



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, PUBLIC WORKS
AND TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

(Reference: Annual and financial reports 2007-08)

Members:

**MS M PORTER (The Chair)
MS C LE COUTEUR (The Deputy Chair)
MR A COE**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2009

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms N Derigo (Ph: 6205 0435)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Committee Office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

APPEARANCES

Department of Territory and Municipal Services	53
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Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 9 am.

Appearances:

Stanhope, Mr Jon, Chief Minister, Minister for Transport, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Minister for the Arts and Heritage

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Byles, Mr Gary, Chief Executive

McNulty, Mr Hamish, Executive Director, Environment and Recreation

Morrell, Ms Sue, Executive Director, Community and Infrastructure Services

Elliott, Mr Tom, Executive Director, Enterprise Services

Watkinson, Mr Russell, Director, Parks, Conservation and Lands

Mannall, Mr Graham, Manager, ACT NoWaste

Zatschler, Mr Gerhard, Manager, Heritage

Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT

Greenland, Ms Karen, General Manager, Transport Regulation and Planning

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, ACT Library and Information Services

Swift, Mr Tim, General Manager, ACTION

Ryan, Mr Stephen, Director, ACT Property Group

THE CHAIR: Good morning everybody. Thank you very much for appearing before us this morning in the inquiry into annual and financial reports. I know that you are all familiar with the contents of the privilege card. I am sure that you have all read and understand the implications of the privilege card?

Mr Stanhope: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Chief Minister, would you like to make some opening remarks?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the invitation to attend today. As always, officials from Territory and Municipal Services and I stand ready to provide assistance, where able, to the committee. I have been asked to make an opening statement. I have had one prepared which I am happy to deliver.

The Department of Territory and Municipal Services delivers many of the critical services that keep Canberra running—the services that make Canberra one of the most beautiful places in Australia, if not the world, in which to live. TAMS's essential function is to build and maintain the places and to provide the services that Canberrans use every day—our roads, parks, public spaces, urban places, sports grounds, waste services, libraries and government shopfronts. The range of responsibilities which TAMS has is unique, and it is a model that I am sure other jurisdictions would wish that their constitutional or governmental arrangements permitted.

It has to be said that a government department with the mix of responsibilities that TAMS has is only possible in a jurisdiction like the one that we have here in the ACT, which combines territory and local government functions. The department comprises

a workforce of around 2,800, including a significant number of field-based employees. It manages a total of 171,000 hectares of land encompassing national park, urban open space and forests, and manages around 630,000 trees within the urban part of the ACT, within the streets of Canberra.

TAMS maintains our community's infrastructure, including 2½ thousand kilometres of road and bridges and 1,860 kilometres of community paths, and has an ongoing strategic plan in relation to adding to that infrastructure, as well as maintaining it. So that is one of the very significant functions of TAMS.

I will briefly outline some of the achievements delivered through TAMS in 2007-08. TAMS, during that financial year, watered and maintained 4,000 trees and 15,000 shrubs—and planted, significantly, many of them since the 2003 fires. In that time, 24,000 trees have been watered—always, of course, with non-potable water. The department has upgraded the Melba shopping centre and is currently progressing upgrades at Garran and Ainslie shopping centres, which commenced during that period. During 2007-08, the department also worked most particularly with communities to upgrade the Erindale shopping centre.

In 2007-08, the department, through Canberra Connect, answered one million calls to that service. It has delivered the new ACTION network 08; launched the sanctuary at Tidbinbilla; completed the Gungahlin Drive extension; commenced major roadworks for the airport road upgrade, stage 1 of which covered the duplication of Morshead Drive and Pialligo Avenue; delivered road safety improvements for a number of blackspot sites; and, most particularly, four intersections and five mid-block lengths of road, including Coppins Crossing and the Naas bridge.

That is just a very brief summary of some of the work and achievements of TAMS. TAMS is that part of the ACT government's public service which the majority of Canberrans come face to face with in their daily lives. It is the department that organises and is responsible for the administration of our libraries, waste collection, the look and feel of our communities, maintaining our footpaths, trimming our trees, removing dead trees, rendering the place safe, our road safety programs, and the quality and maintenance of our roads. It is the department which impacts most directly in a day-to-day sense on our lives. Mr Byles and his senior executives and officers who are here today are very happy to detail with pride their continuing achievements. Thank you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: Chief Minister, could you outline for the committee the current policy and progress with the protection of trees, which comes under—

Mr Stanhope: Which aspect of trees?

THE CHAIR: Significant trees. That comes under the—

Mr Stanhope: The conservator of flora. I will defer to Mr McNulty. He will be able to give a rundown on the policies under which he, as the statutory officer, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, operates in relation to trees.

Mr McNulty: Tree protection in the ACT is carried out under the Tree Protection Act,

which protects regulated and registered trees on leased land. Anybody wishing to undertake a tree damaging activity on leased land has to apply to the department. An assessment is made of their request and a decision is made as to whether or not to grant the request to undertake the activity. If the approval is not granted, they have the ability to seek a reconsideration of that decision. In that case the trees are considered by the tree assessment panel, a recommendation is put to the conservator and the conservator makes a decision on the reconsideration request. The Tree Protection Act has a number of criteria under which requests for tree damaging activities can be considered. If the request does not meet one of those specific criteria, we have no choice but to refuse the request.

THE CHAIR: Is there an increase in the requests because of the drought? Have we experienced additional pressure in this particular area, with trees perhaps dying in the drought?

Mr McNulty: Since I have been the conservator, which is now 2½ years, the number of requests has been pretty consistent, at around 1,800 a year. I cannot say that in the last two years there has been an increase, but because the drought has gone on for a protracted length of time, there may well have been an increase over the period before that. What I can say is that the people in the tree unit are incredibly busy, because there is a statutory time frame within which these requests have to be dealt with, and they are very busy making sure that those requests are dealt with within that statutory time frame.

THE CHAIR: What is that time frame?

Mr McNulty: Fifteen days.

THE CHAIR: That is quite a quick turnaround.

Mr McNulty: A very quick turnaround.

Mr Stanhope: There is an associated issue, Ms Porter, in relation to trees that goes just to the requests that the conservator would receive in relation to significant trees, and applications for tree damaging as opposed to the removal of trees that perhaps represent an aesthetic concern as well as a danger. Mr Watkinson is perhaps more directly involved in removing those trees that are dying either as a result of drought stress or as a result of age. Just recently, an additional \$390,000 was made available for the removal of trees, the majority of which, I assume—and Mr Watkinson might be able to confirm—are dead as a result of a combination of age or drought. I think at the moment it would be most particularly drought. I understand, from memory, that in the last five years 15,000 trees have died or been removed. Mr Watkinson can perhaps explain the process in relation to actions which the department takes without an application through the conservator, but as part of our responsibility for maintaining the city.

Mr Watkinson: The Chief Minister is quite accurate in his memory. We have taken out 15,000 dead and dying trees in the last five years. We estimate that we have had about 18,500 trees affected by the drying climate that we have at the moment and we are still actively marking dead trees for removal. Those trees are identified either by

our own staff on routine inspections or by members of the public notifying us that they have concerns about trees that they see in our parks and streets.

THE CHAIR: What is the process once they have been identified and marked?

Mr Watkinson: Once we get a request, there is an initial assessment made based on the information that has been provided—whether they sound to be an immediate hazard or not. We would normally try and get out and inspect those trees—if we think it might be dangerous, within five days; if we think it is just another deteriorating tree, within two to three weeks. The tree is assessed as to what level of risk it might form for the public. If it is assessed as hazardous, it will be removed within two weeks. If it is not assessed as immediately hazardous, then it is scheduled for removal as part of our tree removal program. Obviously, we try and do that in a structured way rather than just bouncing all around the city.

THE CHAIR: So you do it area by area?

Mr Watkinson: For the trees that are not assessed as immediately hazardous, yes, we have a running sheet of dead and dying trees and we try and allocate those for removal on an area basis.

THE CHAIR: And their replacement?

