is to allocate them as prescribed and then go to each business unit, look at how they do business, and look at where they have some flexibility and where they do not have flexibility. It is just part of our normal business.

Ms Howson: So we will be assessing the impact of that allocation. Obviously there will need to be a focus on maintaining essential services. That will be the primary driver of our decision.

MS HUNTER: If you have a business unit that, for instance, used far more consultants than anybody else, do you make adjustments or do you just stick to the FTE methodology?

Ms Howson: Traditionally we have been able to manage the savings impacts by sticking to the proportional allocations, and that is where we will start.

MR SMYTH: So the savings on page 138 listed as “Other agency savings”—what will they consist of?

Mr Hubbard: We have not got a description of what they are at this stage. We will be working with Treasury to glean what they might be. They might be savings from just about anywhere. It could be services provided by Shared Services; they might turn up some savings through IT savings. As we go through the year, we will glean what those are. We see this as a normal part of doing business.

We get indexation at the start of the year. We also get a savings allocation. We move through the year and just operate the business as best we can. As Ms Howson said, the whole emphasis is on service delivery, so we will make adjustments around that. I do not think that at this stage in the business cycle things are going to get too much better too quickly, so we will have to do some pretty significant looking at ourselves about how we can deliver services and generally trim costs. But that is part of my role every year. We have worked through over the last five or six years to do that, and we have managed to do that.

MR SMYTH: If you go to page 360 of budget paper 4, employee expenses, they only go up two per cent this year. It is not even WPI. How can we have any faith that you are going to meet that?

Mr Hubbard: That was 360, was it, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Yes, your operating statement.

Mr Hubbard: What were you pointing to?

MR SMYTH: The employee expenses line.

Mr Hubbard: Yes.

MR SMYTH: It goes up two per cent this year. Then in the outyears it goes down. How do you survive with a continual cut to staff?

Ms Howson: That is again where we go back to general strategies of looking at how we deliver our business. Essentially we are going to make decisions on the basis of the principle of maintaining essential services. We will need to have a look at where our highest priority program and service delivery areas are and ensure that they are adequately funded. There is good opportunity in this physical strategy to have a look at the way we deliver business.

Mr Hubbard: I might add a comment that of course the most accurate numbers are the ones that are closest to next year's budget. In the outyears we have not included any adjustments for likely enterprise bargaining agreements, because they have not been done.

MS HUNTER: So those 2014-15 and 2015-16 figures would go up?

Mr Hubbard: I am expecting them to go up-

MS HUNTER: With the new EBA.

Mr Hubbard: and reflect increases in the new EBA.

MR SMYTH: Which, of course, minister, may blow your surplus at 2015-16 if you have not funded EBAs.

Mr Hubbard: So it does not actually reflect a cut in FTE.

MR SMYTH: It must represent a cut in FTE because it goes down. If you are saying that in 2015, with \$77,981,000, you can employ the same number of people you employ today for \$79,717,000, I would love to see how you do that.

Mr Hubbard: I am expecting that number to go up by whatever the agreed negotiated EBA is for the current workforce.

MR SMYTH: So EBAs have not been included in the outyears?

Mr Hubbard: That is right. That is what I previously said.

MS HUNTER: That is quite interesting. The base drops, does not it, in 2014-15, 2015-16? If you go from \$79 million down to \$77 million, you have already lost a bit before you then add on the EBA.

Mr Hubbard: Yes. It is not quite that—

THE CHAIR: It is not?

Mr Hubbard: It is not quite that simple, no. My expectation is that it will go up from the existing base, taking into account that there are savings, there are likely to be some negotiations around total staffing levels. My presumption is that that base will be multiplied by whatever the WCI or wages indexation rate is in the future. At the moment, I cannot say what that is going to be. I think times are getting tougher.

Ms Howson: I think the issue is that we are going to need to find savings and we are going to have to look again at the way in which we deliver services. As a directorate, we will be looking across a range of core business processes. At the moment, I think there is opportunity for us in the way in which we design some of the very common processes that each of the business units actually has as separate entities. So there is an opportunity to collapse those, and I think that will promote better integration and also a one-CSD approach. There are opportunities in actually having to relook at the way we deliver particular services at the moment.

MS HUNTER: I want to go to budget paper 4, page 343. That is looking at the output class as a total cost to government payments and so forth. The description is “high quality community based, consumer focused disability services through government and non government service providers”, with a comment about meeting the needs of accommodation support and so forth. The description is outlined there. Could you advise me why you charge for respite care for disability clients and individual support accommodation for disability clients? I am just trying to understand the rationale behind all of that.

Ms Burch: For charges?

MS HUNTER: And I was wondering how much it costs to administer the system and what you are charging as well.

THE CHAIR: How do you actually determine what you charge?

Ms Howson: The question is: specifically?

MS HUNTER: First of all, the rationale for the charging. What is the formula for charging? How do you come up with the figure, and then how much is that compared to the cost of administering the system?

Ms Burch: We might invite Norm Fraser to come up.

Mr Fraser: The respite fees are based on respite as support—and the fees are to not be a supplement to the cost of living for individuals who are housed there—while they stay overnight. In other words, we are taking fees on their behalf for food, utilities and those types of expenses. So we are not supplementing their income. And the second point?

MS HUNTER: When you work it out, it is just food and utilities?

Mr Fraser: Yes, based on a fee per night, depending on whether they are a full stay and whether they are subsidised if they are kids and so forth.

MS HUNTER: So you come up with what you think it should be for a night. This is about the cost of utilities and food for each person. And then you charge that?

THE CHAIR: Are you basing it on any particular base level or is it just determined on what would be the normal costs or something like that?

Mr Fraser: It has been in place for some time and they are basically indexed for the cost of living. That is the best way.

MS HUNTER: And how much does it cost to administer?

Mr Fraser: I would not know that off the top of my head.