Mr Watkinson: The replacement is obviously dependent on seasonal conditions, but we have a street tree replacement program that has been running for a number of years. That is at a much lower level than the number of trees we are having to replace at the moment. We are taking out a lot more trees than we are able to replant at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Because of the seasonal—

Mr Watkinson: Because of the number of trees that we are having to take out. Our normal street tree replacement program goes through suburbs and has a fairly limited budget. That is a sort of programmed replacement of trees but, because of the excessive numbers that we are now having to take out, we have not been able to keep up with the number of trees being removed.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Stanhope: Just for the sake of completeness, in the context of the government's street tree replacement program, I might invite Mr Watkinson to give some update on the government's approach to renewing the urban forest. There is a major issue facing this community and the government is grappling with it.

As I indicated at the outset, Mr Watkinson and his officers maintain 630,000 trees in the urban area. Many of them now are approaching their centenary. Many of them, over and above those that are drought stressed, are dying of age. We have entered into a major program which, over the next 20 years, we anticipate will require us to renew entire streetscapes and perhaps undertake a complete renewal of our urban forest over that 20-year period, at a cost, we imagine or envisage, of something in excess of \$200 million. It is a major piece of renewal.

We focus often on the need to renew and maintain our road infrastructure, our stormwater infrastructure. Whilst I hesitate to call our trees infrastructure, Canberra's trees are at the heart of this city, and there is a major issue and a major resource issue facing the community. We have begun that work. I would welcome some completion of the issue of street tree replacement.

So as not to create a wrong impression, I might just say that the government is investing quite significantly in trees. We have a million-tree program, which I pursue quite vigorously. There are two issues in relation to tree planting and tree replacement or renewal. There is the issue of replacing trees in situ in streets and then there is the issue of additional plantings, which are being pursued by the department throughout the whole of the ACT.

Mr Watkinson, the street tree renewal issue is a really significant one for this community, because the government will increasingly be allocating significant amounts of resource to this. We will have to; otherwise we will face some serious implications in relation to safety as well as facing the possibility of entire streets of trees within the older suburbs of Canberra simply dying on us and our being left or caught short in relation to our urban forest and its health. Can you talk about the steps that we have put in place, for the information of the committee?

Mr Watkinson: Of course. I would personally use the term "green infrastructure", because I think the urban forest is very much part of Canberra's infrastructure. We estimate that we will have to remove around 400,000 trees during the next 20 to 25 years, which is about two-thirds of the urban forest. The government has signalled its support for that program by an indicative allocation of \$5 million a year in the next four years. We have established an expert reference group, which is assisting us in developing a methodology about how to undertake this task. It will probably be the single biggest urban tree replacement program undertaken in Australia. There will obviously need to be an extensive community engagement program. The removal of trees, particularly if they are not dead, is always a controversial issue.

What we are looking to try and do is to renew this urban forest infrastructure in a strategic way rather than the rather haphazard removal of trees that we are undertaking at the moment, which is dependent on where the trees are actually dying. That is leaving us with something a bit like a jagged tooth effect, because we have got random removal of trees in streets, which is starting to degrade the look and feel of Canberra. What this program is about is much more of a strategic tree replacement program based upon an assessment of risk. We are currently starting an audit of all the urban trees, which will take a number of years. We will program a systematic replacement of trees, probably at a neighbourhood to suburb level, and we will commence that program, subject to budget appropriation, next year.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Mr Stanhope: In the context of consultation and not taking the community by surprise, can I say that the government has been talking for the last couple of years and we have been appropriating funds for the urban renewal. We have an expert reference group which is at the formative stage. But I do believe that we have reached

a stage in our consideration of the issue where we need to begin to engage with the community and the community needs to begin to engage with us. We will formalise that consultation as we advance the work of the expert reference group. There are some very significant challenges for us as individuals, for us as a community and certainly for us as a government or an assembly in relation to our capacity to commit to the renewal of our urban forest.

Mr Watkinson is right: we have all seen it. A drive down Macarthur Avenue is instructive. It is essentially eucalypt plantings—very old. Significant numbers have died; they have been replaced. In avenues such as Macarthur Avenue, we now have trees in a whole range of ages. I am one of those who think that perhaps that is a better approach. There is a view which I find very confronting that we will reach a point in relation to some avenues and some streets where every single tree—Mr Watkinson did not go to this but, when one weighs up the options, one is to replace trees as they die so that perhaps every second tree is replaced, every third tree is replaced or every fifth tree is replaced.

There is another view that every tree be replaced, so that we move into a street, say in Manuka or Forrest, remove every single one of the century-old trees in that street and then replant. The expert reference group has a view about whether or not we would replant the species that are currently there, which of itself is very confronting. I am a bit of a traditionalist and inclined to trust Weston in relation to these issues, whereas these new-fangled modern-day experts suggest that maybe we should be taking account of how those trees performed and of issues like climate change—heaven forbid!

These are the issues we face. I know that the Canberra community has not engaged with this yet, but this is a debate and an issue—a reality—that is coming to Canberra, and it is a reality that we need to deal with. Mr Watkinson, through his expert reference group, believes that potentially, within that very short time frame of 20 years, we may need to replace 400,000 trees. We are talking about the trees that we love, most particularly in the inner north and the south—those wonderful treescapes in Forrest, Yarralumla, Deakin and Ainslie that might need to be all removed. It is a horrifying, horrifying thought.

This is a very significant piece of work which TAMS has just commenced and in relation to which we need to engage very closely with the Canberra community.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. You have given us a very full overview of that. Obviously it is significant. I am sure that the committee will look at that when we prepare our report. That will be one way of getting this information out into the public.

Mr Stanhope: We need this to be a conversation with the entire community.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We have started the conversation in a very real way today.

MS LE COUTEUR: I should note that Downer also has some beautiful street trees, while we are at it.

Mr Stanhope: As I said, all over, yes. And you would hate to lose them, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Absolutely. I am with you on the jagged effect, actually.

Mr Stanhope: I must say that is my instinct too, but some regard that as a bit of a heresy.

MS LE COUTEUR: In terms of tree removal, when you are asked for permission to remove a tree, do you look at each tree individually or do you look at the cumulative impact of tree removals? That appears to be one of the issues that the community has.

Mr McNulty: When we get a request, we look at the tree and the context in which that particular tree is sitting. If I understand your question correctly, it is about it being difficult to say that, if a person on this block requests a tree removal and some time later someone down here does, we should consider this issue in considering this request.

MS LE COUTEUR: In effect, yes.

Mr McNulty: We have to comply with the legislation and consider the trees against the criteria in the Tree Protection Act. Some of those criteria talk about inappropriate plantings and the fact that, if a particular tree is planted very close to other trees which are in better condition, which are better trees to keep, that is a criterion for removing this tree. We look at that sort of thing, but not so much at what is happening down the street. You need to look at the criteria in the act.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. You talk about your views being taken into account as far as the territory plan is concerned.

Mr McNulty: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that working well, and how do you formulate your position in terms of variation to the plan?

Mr McNulty: In terms of referrals from the planning authority generally, they get referred to the conservator for consideration of tree issues. We provide advice to the planning authority on whether the trees are regulated. If they are regulated, they need to be protected unless they meet certain criteria; if they are not regulated, the conservator does not have a view per se. We provide that advice to the planning authority. The planning authority consider that advice with all the other factors they have to consider in making a decision on planning issues and they make the ultimate decision.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you do advice on DAs?

Mr McNulty: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is all I have got about trees. I have got some other

questions about other parts for this witness.

MR COE: I have got a question on trees.

THE CHAIR: Go ahead.

MR COE: Can I carry on down that line?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR COE: Mr Watkinson mentioned the audit that is being conducted of the urban trees. I am wondering whether you could please expand on that audit. Is it a database? What sort of information do you record about it? And what do you actually intend to use that data for, in a day-by-day sense?

Mr Watkinson: There was a previous audit done by the Australian National University for us seven or eight years ago now and that is what has alerted us to the need to start the urban forest replacement program. That data is now out of date; so what we are commencing is virtually a tree-by-tree assessment of the current health of trees. This is being done under contract. That data will then be used when we start implementing the urban forest replacement program, in terms of what the minister has just described as “do we take out a whole street, half a street?”, because those decisions to some extent will depend on the overall health of the street.

So we are looking at formulae: perhaps if one-third of a street is assessed as unhealthy, then we might only take out one-third and try to extend the life of the other two-thirds. If 75 per cent of the street is assessed as unhealthy, then we might take out the whole of the street. Those are the types of formulae that we are trying to develop and it will be driven by the assessment of the health of trees and the associated risk if they are assessed as unhealthy.

MR COE: Will you actually be able to generate numbers for how many trees there are in a given street in this database?

Mr Watkinson: Yes.

MR COE: It seems a mammoth task to put something like that together, that sort of project.

Mr Watkinson: It is, but all that data will be put onto a GIS system; so it will be spatially recorded and against that geographic location there will be a record of the condition.

MR COE: How many people are working on this project?

Mr Watkinson: I am not sure. I think we have got two people from the contractors commencing work at the moment. I think that is starting this week or next.

MR COE: And do you have a rough time frame for when it might be completed, if this is ever completed?

Mr Watkinson: The first phase of assessment, I think, is that we are trying to get 18,000 trees assessed before winter, because there is obviously an issue of getting the trees assessed before the deciduous species shed their leaves and then that will have to be repeated for a few years before we get one—

MR COE: By two people?

Mr Watkinson: It will be more than two. I think we are just starting with two. We have got two companies engaged. I just do not know the detail of how many are actually working at the moment.

MS LE COUTEUR: Turning now to the non-trees, to the flora and fauna part, I have got some questions about the wildlife caring licences, which would be what you call keep licenses. It is at page 223. How long does it usually take for the granting of a renewed licence? I am sorry, this is a bit of a sore point.

Mr McNulty: It depends on the information that is provided to us. If we get all the information that we need, that we require to assess the application, we can assess the application quite quickly. If the request complies with the policies and the procedures within all our management plans, it is much easier but, if we get a request where the information is not provided and we have to make frequent requests to have the information provided, it obviously takes very much longer.

MS LE COUTEUR: And how many of these licenses require inspection of their caring facilities before they are granted?

Mr McNulty: I think they all do.

MS LE COUTEUR: And would a vet be required to provide information before it is granted?

Mr McNulty: Generally not.

MS LE COUTEUR: You have mentioned a number of investigations, stuff that was referred to the DPP. Did it go any further? Have you prosecuted?

Mr McNulty: I understand there are a couple of prosecutions going through at the moment with some tree-related matters, where people have removed trees without permission. One of the other investigations was, I think, related to a kangaroo and a dog incident down in Deakin. There are various investigations. A lot of them are trees but there is also wildlife, illegal hunting and things like that.

MS LE COUTEUR: When you have got “investigations” on page 233, that is wildlife and trees?

Mr McNulty: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: On the next page, 244, you have mentioned a number of plans of management. I guess generally I am interested in a very quick, because we do not

have a lot of time, update on how they are going. You have got four of them.

Mr McNulty: Perhaps Mr Watkinson can update. It is his area that prepares the plans.

Mr Watkinson: I can give an update on that. From memory, we are currently going through the recommendations of the planning and environment committee's review of the draft Namadgi management plan. We hope to have that completed in the next few weeks. The Jerrabomberra management plan will shortly be coming forward for approval. We have now got a final draft prepared of the Jerrabomberra wetlands nature reserve management plan.

The Googong foreshores draft plan, we are still preparing the final management plan of that, following a period of public consultation. But again, we would expect to be bringing that one forward in the next couple of months for approval. And we have commenced the Tidbinbilla management plan process recently and that is currently going through a series of public meetings at the moment.

MR COE: I have got a question that is more so, I think, in the parks, conservation and lands component of the report but it might be a good segue into that section. What is the "give a tree a drink" program, as mentioned on page 50, how is it assessed and what are the success criteria?

Mr Watkinson: The "give a tree a drink" program was initiated last year. The concept was to encourage residents to look after the trees in front of their properties. We provided information in the form of a brochure that gave guidance on how best to water trees, how to ensure that water does not run off on dry ground, how to use mulching. But it was very much an information encouragement campaign than anything more than that. I do not think we would have any criteria about how successful that has been. The emphasis, of course, was on using non-potable water. What we were doing was encouraging people, as well as looking after their own garden, to spare a bucket every now and then for the tree in the nature strip in front of their house.

MR COE: Is it an ongoing program or just more of a one off?

Mr Watkinson: No, we are hoping to give another boost to that program this year and probably following years, so long as these drought conditions continue. Particularly when we are undertaking new street tree planting, we try very much to give priority to areas where we know the community and the local residents are going to help us look after those trees.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said "spare a bucket for a tree". I always wondered, looking at the size of the street trees, does one bucket make any difference.

Mr Watkinson: One bucket is better than nothing. But no, you are absolutely right, of course. The reality is that people have so much grey water that they can get rid of and people are obviously interested in looking after their own gardens. We are just asking that they give some consideration to the tree in front of their properties as well.

MR COE: Has every household received that brochure?

Mr Watkinson: From memory, we did a media campaign, making people aware that we had the brochures available and then the brochures were provided through our shop centres and on request.

THE CHAIR: Mention was made of the Tidbinbilla plan. I go to page 11 of the report where it talks about the opening of the sanctuary in April 2008 as a major achievement. I was wondering whether I could have an update about the sanctuary and what is happening there, please.

Mr Watkinson: The sanctuary is proving to be very popular. We have an arrangement with Conservation Volunteers Australia where we now have a number of trained volunteer guides who are there to interact with visitors to the sanctuary. That initiative is receiving very positive feedback and it is a bit of a different approach than just having a number of signs, although we do have quite a good interpretative display at the sanctuary as well. But the ability to stop and talk to someone who is knowledgeable and you can ask questions of is proving very popular with visitors going around there.

The wetlands are maturing quite well, although they are currently quite dry because we have not had much rain for a while. We are currently working with Birrigai, which is now being managed jointly with Tidbinbilla, to expand the range of school-based programs which are using the wetlands and particularly the sanctuary as part of environmental education.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur, did you have a question? I think we are onto parks and conservation.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. Now that parks and conservations has been split from DECCEW, how does the policy input go, given that parks, conservation and lands still contains the ecologists and the people on the ground?

Mr McNulty: We are developing arrangements with DECCEW to make sure that there is strong interaction between the two departments on a whole range of policy and operational issues because there are many interfaces between TAMS and DECCEW. Ultimately I imagine there would be some form of an agreement which will outline how that all works because you are right: there are many, many areas where the policy responsibility sits in DECCEW and the operational aspects sit in TAMS and we have to make sure that operates in the best way possible.

But if I can give an example, not specifically related to PCL but rather to waste, there is a working group of TAMS and DECCEW people working on a waste strategy which is working really well and, I believe, will get a really good outcome. The policy input from DECCEW and the operational input from TAMS will yield a really good outcome. So there are mechanisms in place to do with the interfaces between the two departments.

THE CHAIR: As an example, with regard to bushfire management, you would do the policy and the operations?

Mr McNulty: The bushfire policy per se is set out in the strategic bushfire management plan, which is prepared by ESA. The preparation of subregional bushfire management plans and the annual bushfire operations plan is undertaken within TAMS. So we do all that work but in close liaison with ESA, obviously.

MR COE: On that answer, how do you communicate with ESA? Are there permanent officers or are there almost daily or weekly meetings through the bushfire season where you assess situations?

Mr McNulty: The relationship with ESA operates at many levels. There is a strategic bushfire management plan which has, as I said, the policy aspects. We are currently preparing the subregional bushfire management plan, which will be the next layer down, which specifies over a 10-year period how the department intends to manage fuel. There is an annual bushfire operational plan, which is a works program for each year. There is also an MOU between TAMS and ESA which says how TAMS will provide fire-fighting, fuel management, training and services for bushfire purposes. As well as those documents, our bushfire management staff have frequent, regular meetings with ESA, especially during the fire season, but even during the preparation of all the plans there are frequent meetings with ESA. So there is a really close relationship.

MR COE: With regard to fuel management, are you happy with the level of fuel in our parks at the moment?

Mr McNulty: Our bushfire operations plans are endorsed by the Bushfire Council and signed off by ESA. They are audited on a regular basis and we are complying with the requirements of our bushfire operations plans. We test fuel at about 600 locations, I think.

Mr Watkinson: Seven hundred.

Mr McNulty: At 700 locations throughout the territory, which provides the basis for the work that goes into the strategic subregional bushfire management plans and the bushfire operational plans. I believe that we are doing the best job we can with the resources we have got available.