Ms Howson: We will probably have to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: It is taken on notice.

Ms Burch: We will bring back what we can. I am not quite sure how it is packed up internally.

THE CHAIR: We can get more of an idea.

MS HUNTER: I was just trying to get an understanding of the rationale on how that is worked out.

Mr Fraser: That is it.

MS HUNTER: Sometimes things are historical, pick a number and then just index it from there.

Mr Fraser: No. It was always just something that would avoid supplementing income, which is what they get a DSP for.

MR DOSZPOT: I have not asked too many questions today. So I would like to come back to those questions about the total efficiency dividend cuts for the Community Services Directorate for 2012-13. It is \$1.831 million for the Community Services Directorate.

Ms Burch: What page are you looking at?

MR DOSZPOT: Page 135 of budget paper 3. In regard to the overall total agency cuts of \$24.5 million, what is the correlation between how much each directorate gets cut? Is there a percentage on that?

Mr Hubbard: That is really a question for Treasury, I would think, but my understanding was that it was allocated on FTE and I think there was some allowance for small agencies as well.

MR DOSZPOT: In my brief look at it, it appears to be a fairly substantial cut. We are talking about nearly 7.5 per cent out of the total \$24.5 million cut.

Mr Hubbard: What percentage?

MR DOSZPOT: The total Community Services Directorate cuts for 2012-13, which is what—

Mr Hubbard: I am pretty sure I know what you are saying there. I think that would be our proportion of FTE, approximately our proportion of current FTE.

MR DOSZPOT: What sorts of services do you expect to lose as a result of such a great cut?

Mr Hubbard: I think the government has a clear statement about maintaining service delivery.

MR DOSZPOT: So we are going to be spending less, having fewer staff, but delivering more services?

Ms Burch: I think what Mr Hubbard and Ms Howson have already explained is the raft of set savings measures, but it is also a chance, as any service should have, to reflect on the models of service delivery as well. I think Ms Howson described it nicely by referring to the principle of front-line service provision being maintained. But you always look at back of house. You always look at the way of delivering those services, to make sure that you have got good, contemporary practice in place.

Ms Howson: And page 25 of budget paper 3 has a bit of an overall statement of the government's position in terms of the savings.

MS HUNTER: I also want to ask about resource management plans. Does the department have a resource management plan? Are you working on it?

Mr Hubbard: Is that about—

MS HUNTER: This is something that should be happening in each directorate.

Mr Hubbard: Are there better resources, utilities et cetera?

MS HUNTER: Utilities and so forth. I probably should call it the utilities saving plan,

which probably makes a lot more sense. Do you have one and are you rolling it out? My understanding is that you should be looking at things like cutting—

Ms Howson: Use of energy and so on.

MS HUNTER: Yes, absolutely.

Mr Hubbard: My understanding is that we are looking pretty closely at all the things that contribute. Basically it is our greenhouse strategy and how we utilise buildings, cars, those things that are expensive around resources.

MS HUNTER: Some of this is for meeting that carbon neutral time frame, but I guess the other side of it is about budget savings. Obviously one of the savings measures in here is about the fleet and how you can deal with the fleet. But what about your utilities or the buildings you are currently in? Are you looking at what you can put in place to try to save a few thousand dollars, maybe some hundreds of thousands of dollars?

Ms Howson: We are taking it broadly from the directorate responsible for the environment.

MS HUNTER: Environment and Sustainability.

Ms Howson: And they are prescribing a whole-of-government approach and principles that will support specific directorates around the decisions in that area. You are right that we are targeting the things that we can action immediately around, for example, choice of fuel and the types of vehicles that make up our fleet, to reduce our use of fossil fuels. That also goes, of course, to our carbon reduction targets.

In terms of broad practice across use of our facilities and our buildings, I think there are certainly things that are taken into account in fit out, and I think, particularly in our directorate, our approach to development of our public housing stock is where we make our most significant contribution. Ms Sheehan could probably elaborate further on that.

MS HUNTER: I am happy to hear it, but we do note the great work done there. Obviously we have very much pushed more money to go into making current houses more efficient—and also the new star ratings that have been achieved.

Ms Sheehan: And there is a significant program across our community facilities as well, to improve the energy efficiency of those facilities. Most recently, the minister announced that we had been successful in a matching grant process with the commonwealth government around improving the energy efficiency of our community facilities. It is not haphazard. We are developing a strategic asset management plan for our community facilities. We have a rolling program of assessments of the facilities. So the energy efficiency is directed towards a good knowledge of what the quality of the stock is and where we can actually make a difference. Across the facilities that we own, I think that we are making substantial difference.

MS HUNTER: I guess it does come back to central office, if you like, and what has been done there—the little things like encouraging all workers to turn off their computers overnight, which seems like a small thing but it can make a huge difference over a year in what you pay.

Ms Burch: Yes, a green office approach as well. The ESDD has got a number of initiatives that run through the office, and certainly CSD has picked that up. Mr Collett has come to the table; he knows all things facilities management. You might like to add to that, Mr Collett.

Mr Collett: In the recent re-fit out of Nature Conservation House, we worked very closely with the building owner to implement a wide range of energy efficiency measures. We replaced the ceiling grids to give a more effective distribution of conditioned air through the building. At the same time we have replaced the electrical lighting, not only taking advantage of more efficient fittings that are available now but also moving to automated close-off and shutdown of the electrical lighting after hours. We have been in discussions with the building owner around the possibility of streaming our garbage. We have recently worked with the building owner to replace the window treatments to provide a more energy efficient natural lighting system, which not only reduces the need for electric lighting but also reduces the demand on the air conditioning. The air conditioning was substantially upgraded, moved to a purge system that enabled us to use fresh air whenever the external air characteristics were suitable for the buildings.

Our facility in Moore Street is a more modern building, so it already includes a number of those facilities, but we are working closely with the other tenants in that building to look at waste streaming and improvements in that area.

Ms Sheehan has already highlighted the support from commonwealth to look at our community facilities, but we will be looking, as well, at our own premises. Some of the improvements that we have made to the therapy centre over the years have been around improving its energy efficiency. We will continue to work in that area.

THE CHAIR: I will go back to Mr Doszpot, thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. I want to continue on page 135 in budget paper 3. The total cuts for 2012-13 are \$1.831 million. What percentage of that would be applied to staff cuts?

Mr Hubbard: It is actually shown in the budget paper. Let me just grab the right page for you. It is actually on page 364. It is written there. Let us have a look. I think it has been. It looks like it has been netted off here, but—

MS HUNTER: Isn't it 587 of budget paper 4, which lists the number of FTEs?

Mr Hubbard: I have not worked out the proportions from the table, but it will mirror the actual proportions of the total allocation.

MR DOSZPOT: That is what I am getting at. In the overall agency table, employee expense cuts are the highest in each category.

Mr Hubbard: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: I would like to get some understanding of what it would be in Community Services.

Mr Hubbard: I will get that actual proportion.

THE CHAIR: Have you got that figure there or do you need to take it on notice?

Mr Hubbard: I will take it on notice, but I might have it before the end of the session.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Hubbard: I have not done the proportion.

THE CHAIR: So that is taken on notice?

Ms Howson: We will see if Mr Hubbard can get the figures before we finish.

MR DOSZPOT: I would appreciate that. And by extension, the ongoing years of 2013 and 2014—the figure goes up quite substantially. If we are using the same total agency figures, that figure keeps going up fairly high. So I would like to see the figures on that basis.

Mr Hubbard: I will get you the proportion that has been allocated per year.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will go to therapy at 4.30, but I have got a question. This might be one that needs to be taken on notice as well. It is regarding ISPs. I wonder if it is possible to get a figure on how many applications for ISPs have been received in the last 12 months.

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: And how many were successful?

Ms Burch: Ms Starick or Ms Whitten might have that with them; if not, we will take it on notice. Just in the last 12 months?

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is right. Just the last 12 months will be fine.

Ms Burch: We are quite happy to provide you total quantum as well, because they are all—

THE CHAIR: How many applications were received and how many were successful?

Ms Whitten: I do not know that we have got the application figure, but in 2011-12

122 people received ISPs.

THE CHAIR: Do you keep a record of how many applications there are?

Ms Whitten: I probably need to take that bit on notice.

THE CHAIR: Take that bit on notice.

Ms Whitten: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So there were 122?

Ms Whitten: Yes.

Ms Burch: Do we have the quantum attached to that? That is 7½ million.

THE CHAIR: And you will take the number. Mr Hubbard has it, I think.

Mr Hubbard: Mr Doszpot, this is the employee expenses. If you look on page 364—

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Mr Hubbard: As you pointed out, the large proportion is on employee expenses. It is shown there, a couple of lines from the bottom of the page. The savings initiatives are 1.485 out of employee expenses. So of the 1.8, approximately 1.5 is allocated as employment expenses. I will give you the forwards as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. And subsequently the questions I would like addressed are these. How will that impact on the services that are currently being provided? What sort of staff cuts? Are we looking at staff cuts? I would like some explanation.

Ms Burch: They are offsets.

Ms Howson: Yes. So again, across the directorate we feel that we can manage that through—

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry; go on.

Ms Howson: We feel that we can manage that through the strategy that I outlined a little earlier, which is again maintaining a focus on essential front-line services but looking at improvements in productivity in back-of-house operations.

MR DOSZPOT: I will be very interested to see it. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I have a question on an accountability indicator on page 347, about the client satisfaction that is measured by the annual survey. I may have asked this last year; I cannot recall. The 75 per cent figure—how do you arrive at that number as a target?

Ms Whitten: In an ideal world it would be lovely to be 100 per cent. I do not know

why we have got it at 75, but if you look at a lot of the targets across the Community Services Directorate we are probably around that target.

THE CHAIR: I think some other jurisdictions have 85 per cent as their target. I am wondering why we have arrived at that figure of 75.

Ms Whitten: I think, as the minister mentioned earlier, our previous results have been around 65 per cent; so in a sense we have still got a little way to go—

Ms Burch: It is a stretched target.

Ms Whitten: to stretch it to 85, I suppose.

Ms Burch: Would you like a copy of the survey so you can get a sense of it?

THE CHAIR: Yes, that will probably be useful. I was just interested in why we have got that figure and it does not change over time.

Ms Howson: I was just going to say that in establishing the target we would generally look at the previous year's performance and make sure that we were setting ourselves a target where we would be basically incentivising ourselves to do better. Then, as we meet those targets, we extend them further.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you might need to take on notice what the actual percentage of satisfaction has been over the last three years or something. It would just be interesting to see if it is—

Ms Whitten: In our annual report we—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, that is fine. Okay. That is fine.

Ms Whitten: have got the last ones—the last two years.

THE CHAIR: I will have a look at that. Yes, that is fine. I can look at that.

Ms Burch: It is around 65 per cent.

Ms Whitten: Yes. It was 63 in 2009-10 and 65 in 2010-11. The reasons for dissatisfaction are around communication flow and consistency of staff, which would make—

MR SMYTH: Just a moment there. I am on page 357 of last year's budget paper. The target in 2010-11 is 75 per cent, not 65 per cent.

Ms Whitten: Sorry, that was the result.

Ms Burch: That was the result.

Ms Howson: No, that is not the target. That is the actual result.

THE CHAIR: The result was 65, yes.

MR SMYTH: Okay. So the 2010-11 outcome was 65?

Ms Whitten: The 10-11 outcome was 65 per cent.

MR SMYTH: So how certain are you of making the 11-12 outcome of 75?