MR COE: And how does it compare to previous years?

Mr McNulty: I am not aware of that. Russell, do you know that?

Mr Watkinson: Could you elaborate on what exactly you mean?

MR COE: Just in terms of levels of fuel and the actual fuel management, how does the status of the current program compare with the status at this time in previous years?

Mr Watkinson: Last year we completed, from memory, about 90 to 95 per cent of what was in the bushfire operations plan. There is an annual assessment of fuel loads, which is used to construct the annual bushfire operations plan. That is put to the Bushfire Council, which do a review and make comments about whether they think it

is appropriate or not. The program runs from year to year at roughly the same levels. But the subregional fire management plans, which are currently at the stage of finalisation before coming out for public consultation, address putting in place a mosaic of burns across the landscape over a long time horizon, so that we are sure that we have proper asset protection as well as maintaining ecological values, and that is always a difficult balance to find.

MS LE COUTEUR: While we are continuing on with fires, you said that you have added an extra 24 kilometres of fire trails. What is the total amount of fire trails in the ACT, approximately? Do they require a lot of managing or do they basically manage themselves—you construct them and they stay there?

Mr Watkinson: We have 477 kilometres of fire trails and we have a program of upgrading those, because different fire trails are designed to cater for different types of machinery that need to travel along them. Some are just for light units and some are for tankers; so there are different grades. These are all documented in the bushfire operations plan. There is an annual program of making sure that all those trails are kept clear before the summer fire season, so that they are accessible for their designated use.

THE CHAIR: We might move on. I think we have done trees, so we might move on to heritage. Do you have any questions on heritage?

MS LE COUTEUR: Can we do some others for PCL apart from fires? On page 48 it says you are replanting the pine plantations. How is that going, and are you still using pines for planting?

Mr Watkinson: I am sorry, I did not quite catch the question.

MS LE COUTEUR: Basically, are we still planting pines?

Mr Watkinson: Yes, we planted 18,000 pines last year, but that was infill into Uriarra forest. So it was replacing seedlings which had died off from the previous plantings.

MS LE COUTEUR: And that is the only place you are doing pines?

Mr Watkinson: Before the fires we had a commercial plantation estate of around 16,000 hectares. Currently, we have a plantation estate of about 8½ thousand hectares, and they have been actively managed. So there is pine plantation management, which includes some planting, taking place within those residual plantations.

MS LE COUTEUR: On page 51 you mention master plans for Glebe Park and Black Mountain. When will they be released for public comment? What sorts of things do you have in mind?

Mr Watkinson: The Glebe Park master plan has been approved and released, probably about six months ago, from memory.

Mr Stanhope: No bridges in that.

THE CHAIR: Sorry?

Mr Stanhope: There are no planned bridges in Glebe Park.

MR COE: No surprises? No planned lakes either?

THE CHAIR: I am obviously missing the point, but carry on.

Mr Watkinson: With the Black Mountain draft master plan, we are hoping to have a complete draft for public consultation in the next couple of months.

THE CHAIR: And we presume there are no bridges in that one either?

Mr Stanhope: There is half a bridge, actually. I am not quite sure why the Black Mountain master plan does not have a bridge to Weston Park, because the Weston Park master plan has got a bridge to Black Mountain. I will digress on an interesting issue. The joint standing committee on the national capital, chaired by Senator Lundy, has instituted an inquiry into the proposed Immigration Bridge. Senator Lundy has also indicated today that she proposes to take submissions on a proposal and a draft master plan.

You do need to understand the hierarchy of the planning process which the department engages in in relation to the master planning. It does give the possibility, following a suggestion by a representative organisation, that consideration be given to fulfilling Walter Burley Griffin's design for footbridge access from Weston Park to Black Mountain peninsula. Senator Lundy, in today's media, has indicated that they would propose to take submissions on that aspect of the draft master plan for Weston Park, which will be very interesting. It is probably a little bit premature because we are going through a consultation process of our own in relation to a master plan for Weston Park, and it is now being inquired into by the joint standing committee of the national parliament.

For the sake of the conversation, I express the view that these are issues that we should seriously consider and not just dismiss as some frolic. I do not know whether people understand. I am interested that Brisbane are currently building two bridges across the Brisbane River and have just completed a footbridge. I do remember the hullabaloo that the Brisbane City Council and Peter Beattie faced when he proposed to build a bridge from South Bank to the Queensland University of Technology. There were almost riots in the streets. I think it is used today by about 100,000 people a day.

It is always an interesting part of the process—the initial hullabaloo, the threats of riots in the street, chaos and desecration of a view. The footbridge across the Brisbane River is now probably the most used bit of pedestrian access in the entire city of Brisbane. To just dismiss out of hand such consideration because it offends the National Trust's view of what Walter Burley Griffin might have meant or intended is incredibly short-sighted. The world changes.

In the context of how mobile we are as a community, the Weston basin is 16 kilometres around. I think the prospect of cutting it in half is a really good idea in

the context of people having access to the national institutions and a different bike route. I think it is quite selfish to suggest, “No, here’s a view-perfect that we can’t afford to offend.” That is really incredibly short-sighted. We should have a mature conversation about these things.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. We really need to move on.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could we talk about heritage areas?

THE CHAIR: You have got a question on heritage?

MS LE COUTEUR: It is about the relationship between city property owners and TAMS. On page 50 it talks about there being a levy and what is funded by this. You are building the brand. What do you mean by that?

THE CHAIR: Which paragraph on page 50?

MS LE COUTEUR: Sorry, I must have been given the wrong page number.

THE CHAIR: It is the middle paragraph in the second column.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Stanhope: Ms Le Couteur, this is a reasonably new initiative. It is probably less than 18 months old. In consultation with Canberra CBD, the city centre marketing group, most particularly driven by Manny Notaris and the city centre traders, there is a desire by a significant portion of property owners and retailers within the city heart to work in partnership with the government. It is a model that is pursued very successfully in many other cities around the world.

The government agreed to the partnership, initially, I must say, with some interest in terms of what might be achieved. In the first year of operation of the partnership, a levy was imposed by the government but which was hypothecated to an incorporated association of Canberra Centre businesses for the maintenance of the city heart or Civic. You see the fruits of the partnership in the lovely pansies that are currently adorning the city, along with some geraniums and some other lovely flowers. I must try and discover the secret of keeping petunias alive in hanging baskets. I must say that I am intrigued.

There are some other capital works. But there is now a very significant partnership developing, and I hope that it will expand to encompass partnerships in relation to a whole range of other municipal activities which occur within the city centre. I believe that, as a result of the success that has been achieved in this first year, it is a model that we should consider in relation to some of our other major town centres. Mr Watkinson can probably go into some more detail, but it is working extremely well. I think it is lifting the city. It is quite interesting how ownership of municipal maintenance by those most affected in a city centre really does seem to create an opportunity for a quantum growth or leap in the way in which city centres or downtown areas are managed.

I had discussions in Richmond in Virginia on a model that is employed there, but it is far more expansive here. The city heart organisation or its equivalent in Richmond, the capital of Virginia, took over all responsibility for street cleaning and waste disposal. Their experience, with respect to a request by governments to seek partnerships in maintaining that part of the pavement in front of you and keeping it clean and swept, was that when the government was responsible, shop owners were disinclined to keep the area in front of their shops or premises clean. Immediately after the levy was posed and the city heart took over responsibility for cleaning—which has not happened here in the way that it does in some American cities—shop owners, all of a sudden, thought, “It’s our responsibility; we’ll do it.” Governments do not have the capacity to sweep in front of every shop every day, but a shop owner does.

The psychology of some of these things is quite interesting. In downtown Richmond, the city heart equivalent in Richmond lobbied for the responsibility for waste, for street cleaning and for street sweeping. They believe that the implications of that are enormous for the look and the feel of their city centre, which is far daggier than ours, with a quality of public art that is far less significant than ours; nevertheless they are learning. I have invited them here to see how it is really done.

THE CHAIR: Mr Watkinson, do you have anything that you would like to add?