Ms Whitten: Really, that is a matter of getting the result from the people that we survey and it depends who actually answers the survey response, I suppose.

Ms Burch: It is about a 75 per cent response rate, but we will provide the survey to you because it does allow people to make comment across a range of things and they could be making comment about their shared accommodation, changes of staff, the state of the house—a whole range of factors come in there.

Ms Whitten: Yes, absolutely.

MR HARGREAVES: Could you also give us a copy of the survey you sent out last time, unless it is the same?

Ms Burch: Yes.

MR HARGREAVES: Just to see how you have actually responded as an organisation to the way in which people have commented to you.

Ms Burch: All those survey results come back in and they do inform how we go about our business in the coming year.

THE CHAIR: We have got time for one final question.

MS HUNTER: I want to go back to the numbers of FTE on page 587 of budget paper 4. We had a 2010-11 actual of 880. Then there was the budget in 2011-12 with 906. The estimated outcome is 944; so what has spiked? What has happened to take it from 906 to 944?

Mr Hubbard: I might just take you back to page 339, because it is the same numbers; it is the same line.

MS HUNTER: Yes, fair enough.

Mr Hubbard: If you have a look at the footnote, that gets you from 2011-12 to the estimated outcome. You will see that what has happened there is that we have had—

MS HUNTER: Okay.

Mr Hubbard: So that explains getting to the 944.

MS HUNTER: Thank you. Then in 2012-13 we are going down to 932. I am assuming it is not going to be the additional staff that have been put in in the last year

in response to these reviews. I think that was Mr Dospot's question—where staff were going to come from in going down from that 944 to that 932.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, really, what we do is we compare the 11-12 budget to the 12-13 budget. As you can see, there were some one-offs in the footnote, which is dealing with some of the issues in the new strategic projects. That 906 figure incorporated some savings. If you look at the end of that footnote, it was planned that we would lose a certain number of FTE. What we did was, rather than lose the FTE, we actually took it out of admin savings. So that accounts for about 16 people. So we added those back in. Also, when you look at the new initiatives that we have funded through the budget, that pretty well takes you above the 932, plus we have made an adjustment for the allocation of FTE savings off that number.

MS HUNTER: Okay.

Mr Hubbard: There are quite a few ins and outs. There is commonwealth—

MS HUNTER: Yes, there are ons and offs.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, there is commonwealth funding that has come in that has provided a couple of FTE. So it is quite a complex number, but the real change from year to year is the 11-12 budget to the 12-13 budget ons and offs, and I think the footnote explains quite clearly the move from 906 to 944, if you are happy with that?

MS HUNTER: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Okay. We will have to move on to therapy services. We will just get the relevant officials.

Ms Burch: Thank you, Disability ACT.

THE CHAIR: You probably heard me earlier. I will draw your attention to the privilege statement on the blue card in front of you. Could you indicate that you are aware of the implications in that? I will go to Mr Hargreaves first.

MR HARGREAVES: Thanks very much. Minister, I am interested to know how Therapy ACT is ensuring that it intervenes early with kids requiring therapy and how it collaborates with other relevant services in and outside of the portfolio.

Ms Burch: We do work closely, particularly with education. I think we show that through the therapy assistance program. But we have a range of programs that have one to one support, but also we support parents in some parenting programs in giving them skills to care for their child at home. Ros Hayes is well known to everybody in Therapy ACT. Paul Wyles has been heading up Therapy since about November. I can christen you with estimates if you like, Paul, and you can answer this question.

Mr Wyles: Certainly. Therapy ACT works in lots of ways collaboratively and to intervene early. The research shows us that it is really important to intervene early, particularly with children with developmental delays and disability. We need to intervene early in the life of the child and also in the life of the problem. So a number

of Therapy ACT services are targeted really as early as possible with children; so there are services that are really targeted at toddlers—from that period upwards.

Some of the work we are doing collaboratively across government. I think that one of the really innovative initiatives is with Housing ACT in relation to having occupational therapists work with Housing to make assessments and provide reports in terms of modifications of properties. We work closely with the child and family centres—for example, funding a partnership with ACT Playgroups around coordinators for playgroups and allowing therapists to be part of that process so that we can intervene early and detect children who might need some support.

More generally, we work with the child and family centres to provide therapists as consultants where they may view a child as needing some support and assessment. We have occupational therapists and now speech pathologists doing work with five of the Koori preschools across Canberra.

MR HARGREAVES: How many kids are there in the Koori system?

Mr Wyles: They see the children on an as needed basis. They are going in each term. I understand that at some of those schools they are seeing up to 20 children across the system.

MR HARGREAVES: Excellent.

Ms Burch: But the drop-in clinics at the child and family centres are a great way of making that connection, because it is that simple open door. You go into a child and family centre, which is a familiar environment, and then take advantage of that other access to therapy services as well. You can have a range of services and then you can connect back in to Therapy ACT.

MR HARGREAVES: In one of my previous incarnations, I ran an equipment loans service. That is part of the rehab thing now. I am looking at the children and young people equipment loan service. What I would like to know is what you see is the reason for having it as a discrete program. What are the range of equipments that people can access and at what cost?

Mr Wyles: The equipment loan service is a free service and it is eligible for all ACT children and young people up to the age of 16. It is a great service. Probably the best way to explain it is that we have had some really positive feedback in the last six months from the occupational therapy team at the Canberra Hospital who have increasingly referred children with leg fractures or breaks. As those children are leaving hospital, they are often requiring some equipment as part of their rehabilitation and getting back on their feet.

The sort of equipment that might be supplied in those cases would be equipment for bathing, toileting and mobility. The equipment loan service will fit that equipment and assess and make sure that the equipment is right for the child or young person. They will deliver that equipment to the families. So the families are very pleased that, on top of everything else in terms of having a child that has limited mobility, the service can go to their home and do that fitting and delivery.

MR HARGREAVES: Are they required to put a deposit down?

Mr Wyles: No.

Ms Burch: The service has just about doubled over the last 12 years. It goes up to the age of 16, as I understand it. One of the benefits is that families know they can, to use a very crude term, try before they buy as well, or particularly have equipment for loan while the child is going through various growth phases as well. They do not have to necessarily buy that equipment untested and make sure it is right for their little ones.

Mr Wyles: There has been a growth in demand. In July 2001 there were 51 pieces of equipment loaned and in May, this past month, we are up to 96. So it has almost doubled.

MR HARGREAVES: Do you have on your books specialist wheelchairs for kids with spina bifida—that kind of stuff?

Mr Wyles: Yes, we do.

MR HARGREAVES: And you fit them. What sort of system is employed in that? There used to be a Lego system that they used to put together to shape the wheelchair componentry to the child. I understand that is now outdated technology; there is another way of doing it. I was curious to know how that works.

Mr Wyles: I am not sure. That is a very specific question.

Ms Hayes: The equipment in the equipment loan service is not individually tailored in that regard, Mr Hargreaves. It comes with a range of different paddings and strappings so that it can be adjusted to best fit the particular spinal configuration of a child. But it is not the final equipment that will be that child's very own wheelchair, which may be specifically individually moulded for them. They are using this as a loan until such time as their own equipment comes through. That very specialised wheelchair modification is not done by us; it is specialised engineers who do that.

MR HARGREAVES: That makes sense. My last question on this is: how long can people borrow the stuff for?

Ms Hayes: We say when we lend it to them that they can have it for six months, but the reality is that if they need to extend it because their own piece has not arrived, we usually do extend it.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: You had a supplementary?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, just going on from the point that Mr Hargreaves made regarding therapy services and early intervention. We have had approaches from concerned parents who had therapy services withdrawn for their child on the basis that they have had their turn and they needed to go to the bottom of the waiting list. Given

the importance of early intervention, is this an appropriate policy?

Mr Wyles: I would not use the term “withdrawn”. What effectively happens is that children come into the system. Children, young people and families work with the therapist to establish a goal. Once that goal is met, in order to manage the waiting list and throughput, if the family have another need, they may be asked to go back onto the waiting list to allow another family to come into the system.

MR DOSZPOT: What do you mean by “another need”? What if the need continues; the need is still there?

Mr Wyles: We work with them around the goal that is established at the beginning of the therapeutic process. Once that goal is met, we may finish that session and they may go onto the waiting list. If they want to establish another goal with the therapist, they can come back into the service.

I suppose the other thing to say is that much of the work we do really relies on families and, in some cases, schools to consolidate the work through ongoing work. It does not mean that you are attached to a therapist until you are 18, for example. It is about how we can all work together to meet the therapeutic goals of that child.

MR DOSZPOT: I cannot take, obviously, the individual case to its ultimate point, but the impression we gained was that that person still needed that early intervention and was told that they had to rise up through the ranks again.

Mr Wyles: The other thing we do is work really hard to see early intervention broadly. There is early intervention that can happen at schools, through drop-in clinics and through group programs. We try and ensure that families have access to all those things.

MR DOSZPOT: Given that this parent had met the goals and had been put back onto the waiting list, what sort of turnaround time would there be until they came up for assistance again?

Mr Wyles: It depends on the needs that might be identified by them. We have a four-tiered priority system. It would depend on that.

Ms Howson: In terms of the demand for services, it is very important that we are actively managing the needs of our client base in order to meet those demands. We take a multifaceted approach. Some of that will be allocation of very direct support and services from therapists. We never leave a family without some avenue to address the needs of their children. That is by engaging with other agencies and by providing strategies for the family to pursue. As Mr Wyles said, if the circumstances of that child changed then they would be reassessed.

MS HUNTER: That probably builds onto the question I had. It is about hours of therapy services provided—page 348, budget paper 4. It is going up. In 2012-13 there is an increase of 100 hours there. In budget paper 3 it is outlined as the therapy assistance program. It seems to be around half a million dollars in next year’s budget and then in 2013-14. It is really pleasing to see the ongoing funding for this initiative.

I think it has been a fantastic enhancement. I just wanted to ask a few questions around that. First of all, we only have it going till 2013-14. What is the intention there—to pull it or to keep it?

Ms Burch: No. This is a program I am very wedded to, Ms Hunter. I think it is a great program. The pilot has shown great success. I think in the six-month period there were about 150 children seen. What we have found has been a great result; there has been significant benefit. They all had individual goal setting and they have all achieved or overachieved that. But the other thing we have found is that about 50 per cent of them were not known clients to Therapy ACT. So we need to work through that and establish that referral system.

The reason two years is there is that it was put in as a pilot program. We are still working, in many ways, through that pilot program and coming to the end of that. I am very keen to see this model work. The two-year funding allows us to continue it, but to refine it based on what we will find and the feedback that will come back from families. I am also very aware of the significant federal investment into kids with a disability at school and we have got the NDIS playing out as well. To me, this is just about putting money in the kitty but recognising that the model and the different environment will change over time.

MS HUNTER: So it is a commitment to ongoing recurrent funding. It is about refining what happens depending on what is coming out of the evaluation reports. I understand from the website there are two evaluation reports—one in December and one in July.

Ms Burch: Yes, there have been a couple, but we need to work with education and work more broadly with Therapy ACT, given that 50 per cent are not clients, and I think there is work to do with the child and family centres as well. It is not about pulling it. It is about keeping money in there but, because it is such a new program, we do need to be a little bit more responsive with it as well.

MS HUNTER: Are we able to get a bit of an understanding—the July one is obviously on its way—of what has come out of the evaluations to date?

Ms Overton-Clarke: There were three specific outcomes. One the minister has just mentioned, which is that 50 per cent of all children referred for intervention during the pilot were new clients to Therapy ACT.