Mr Watkinson: I just want to reiterate what the Chief Minister has said. The partnership is proving very positive in that we are now cooperatively managing the private and public parts of the public realm. So rather than having differentiation on cleaning the streets and buildings between what is public and what is private, we are now seeing that managed collectively. It is certainly, in my view, improving the look of the city centre. I think this type of partnership has the potential to go into a number of different areas in the future.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would that include the maintenance of the Melbourne and Sydney buildings? Whose responsibility is that?

Mr Watkinson: Certainly, the Melbourne and Sydney buildings are private, so it is the private owners who have to maintain the buildings and the immediate surrounds.

THE CHAIR: Did you have a question on heritage?

MR COE: Yes, I do. With regard to the backlog mentioned on page 47 of approximately 300 historic sites, what sort of progress has there been on that front?

Mr Zatschler: Over the last 18 months we have made quite significant progress. When I started managing the unit there was a backlog of over 300 places that had been on the register, some for short periods of time and some for a longer period of time. What we have done with the Heritage Council and the unit is to go through and have a look at the places that had been nominated for consideration. Approximately 50 were taken out of the backlog because they were on national land and the Heritage Act did not apply.

It was a concern for the council, because a number of these places have got heritage

values for the city of Canberra, but given that the act did not apply we cannot consider those. But we have identified those places of significance and interest, and we negotiate and work with the NCA—that is, the planning authority—to make sure that those heritage values are protected. We have also established an order of priority and worked our way through that, to the extent that over 23 places were assessed and either included on the heritage register or struck off.

MR COE: In an outcome sense—not the actual process—how does NCA’s treatment of heritage sites differ from the ACT government’s?

Mr Zatschler: They have got their own planning legislation.

MR COE: In terms of the actual outcome, do you think they deliver a comparable service to what the ACT government delivers?

Mr Zatschler: It is difficult to provide an accurate answer on that. In some areas there is some good work being done, but there are always opportunities where things that have been nominated for our register or included on our register are not necessarily on their radar. If it is on their radar, more often than not the development applications are referred to us for consideration and we provide informal comment on that; if it is not on their radar, then there is an opportunity for—

MR COE: Do you meet with them regularly? Do you put things on the radar?

Mr Zatschler: Yes, we do. We have got a list of places that we share with them. Part of that was the register of the national estate. We meet with them at least on a quarterly basis and we have informal meetings on a regular basis at officer level. We work very closely with Parks, Conservation and Lands; they have got rangers out and about. If issues arise, they notify us and we pick the phone and ring NCA. So there is a good rapport at officer level.

THE CHAIR: Do you have another heritage question or can we go to waste?

MS LE COUTEUR: I have got some more heritage ones if we have got time. How are members chosen for the ACT Heritage Council?

Mr Zatschler: How are they chosen? The process is a public advertisement that goes out every three years for a call for nominations. They come into the heritage unit. We do an assessment of people’s qualifications and how they link in—because certain areas of expertise are called for under the act and we try and align that. We then prepare a report for the minister, who makes the final decision.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do we know on what qualities and what basis Mr Zivco was added to the council?

Mr Zatschler: He was a nominee from the Property Council of the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: There was no other consideration about him apart from the fact that he was a Property Council nominee—

Mr Stanhope: I think there is a legislative requirement that sets out that people representing different interests or expertise be members of the committee. One of those is, I think, the construction industry—quite reasonably in the context. I think it is a very important perspective that that part of our community that has a direct involvement in working with heritage listed buildings, particularly for their redevelopment or for an adaptive reuse of a heritage building—it does present specific issues. That was the basis on which it was decided that one of the members should be somebody with experience in construction and development. Mr Zivco has a deep personal interest as well as expertise and was appointed for his expertise.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the Property Council basically made the decision rather than government? I am aware that he has made political donations to both Liberal and Labor.

Mr Stanhope: He was supported. You could probably go through every appointment ever made and do a fine dissection. Mr Zivco was appointed because of his genuine personal interest in heritage and the issues that heritage listed buildings represent for builders, developers and constructors—and because of his expertise. It was probably incidental that he was supported by the Property Council. His nomination was made to me; I referred it to cabinet, I recommended his appointment and he was appointed. To suggest that there were any issues other than his expertise, his professionalism and his capacity is to do him an injustice.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have questions on notice.

THE CHAIR: You can put them on notice. Do you have a question around waste, Mr Coe?

MR COE: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Zatschler.

MR COE: Minister, page 56 talks about the review of the no waste by 2010 policy and strategy. I was wondering what the status is on that review and whether it has been handed to the government or to cabinet?

Mr Stanhope: I will ask Mr McNulty to respond to that.

Mr McNulty: As I referred to earlier, DECCEW currently have policy responsibility for the waste strategy. Prior to the election, TAMS had started work on that. Following the election and the creation of DECCEW, we are now working closely with that department, but ultimately DECCEW have responsibility for preparation of the new strategy.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you are saying that you cannot answer this question and we need to ask it of DECCEW?

Mr McNulty: My problem is that I am not sure where they are up to. I know that there are meetings going on and we have had long discussions about what should be in that new strategy, but I can not tell you accurately where their process is up to.

MR COE: Where was it up to at the time of handing responsibility for that over to the new department?

Mr McNulty: The review of the current strategy had been completed and some work had been done on what possible options were going forward, but they had not been presented to the government at that time—yet.

MR COE: Did TAMS at any point make a recommendation about the whole date issue, being 2010?

Mr McNulty: There have been ongoing discussions between the government and the department about this strategy.

MR COE: With regard to the date—by 2010?

Mr Stanhope: I do not think that anybody at any stage in the last 10 years has been under any—what do you mean by the fact that we will still have a landfill requirement in 2010? I perhaps should better understand your question or the point of your question. Is it the fact that we have a slogan or have had a slogan of no waste by 2010 as an aspirational slogan? Is your question based on the fact that in 2010, in 10 months time, we will still have waste?

MR COE: Given that it is in 10 months time, I do not know why—12 months, 18 months, 24 months or 36 months. If it was always an aspirational target, then—

Mr Stanhope: It was an aspirational target in 1996.

MR COE: At what point do you realise it as aspirational and at what point do you drop it? I would like to hear whether the department advised to drop it or whether that was a political decision.

Mr Stanhope: It has not been dropped. At this stage, we are developing a new strategy which recognises—as has every government—that a sense of the no waste by 2010 target as an aspiration, as a slogan, was developed. But I think it is fair to say today—and anybody who thinks about the subject knows—that in 2020, and I would imagine in 2030, we will almost certainly still have a landfill requirement. That is just the reality. That was the reality in 1996 when this slogan was coined; it was the reality in 2000; it was the reality in 2005; and it is the reality in 2009. There will still be a landfill requirement. And what will be going to landfill? What will be going to landfill is waste of one sort or another.

Let me give a simple explanation at this stage. It is simple, but it is very black and white; that is why it is a relevant example. I have no doubt that in 2020 we will still be taking asbestos to landfill. Asbestos is waste. Asbestos is disposed of these days in landfill. Every government since 1996—anybody who has ever thought about waste, anybody who has ever worked in waste—knows that there was no way that anybody was going to determine a way or a method of disposing of asbestos that did not require it to go to landfill. So this notion that we have a no waste by 2010 policy or slogan and—shock, horror—in 2011 the ACT is still going to be taking waste to

landfill, so the policy has failed, is a nonsense. We will still, at this stage, in terms of our understanding, be taking asbestos, along with a range of other substances, to landfill in 2020.

That is not to say that we are giving up, we have abandoned the target or we have abandoned the strategy. It is not. This is the way it has been reported. It has been reported atrociously and outrageously and with a significant level of ignorance. Some of the media reports I have seen are just a joke—without any consideration, any looking at the facts or the issue or seeking to understand.

What we have achieved is a rate of reduction of waste to landfill to the point where somewhere in the order of 72 to 74 per cent of waste that traditionally had gone to landfill no longer does. That is a fantastic effort. It is about the best in the world. But we are at the pointy end; we are at the hard end. There is 26 or 27 per cent left to go; it is the difficult end technologically and it is the difficult end in the context of resources. Every additional one per cent reduction in waste to landfill now costs incrementally more. On the latest advice available to me, we believe that just to achieve the next one per cent will cost somewhere in the order of \$2 million. That is for the next one per cent, and that is the next easiest one per cent. The next easiest one per cent will cost about two million bucks, perhaps just under. Then it gets incrementally harder and harder.