MS HUNTER: Just to understand that—and Ms Hayes will be able to help here—were these children in mainstream schools?

Ms Hayes: Yes, they were. This was one of the aims of having this service delivery. It was to be able to increase the accessibility of the service to a range of people who would not normally see themselves as coming to a specialist therapy service. They would not see their child as having a disability, or maybe they were from a non-English speaking background or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who would not normally access these services. It is around providing the sort of intervention that can really make a difference, in the first year of school, to giving those children who might have come from a lower base a real boost in that first year

in terms of their development.

MS HUNTER: So how do you identify them? You are testing and running it through everybody or you are waiting on referrals?

Ms Hayes: In the schools that we are working with the classroom teachers identify them, or for those coming into year 1 the preschool teacher is identifying them, saying, “Of the group I have got coming up, I am worried about these six.” It is that six where we will be looking to run a little communication, speech and language program or a mobility program or a physical program. There are a few particular areas.

These are not children with disabilities. They are not an ongoing group. They are children with developmental delays who will benefit from that kind of input. Usually if we can give that input over the first one or two terms of their school life, they are fine. They do that bit of catch-up, and at the same time I think teachers and teachers aides get some really good ideas about how they can work with those kids and can keep that program going. It is one of the real benefits of embedding this sort of thing within the school system rather than having it outside.

MS HUNTER: This gives you the capacity to go out and work with those teachers and teachers aides. They know the child who has come through the service and has a particular aid. It might be a program you are trying to run out and they are across that program or across how that aid works. I remember that I raised this a few years ago, which is why it is really pleasing that the service is funded.

Ms Hayes: One of the other aims of the program was to make it sustainable—that once a program had been run in the classroom then that program was sustainable. That involves teachers and teachers aides being skilled up to go on providing the program. Otherwise, if you are just relying on therapy and therapy assistants to do it, we would need hundreds of them. So it has got to be on that basis.

MS HUNTER: Great. That was just one of the findings.

Ms Hayes: Seventy-eight per cent of children completing an individual program with a therapy assistant reached or exceeded their target goal and 85 per cent of children completing a group program with a therapy assistant improved in standardised testing. Those were the three main outcomes from the initial review in December.

MS HUNTER: And you will have more data coming through in July?

Ms Hayes: It started in the third semester, so, yes, the third term.

Ms Burch: Yes.

Mr Wyles: It might be useful just to be clear about the schools that it was trialled in.

MS HUNTER: Yes.

Mr Wyles: There were four public primary schools—Gowrie, Caroline Chisholm, Florey and Harrison; two special schools, Malkara and Cranleigh; and one Catholic

school, Mother Teresa.

MS HUNTER: At the moment it is being piloted with these schools. What is the thought, minister, once this pilot is done, around whether it will be rolled out across other schools?

Mr Wyles: I have already had some discussions with the education and training department. They are very keen to continue working with the therapy assistance program and modelling it against their four regions. Clearly, we are going to have to continue with those schools, probably until the end of third term, with term 4 being a transition term going forward. As the minister has stated, we really need in this next two years to work closely with ETD around getting a very integrated and sustainable model. That means considering a couple of other things like the substantial professional development training program that Therapy ACT does for education but also a lot of consultation that happens into schools through existing teams from Therapy ACT.

MS HUNTER: So at the moment you do training with teachers?

Mr Wyles: Yes.

MS HUNTER: How long is that course? Is it a few days, is it a day or what is rolled out?

Ms Hayes: We have a whole range of programs across each of the disciplines. The speech pathologists in each semester run a couple of workshops, usually one more language based and one more speech based. Last year they ran one whole-day workshop for teachers. Occupational therapists and physios jointly run a program for teachers around children that teachers find difficult to deal with because they do not have concentration—the fidgety child, the non-focused child. We run some programs around communication devices for children in specialist schools, particularly, so that they understand the specialist communication devices.

MS HUNTER: Is that a more recent one that you have been running?

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MS HUNTER: Good.

Ms Hayes: We have an annual meeting with education around what their priorities are for input into teacher education. We work with them to devise a program across the 12 months that meets their needs. To some degree, it also meets our needs in terms of what we think teachers need to know about children with a disability who might be in their classroom.

MS HUNTER: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I will defer to Mr Doszpot.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. In respect of autism, the commonwealth Department of Health suggests that early intervention needs to be extensive and intensive. What support does CSD provide for children diagnosed as autistic or as having ASD?

Ms Hayes: Therapy ACT has a specialist autism service which is staffed with speech therapists and occupational therapists, and access to a physio and psychologists. That service is specifically for the nought to eight range, because we are looking at early intervention. A child with a diagnosis of autism can go to that service and be provided with a fairly intensive program. It is not the intensive in-home therapy program but, in terms of the kinds of input from professionals, they get quite good input from speech pathologists, an OT and a psych in a multidisciplinary team approach.

MR DOSZPOT: How many hours per week of ASD-specific—

Ms Hayes: It is not that kind of weekly program. It is the input from the specialist professionals. That will vary. When they first come in, there will be an assessment, getting to know the family. There might be some intensive intervention, which might be an hour a week. Then the family will learn some strategies. They will be implementing those. They will be followed up perhaps weekly or fortnightly. They develop some goals. They might have some goals around bed time, toileting or communication. They will work with them on those specific goals. And then, once those goals are met, they will perhaps have a break from that for a while and then go back. It is very variable, depending on the family's needs, where they are in a cycle, what other input they are getting and a whole range of things. There is not one single program.

Ms Howson: So it is quite a tailored response to the needs of individuals?

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any figure that could give us some indication of how many hours per week ASD-specific intensive early intervention for a child with autism are handled by the ACT government?

Ms Hayes: No; we do not have a program for that.