I used that example of asbestos. It is very simple and simplistic, and we can argue about it, but just use the example of asbestos. Nobody knows how to make a usable product or a saleable product out of asbestos. Nobody wants it; you cannot sell it; there is no market. There is a market—an increasing and growing market—for waste that we perhaps once imagined we would never be able to recycle, in places like China. But China has no interest in our asbestos. Nobody wants it. I do not know of any place in the world where asbestos is dealt with other than by putting it in the ground in landfill. That is what we do. We dump lots of it. Over the last 10 years have dumped tonnes of it into the ground, and we will continue to do that.

But we need to work harder. We need to maintain the momentum. To the extent that, yes, 2010 is upon us and there is still 26 or 27 per cent to go, that represents a major challenge—and a challenge which we are prepared to grapple with. We are looking at the strategy and we will deliver a new strategy. We signalled in the last election the next range of initiatives that we believe that we as a community need to pursue. It is a view that the Greens party essentially mirror in relation to their list of priorities.

I do not dispute it. It is now a question of resourcing and prioritising. It is a debate and a conversation I will look forward to having over the next few months. Preliminary advice to me—this is ex the finalisation of a strategy, and I need to make that point: the government does not have a concluded view or position at this stage on the next initiative that we should resource as a community. Early advice to me which I find persuasive—I have been convinced but can be persuaded otherwise by perhaps the Greens or the Liberal Party or others—is that the next significant investment by us in waste should be, and it is a recurrent expenditure, which is difficult in these times, the employment of additional staff to separate waste into streams at the tip face. I am told that for the investment of just under \$2 million a year we can perhaps remove from landfill an additional 20,000 tonnes of waste in the recyclable streams.

If you visit Mitchell or if you visit Mugga, it is very easy to see what Waste ACT is proposing. When we Canberrans go to the tip face with our trailers when we have cleaned out the garage or the back shed, we throw into the trailer a couple of old wooden cases, all of our old sheep manure bags, a few broken bricks that we found and a couple of lumps of metal that have been lying around. We go to the tip; we shovel it into the tip face; and Waste ACT bulldozes it into the back of a truck and takes it to Mugga and drops it in the ground. It is resource intensive, but the idea is that the few bricks, the lump of cement, the couple of old bed posts, the plastic bags and the old packing case will be separated into different streams and each of them will be recycled. We estimate that for \$1.7 million to \$1.8 million we can take another 20,000 tonnes out of landfill. The advice to me from Waste ACT is that, in terms of bang for buck—waste removed from landfill per dollar—that is the next and most efficient.

There are other initiatives that the government has to pursue for the sake of leadership and for the sake of community engagement. There is a proposal that I think is perhaps on the Greens' list, which is green bins and organic waste; it is something the government is also supportive of. That is our attitude to these things.

THE CHAIR: I do not know what is in this strategy, but possibly there may be some education around what one purchases and what one throws away. I believe that the ACT has a record of purchasing more things that are unnecessary, that we then turn around and throw away.

Mr Stanhope: We do, yes. We are very prosperous. Our footprint—that is another debate, I think.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Stanhope: We are a prosperous community, we are a high-consuming community and our footprint is large.

THE CHAIR: Some education around that might be useful.

MR COE: Minister, you just spoke at great length about that issue, but on page 122—

Mr Stanhope: For want of not being misrepresented again.

MR COE: On page 122, volume 2, the figures are pretty interesting. Annual tonnes of waste to landfill per head of population has gone up; annual tonnes of recyclables collected per head of population has gone down—and the percentage of recovered material of the total waste stream, which is what you were talking about at the end in particular. Then you go down to page 123, with the notes or the explanation. It says:

The growth in recycling per head of population has slowed compared to estimated projected growth.

It does not quite sink into what you just said. Would the department like to comment on why those figures are the way they are?

Mr Stanhope: Is not consistent with what part of what I said?

MR COE: You implied that we were going ahead in leaps and bounds in this place.

Mr Stanhope: No. I said that we have reached between 72 and 74 per cent, which is about the best in Australia—and it is. That is what I said. I did not suggest—I said to—

MR COE: Earlier in the answer, when you were talking about how much progress we were making compared to 1995, 2000 and 2005, you implied that we were making a lot of progress—

Mr Stanhope: We have made massive progress.

MR COE: Whereas this suggests that we have gone backwards of late.

Mr Stanhope: No; we have not gone backwards. But certainly the growth—we have gone ahead massively since 1995. We have probably just about doubled the amount of waste not going to landfill. Our progress over the last 10 years has been massive. But certainly we have moved to somewhere between 72 and 74 per cent—

MR COE: Is it just me or does 1.64 to 1.55 seem like more than five per cent?

Mr Stanhope: Yes. There has been massive progress in terms of the amount of waste that does not go. It has increased from 430,000 tonnes to 798,000 tonnes. That is the increase.

THE CHAIR: Can you just listen to the answer, please?

Mr Stanhope: There has been a massive increase in the amount of waste, but there has also been a massive increase in the amount of waste generated. I do not dispute that. I do not know these numbers off by heart; I would have to go and do some study on it. But you can not suggest—I am not denying that, as a result of the increase in the population and increase in waste, the numbers do not represent a major challenge for us; they do. The job is becoming harder. The population has grown and the amount of waste that we are generating has increased. I am not disputing that we have not kept up with that.

We have made massive progress, but I am not disputing—I do not dispute the numbers—that there is still a mountain of work to do. We have reached a point where, as I have just been saying, what I was seeking to say—the government accepts that we need to do better. But I am also saying that you need to accept that we have done incredibly well—and we have. We lead Australia in relation to the amount of waste that does not go to landfill—around 72 to 74 per cent. But there is still massive work to be done.

I think it is fair to say that over the last couple of years some of the numbers are not going in the direction that they should. I do not dispute that. That is a question, and I can give you the straight answer for why that has occurred: resourcing. We have not

put as much money into it in an incremental sense as we traditionally have, and waste has caught up with us. We need now to invest again; we acknowledge that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you taking any other sorts of action? What I am meaning is trying to reduce the waste in the first place. Are you looking at working with manufacturers and are you looking at educating the community—not creating it in the first place? I appreciate that this is possibly not the responsibility of TAMS, but as part of the waste strategy that would seem to be one of the things we should do.

Mr Stanhope: I will ask Mr Mannall to answer that—the world’s expert on waste.

Mr Mannall: Certainly the avoidance of the production of waste is clearly an important aspect. It is actually looked after by the department but I can give you a perspective on it. Certainly our capacity is somewhat limited because the ACT is a fairly small community but we are active participants in things like the national packaging covenant to work with the industry to make sure that, where possible, we can actually reduce the amount of this that is generated.

One thing that we have noticed is that the total amount of waste generation on an annual basis continues to increase and it is going up faster than both population growth and economic growth and that is one of the big challenges. I think from a waste perspective, having an economic downturn is probably the best thing that we can have but there is certainly a challenge to try to keep having good quality lifestyles and yet use and consume less resources in doing that.

MS LE COUTEUR: How are you publicising some of your new waste initiatives? For instance, I believe now you have got recycling for fluorescent and compact fluorescent tubes, but only yesterday in this very building I saw one of them being put in the normal rubbish. I do not think most people are even aware of your initiatives, unfortunately.

Mr Mannall: It is certainly new. Our initiative to take it is really only for householders; it is not for commercial generators. There is a requirement, I understand, that all commercial generators are to actually recycle those lights themselves so that the facilities that we have brought in are basically for the community. If you are changing your fluorescent lights or your compact ones at home, you can bring them to us at our sites and then we will take them away and get them recycled.

To date, there have been several announcements to advise that they are there. There is information on our website about it. But we have not done any specific brochures or campaigns, purely because we have not had the resources available at this stage to do that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I follow up about what you said about commercial. If I understood you correctly, you basically said that you looked after the residential side but the commercial side has to do it all themselves. Is that effective? What monitoring are you doing to make sure that they actually do the right thing? I remember when I had some work done on my house the builder assured me that of course it was all being totally recycled et cetera. Do you monitor that this actually happens?

Mr Mannall: I cannot answer that because NOWaste is actually just the service provider; we are not a regulator. It is certainly picked up under the EPA requirements that there are limits on the amount of that material that is allowed to be disposed of. Whether there is any active regulation, I just cannot comment; I do not know.