MR DOSZPOT: What about the qualifications of staff within the CSD on this? Do any employees hold a certified behavioural analyst qualification, a BCBA qualification?

Ms Hayes: I believe a couple of our staff do, yes. All our staff are professionally qualified. They are all qualified—as a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, a psychologist. Some of them may have got those other qualifications. They often look at those qualifications when they are students if they are working in one of those programs as an assistant.

Ms Burch: And there are other programs, because we offer the family group program, support training and playgroups.

Ms Hayes: Yes. Playgroups, yes.

Ms Burch: Did you want to talk about that?

Mr Wyles: I was just going to say that Disability ACT fund Autism Asperger for a family support worker.

Ms Hayes: Sure, but the question you are asking is in terms of the one-on-one behavioural intervention programs. We do not offer those intensive programs 20 or 40 hours a week or whatever.

MR DOSZPOT: We have gone beyond that.

Ms Hayes: We offer the allied health professional input to the family.

MR DOSZPOT: I am trying to get a bit more information on the actual qualifications of the staff that provide this.

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: In previous estimates there was a suggestion that there was a psychologist with a BCBA qualification, but I cannot seem to locate one on your website.

Ms Burch: They are not a requirement.

Ms Hayes: We do not list all the individual staff and their qualifications. There are 120 staff. We do not list them individually with their qualifications.

MR DOSZPOT: So you are confident that you do have some with BCBA?

Ms Burch: Is it an essential requirement?

Ms Hayes: It is not an essential requirement, no. In fact, that particular staff member is currently on maternity leave.

MR DOSZPOT: So you have got one?

Ms Hayes: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: That is what I was trying to find out. Does the minister support the view provided by Therapy ACT to her that, in respect of autism, early intervention services can only work to provide improved coping mechanisms?

Ms Burch: I think our intervention covers a range of responses and seeks a range of different outcomes and goals, depending on the individual and family. I am not quite sure, Mr Doszpot, that that very narrow interpretation covers the response provided by Therapy ACT to individuals and families with a child with autism.

MR DOSZPOT: I will make a qualification, if you like. Do you recognise that such

advice contradicts the commonwealth department's view on intervention which provides assistance?

Ms Burch: What advice? What comment?

MR DOSZPOT: The commonwealth government's advice is different from what I quoted to you before.

Ms Burch: We support early intervention. We have a range of programs that both Ms Hayes and Mr Wyles have outlined that go to support individuals and families with children with autism. We have had this discussion here many times.

MR DOSZPOT: We have had it a couple of times.

Ms Burch: We have had it just about every estimates and annual reports I can remember. And it is the same with your query on the qualifications of staff. What you are seeking—ABA training is not considered an essential requirement for the clinicians at Therapy ACT.

MR DOSZPOT: I have got your comment on that. We will make appropriate inquiries as to what we were told about the requirement. But thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: I have one; this is one that probably needs to be taken on notice. I wonder if it is possible to get a breakdown on where Therapy ACT services have been provided in various settings. That would be Therapy ACT sites, specialised clinics, people's homes and residences, childcare settings, educational settings, workplaces and other community settings. If that is possible, could we get that breakdown?

Ms Howson: Are you looking for a precise answer or a general answer? If you are looking for a general response to that, we could probably give that to you now.

THE CHAIR: If it is possible, to get a breakdown of the services across each of those settings.

Ms Burch: We will bring back what we can.

THE CHAIR: Whatever you can provide would be good.

Ms Burch: We will check the *Hansard* on the list.

THE CHAIR: Whatever sites you have that you can provide would be useful, yes, across whatever settings.

Ms Burch: Whoever we provide therapy services to, yes.

Mr Wyles: Being aware, of course, that we provide a lot of services in people's homes.

THE CHAIR: Yes. If it is possible to get further the percentage that is in people's homes as well, that would be good—the level. Mr Hargreaves, did you have a

question?

MR HARGREAVES: No. I just make the observation that, with respect to some of these in educational institution settings, there is always a challenge between which has primacy—the disability service or the education service. I am aware that over the years there has been a bit of a difference of opinion between the providers of education services and the providers of disability services as to which one it should be—which one should overlay onto which. From my own experience, I believe that, with these ones, it should be the disability one with an education overlay, not the other way around. Do you have a view on that, minister?

Ms Burch: Certainly we work, within the school setting, very closely with the education sector and the teachers. Our support is around making sure that the child is supported and has a therapy outcome where they are able to engage and participate in their education environment as well.

MS HUNTER: I want to follow up on an answer we had earlier around the professional development activities that Therapy ACT carries out with schools—with teachers, teachers aides and so forth. Can you just outline what other education and health promotion activities you do.

Ms Hayes: We call them service requests; that is how they come to us. Lots of community agencies might request some input. For example, the maternal child health nurses might request we do some in-service training for them around some aspect of child development or some aspect of feeding or whatever, and we will do that. We work with childcare services and with family day care services. We work a lot in the adult area with Disability ACT, obviously. That is the almost daily way in which we provide in-service training to all of the disability support officers as they join. And they do their induction training; quite a lot of that is provided by Therapy. So they are getting that level of professional development.

Schools, particularly the specialist schools and the early childhood schools, ask for some input. For example, when the early childhood schools were being established, they were quite interested in having some physical education programs that really promoted coordination and good growth motor skill development for kids in their settings. We did some work with them. We look at each one of those requests. Basically we make a decision about whether this is within our core business and whether it would benefit our target group for us to be providing this level of input. We cannot do everything, and the more professional development you are doing the less therapy you are doing. You have to do that balance: is this basically going to benefit the target group or should we say, “No; you need to get that from somewhere else and we will spend our time doing the therapy”?

Ms Overton-Clarke: There is a recent initiative that we are actually being funded for on top of the usual GPO, so I might just get Mr Wyles to talk about that.

Mr Wyles: This was really one of the unforeseen benefits coming out of the therapy assistance program. The Catholic Education Office were very keen to see some speech pathology services more broadly across some of their schools, so we have entered into an arrangement with them where they pay for a day and a half of speech

pathology time, covering about six schools. That is really a consultancy role, professional development role. The Catholic Education Office have been very happy with the service they have been receiving for the last probably six weeks and are paying for that until the end of next year.

MS HUNTER: So by “professional development” you mean going out and working with the teachers who have students who have these needs?

Mr Wyles: Yes. Where teachers might see a small group of children with similar needs, that speech pathologist can develop a program for the teacher to implement in the classroom.

MS HUNTER: That brings me on to speech pathologists. We did have a bit of a shortage some years ago. We had extra money put in; I think around eight FTE were added. How are we going with retaining speech pathologists?

Mr Wyles: Speech pathology numbers have been stable this past year and the year before, so we have got just over 28 speech pathologists. We have the normal churn. This workforce—

MS HUNTER: There were a number on maternity leave, I believe, weren't there?

Mr Wyles: That is right. But there was some recruitment earlier this year and we have been able to recruit from interstate, which has been really pleasing. Demand for service has increased, but we are also meeting our target in terms of clinical face-to-face hours and in some months exceeding it by substantial amounts, over 30 per cent. I think that is really a function of having a very stable speech pathology workforce, on top of other things.

MS HUNTER: And do we have any shortages or any workforce concerns in other areas?

Ms Burch: I think there are a few vacancies.

Ms Hayes: Psychologists, I think we would have to say.

MS HUNTER: How many are we down, or what is the issue there?

Mr Wyles: We just completed recruitment for psychologists last week and I have just been advised this morning that we are likely to offer four positions. For clinical psychologists particularly it is a competitive market. We are competing across government, with New South Wales, the private sector.

THE CHAIR: This is with child psychologists, is it?

MS HUNTER: So what are we doing about working with the institutions so that we are getting in early and maybe spruiking the ACT and ACT government as a place to work?

Ms Howson: There may be some specific things Therapy ACT are doing, but from a

whole of directorate point of view we have got a senior officer dedicated to workforce planning. That person is actually working very closely with the Australian Catholic University at the moment to improve the level of engagement between our directorate and that organisation and to make our directorate look like an attractive place for students to want to come and work when they graduate. We are looking at re-engaging with the Australian Catholic University around internships. That is right across the breadth of the work that we do in the directorate.

Ms Overton-Clarke: The other thing I would add is that we have MOUs with other universities as well, so we offer cadetships during holidays where students come—try before you buy. The specific universities are—

Ms Hayes: Charles Sturt is where most of the speech pathologists are trained, so we have an ongoing relationship with them for placements. Paul was just saying about recruiting speech pathologists. We are successful at recruiting interstate and I think that is because a lot of them have done a placement with us at some time over their studies and they love their placements so they are happy to consider coming back to work. Within the ACT, the postgraduate occupational therapy school has now been established and we have an arrangement there for students to do a rotation through Therapy ACT as one of their placements whilst they are doing their masters in occupational therapy. That gives them a good exposure to paediatric occupational therapy and the joys of that, so we hope we will be able to recruit from that program as well.

MS HUNTER: Which institution is running that?

Ms Hayes: I am sorry; I have been away from Therapy for a few months and these things leave you. It is at the University of Canberra.

Mr Wyles: With psychologists, as Ms Hayes was saying, the evidence is that placements often lead to permanent employment. We have a constant stream of students from all the professions but from psychology at ANU and the University of Canberra and often those graduates are offered positions. But we need to emphasise that it is a very competitive market for psychologists, and to work privately is very lucrative, so people will often come into the public sector, get some experience and then move on.

MS HUNTER: It is, and the schools are finding the same now that they have opened counsellor positions up. It is not an ACT thing; it is right across the country. So I guess it is around what work and thinking is being done to try and get that edge and try—

Ms Burch: Trying to get them early and attach them.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes, and the other point, whilst we laugh about a lot of them going off on maternity leave—

Ms Burch: We have not got a feel for that yet.

Ms Overton-Clarke: As you know, we have often talked here about the fact that they

are one of the biggest profiles in the directorate in terms of permanent part-time positions. So, much as it pulls out Paul's and Ros's hair in terms of being able to schedule them all and so forth, we are very mindful of the fact that we want to keep our people and so—

MS HUNTER: Rostering in a way that assists work-life balance is a way to do it.

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is huge, and the community setting. They really like being not associated with the hospital and being in a community-based setting, so the fact that we have got two locations across Canberra—all of these things add to being able to keep, as much as possible, really good staff.

MR COE: I have a question about the therapy in schools program, which is in budget paper 3 on page 128. I see there is a bit over a million dollars allocated for the next couple of years, a pilot study.

THE CHAIR: We have asked this question, I think.

MS HUNTER: We have talked a lot about this.

Ms Hayes: The therapy assistant program.

MR COE: Okay.

MR DOSZPOT: Early intervention services in budget paper 2, page 26.

Ms Hayes: I did not bring budget paper 2, I am sorry; I have only 3 and 4 with me.

MR DOSZPOT: It is about 550 group sessions through the child and family centre program.

Ms Hayes: That is not Therapy. That is managed through the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support.

Ms Burch: It is the wrong output.

THE CHAIR: It looks as though we have come to the end of questions for Therapy ACT. Thank you, minister and officials from the directorate, for appearing before the committee today. As mentioned at the commencement of the hearing today, there is a time frame of five working days for the return of answers to questions taken on notice at this hearing.

Proceedings will resume at 9 am tomorrow, 26 June, commencing with the committee's examination of the Chief Minister's portfolio, output class 1, government strategy. This will include an examination of the following outputs: government policy and strategy, public sector management, coordinated communications, community engagement and ACT executive.

The committee adjourned at 5.15 pm.