MR COE: How do you measure your success?

Mr Mannall: We have only just started and we really do not have a proper measure of success yet, apart from counting the quantities that we are recovering.

MS LE COUTEUR: This has always been the case as far as commercial goes. Are these figures that Mr Coe was quoting from commercial and residential?

Mr Mannall: They are. One of the big challenges is that we are finding at a household level that most people are being responsive and participating in recycling and we get very good levels of recovery. What has concerned us particularly over the last few years is the lack of take-up of recycling by commercial businesses. In fact, commercial waste to landfill went up by 14 per cent between 2006-07 and 2007-08 and that was one of the major factors in why we did not achieve the targets that we were looking at trying to achieve in terms of resource recovery and the amount of total recycling.

We have been progressively increasing our tip charges year on year to get to the point where we are charging a cost that reflects the true environmental cost of disposing of waste, yet we have seen very limited take-up of recycling by the waste industry itself. The feedback we get is that only about 20 per cent of businesses are actually actively recycling; so there is a major challenge in terms of trying to get the individual businesses but also to get that sector to make sure that they are doing their bit to contribute. That is the area that seems to us to be the area that needs the most attention.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you looked at just extending the residential services to the commercial area? Speaking as a former small or medium-sized business person, it was almost impossible to find a recycling service. We could separate the stuff but, apart from taking it to the tip ourselves, it was not very easy to work out what to do with it. Could you just treat businesses as residences?

Mr Mannall: It is an interesting area. I think we have got to be a little careful because it is a competitive neutrality of not actually walking in where there are established and effective services being provided. Certainly if you have a look at the larger scale, the major waste industry does actually do quite a good job in terms of recovering things like cardboard and paper out of offices and the like. But we do think that in terms of trying to get to particularly the small or medium-sized businesses there is an area there that “potentially would it be viable for commercials to do it?” is questionable and we are certainly looking at that at the moment to see over time is that an area that we should extend the domestic running to. No decisions have been made. It is just in the current planning process to have a look at whether it is feasible. And certainly many other councils do that as a way of being able to get the recycling uptake, particularly in those smaller businesses anyway.

MS LE COUTEUR: Our schools also have been complaining to me that they cannot

recycle.

Mr Mannall: A lot of work has been done with the schools already through the waste wise schools, sustainable schools, program, which is part of DECCEW. In fact, one of the things that we have done to help with that is that, when we changed our domestic collection system for recycling—we used to have divided bins and in multiunits we had red bins for bottles and cans and blue ones for paper—we withdrew all of those old bins out of there to put in yellow topped bins, for consistency. Those old bins are actually provided free of charge to schools to help them to get involved in recycling.

THE CHAIR: We might move on.

MR COE: I have got one final question on this issue, if that is okay. The minister said earlier that we were a leading Australian city when it comes to some of these areas. Then Mr Mannall said that the policies you develop are primarily for residential areas. The example that Ms Le Couteur gave was a government building. Are your policies not communicated to all the government agencies and advised that this is best practice, you should be doing this?

Mr Mannall: Again, the responsibility for that sits within DECCEW but there certainly is a guide for recycling in offices and there is encouragement to get government offices to take that up. It is not correct that we are only focusing on domestic. It is that that is a major area of our service delivery and so it is important that we do that. We do actually work with the commercial waste sector and we have started discussions with the waste industry to find out how do we drive the sort of change that we need.

We have had a look at the opportunity, for example, of bringing in a differential charge for material that comes into the landfill with too much recyclables. That is problematic because the feedback we have got from the waste industry is that to do that, they would have to pass that charge on to everybody, irrespective of whether they were recycling or not. It is an area where we have got to drive some change. It needs some very careful thinking processes about how we do it but certainly the commercial is the low one on the fruit tree where we believe there are lots of opportunities to get a lot more material recycled if we can get both the individual businesses to recognise that they should do it and get the waste industry actively providing those services to their clients.

MR COE: Is not the government sector even lower on the fruit tree?

Mr Mannall: It is already happening. As far as I am aware, all of the ACT government offices have recycling systems already in there. For example, in TAMS we have actually got a system that recovers just about everything it possibly can. It goes from organics through to cardboard into paper, office paper, printer toner cartridges, mobile phones and the like. So we have already got systems in place in many of the government offices to get those high levels of recovery anyway.

THE CHAIR: We will finish on this particular area and then we will go to morning tea. I am not quite sure whether we do have any other questions on this.

MS LE COUTEUR: I could ask more questions about waste—

MR COE: Until there is no waste.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, not for that long. Second-hand Sundays, how are they going? We only had one in 2007-08 but I do notice we have had more this year. Are they regarded as successful?

Mr Mannall: It is a question of what you determine success to mean. They are useful in terms of the fact that we know that people want to have an opportunity to get rid of things that they have got around their home. What is disappointing is that we very much struggle, no matter what we have done in terms of publicity and promotion, to get the type of take-up that we would have hoped that this sort of initiative would have achieved.

For example, there was one run several weeks ago, and for that I think we had about 330-odd houses that were registered to put materials out. So those are very low numbers for the amount of investment that is going into that. That is one of those areas that certainly we know that you need to have good opportunities for people to be able to get goods that they no longer want into reuse for others to pick them up. Trying to facilitate it is one of those areas that, I guess, is a challenge for us to look at.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have got a question. At page 210, you are saying that you manage the Parkwood Recycling Estate. Can you tell me a bit more about what services you actually manage there?

Mr Mannall: Property ACT now manages the Parkwood estate. So it is probably better—

MS LE COUTEUR: That has just changed, because the report says TAMS manages it?

Mr Mannall: It is a part of TAMS.

Mr Stanhope: It is a different part of TAMS. It is no longer—

MS LE COUTEUR: I apologise.

Mr Mannall: It is a different area within the department that does it.

THE CHAIR: After morning tea you can answer this.

Mr Mannall: Yes.

Mr Stanhope: Yes.

Mr Mannall: I will just hold that over for then.

THE CHAIR: Hold that thought.

MS LE COUTEUR: I should also hold the thought about the waste in the department itself until after morning tea? What strategies do you use to actually use less paper, to use recycled paper or double-sided paper internally, within the department? This is about waste issues.

Mr Byles: Perhaps that is an issue we would like to address after morning tea, if that is appropriate?

THE CHAIR: With the Asset Services Group; is that where it would reside?

Mr Byles: Yes, or I will handle that question as well, perhaps after morning tea.

THE CHAIR: We might go to morning tea now. Thank you very much.

Mr Stanhope: So will waste officers or PCL be required further?

THE CHAIR: No, they can all go, as we are going on to the next section, which is community infrastructure services network. Thank you very much for your attendance, those officials that will be leaving us.

Meeting adjourned from 10.28 to 10.46 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back everybody. I welcome to the table Ms Little and Ms Morrell. Thank you very much for joining us. The next area we are going to examine is ACT Library and Information Services.

MS LE COUTEUR: On page 19 you mention a review undertaken of the Assembly library and the Heritage Library in the TAMS and DET joint use agreement. Can you let us know the outcomes?

Ms Little: Certainly. The review of the Government and Assembly Library and the review of the Heritage Library was completed mid-2008 and was presented to cabinet a bit after that. The outcomes of that particular report are being investigated. Some of them relate specifically to the Assembly and to the government service and some relate to the Heritage Library, so we are addressing those as part of our five-year library plan. The review of the joint use arrangements between the education department and ACTLIS has been put forward into our planning process as well, but that report has not yet been released.

MS LE COUTEUR: In Gungahlin the library is being co-located with the school as I understand it.

Ms Little: Yes, it is currently planned for that to be co-located.

MS LE COUTEUR: And the time frame for—

Ms Little: The education department is running that building project so I am only speaking from what I know about that project, but it is my understanding that the school part of that project will be open for the first term in 2011 and we are expecting the building to be finished a little bit before that, so December 2010.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the library might start before the school?

Ms Little: That is possible if the building is ready; it is possible.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good.

MR COE: Page 9 talks about the library hours and the changes to the schedule. I note that at each library they have got the nice new cards which list all the library opening hours. What has been the impact on patronage and what has been the response from the community to the changes in the hours?

Ms Little: That has been mixed and as we speak we are doing a bit of a review of that again to see what impact that has had. It would be fair to say that the Sunday morning opening has not been as popular as we thought, even though the community asked for it. The 8.30 or early morning openings have been quite popular with a small number of people, people who like to come in on their way to work or on the way to dropping the kids off at school. It depends really on the branch, on the demographic of that branch and on the needs of the people, but overall they have been quite successful. But, as I said, we are monitoring it again because we always want to be responsive to people's needs.

MR COE: Do you envisage there will be much of an increase in terms of the computer portals available for people to use to access the internet?

Ms Little: Increase in the number or increase of the use?

MR COE: I guess both; you only increase the number if use is on the up.

Ms Little: We already have a fairly good level of use, quite high in terms of the percentage of available hours. But I am getting reports from my colleagues in the United States that they are seeing a huge increase given the economic downturn, and I am expecting that that may start here. We are a little bit different obviously from some of the cities in the United States in terms of how many people might be unemployed, but we are expecting there to be a bit more demand. We are certainly expecting more demand on all of our services, our books and our newspapers. As people manage their discretionary money, things like internet access, buying those magazines that you like to have and buying books will reduce. So we are expecting some growth.

MR COE: And you will be able to handle that growth?

Ms Little: Yes. Obviously if the growth peaks really heavily we will have to review that. But we have got a little bit of capacity in terms of our internet access and certainly we will just manage that as we can.

MS LE COUTEUR: And growth in the other areas? You will be able to manage that as well? I would like to see you being able to do that.

Ms Little: Again it depends on how big that growth is, but we have a policy that the

newer magazines, for example, are not made available for loan until the next one comes in—for that very reason. Usually the journals are monthly so if there are people who regularly like to read a particular journal they always know that for that month they are going to be able to come and access that journal in the library and read it there. Then we make them available for loan after that, so we manage demand in that way as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: You mentioned your five-year plan. Where are you up to in preparing that?

Ms Little: We are very close to having a draft to go back out to the community. As you might be aware, we conducted community consultations last November and we got some terrific feedback from that. We ran a series of consultations in workshop format—two in the north, two in the south, two in the day, two in the night—and then we also had a feedback form. We got quite a good response to that and some very interesting and very affirming feedback about our value to the community and those kinds of things.

We are looking now at how we might structure all of that feedback in our plan in the future. As you can appreciate, our work goes across every age group and every ethnicity and all of those sorts of things, so it is quite a complex thing to put together and we are trying to synthesise it out into a way that is meaningful for people.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the community will see a draft in a couple of months time?

Ms Little: A couple of months I would say, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Did any of your data go to locations of libraries as well as—

Ms Little: Yes, it does. In the written survey we asked people what suburb they lived in, what branch they used of the library service and then a series of other questions about how they valued the service, what they liked and what they would like to see in the future. The library is looking very much at a future around the issue of lifelong learning, so we asked questions about how people like to learn and we got some really good data out of that as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: Was there any way they could express preference for a library location which did not currently exist?

Ms Little: The inner south community were quite vociferous in both processes. We did not specifically ask people about where they would like to see libraries, although there was a very clear theme that people wanted to be able to shop and visit the library at the same time.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions on the next area, Asset Services Group?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. What role do the asset management services play in the ACT's submission to Infrastructure Australia?

Mr Byles: I will just get the responsible officer to the table.

Ms Morrell: Madam Chair, it might be better if I start. I am one of the members of the ACT government working group for Infrastructure Australia. The asset services group is responsible for managing the asset database within TAMS. So it looks after all the roads infrastructure, the PCL infrastructure et cetera across the TAMS group. It is also responsible for working with all the asset owners and helping them to manage those assets in that database. In terms of their involvement in the Infrastructure Australia submission, there were many departments across the ACT government involved in those submissions to Infrastructure Australia. The asset services group in particular did not have a particular and specific role in that because their role is much more about monitoring and assisting in recording the asset database.

MS LE COUTEUR: I understand there were costings developed by Pricewaterhouse and Treasury costings which were developed with the asset management services. Were there differences between those costings?

Ms Morrell: The asset database is available to pull on, to get data to base costings on. But the PricewaterhouseCoopers report that you are referring to was done through transport regulation and planning, which is Karen Greenland's area, which was looking at the light rail submission. Is that the one you are referring to?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I am just trying to tease out differences in costings and what was actually submitted to Infrastructure Australia.

Ms Morrell: It might be better if we defer to Karen Greenland on that, as she was managing that.

Mr Byles: Madam Chair, would you like to deal with that now? Ms Greenland's section comes under transport regulation and planning, but we can get Ms Greenland to the table now, if you prefer.

THE CHAIR: Whilst we are asking the question we might as well do that.

Ms Greenland: Can I clarify this: you wanted to understand something about the PricewaterhouseCoopers report?

MS LE COUTEUR: And how the costings differed. I understand that you developed some? My understanding, which could be wrong, is that there were two sets of costings developed. Pricewaterhouse did one set, and I thought the other was done by asset management in Treasury or whoever in the government. Obviously it was you, as you are now answering the question.

Ms Greenland: PricewaterhouseCoopers were contracted to provide a report to Infrastructure Australia about the potential cost of a light rail system for the ACT. They undertook a costing exercise, so there was no separate costing exercise undertaken by any ACT government agency concurrently with that. There was an earlier report, in 2004, about a light rail system for the ACT which had included some costings, and that was produced by another set of consultants at that time. In preparing the more recent light rail submission for Infrastructure Australia, PricewaterhouseCoopers drew on some information in that document, but they also

updated it to reflect more recent cost parameters. So there was a different cost for the system, obviously, five years on.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the PricewaterhouseCoopers one could be characterised as just an update of the study that you had previously done, taking into account current technology et cetera?

Ms Greenland: It certainly based some of its work on that as a starting point. It also included some consideration in its report of other factors that might be relevant, like the increases in construction costs associated with the increase in the general construction industry and construction activity around the country. So those were factors that would impact on the increased cost of the project five years on.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Ms Greenland. We might go on to the Property Group now. Any questions, Mr Coe?

Mr Byles: I might ask Mr Ryan to join us at the table. Madam Chair, Ms Le Couteur asked a question prior to the recess about internal recycling issues within the department. Mr Ryan is best placed to answer that question.

THE CHAIR: Fine, so we might go back to that one first and then we will go on to Mr Coe's question.

Mr Ryan: Could I just clarify the question. Was it about waste in buildings?

MS LE COUTEUR: I was specifically asking about paper use—whether you are using recycled, double-sided. Basically, the theme of my question was: what is the department doing internally to reduce the quantity of waste? That was the theme, and I specifically asked about paper. But I would be really happy to hear about things apart from paper.

Mr Ryan: The ACT Property Group is the custodian, on behalf of the government, of all the office buildings across the territory. That is both owned office buildings and those that we sublease from the private sector. We, in turn, put agencies in as tenants in those buildings. At this stage there is no process in place that allows us to dictate to agencies how they will actually operate within the buildings that they are within.

There is some work going on nationally in terms of a framework for sustainable government office buildings, but as of today it is an agency-by-agency arrangement. Within TAMS, TAMS occupies somewhere in the vicinity of 70 buildings, which are office buildings, depots and all sorts of buildings. About one-fifth of TAMS staff operate out of Macarthur House, and there is an active recycling program in Macarthur House. It is an internal decision within Macarthur House to do that. It has been set up over a number of years. I think NOWaste took the initiative on that some years ago. So the arrangement in Macarthur House whereby they have organic bins, paper bins and all the rest, is something that is driven through the office of the chief executive.

We are now working closely with DECCW. It is a common theme. We have developed a working party with DECCW and all other agencies, but we and DECCW

are taking the major running on it as a sustainability working group. We are looking at all issues in terms of government buildings, in trying to improve the sustainability. So outcomes will include recommendations that we will take forward to management council on how we could further improve the way we handle recycling out of buildings.

MR COE: I have a question about Albert Hall. Where is that at in the broader sense?

THE CHAIR: Could you clarify your question, please, Mr Coe?

MR COE: What are the management plans and what is the plan for the site?

Mr Ryan: Albert Hall came back to ACT Property Group at the end of 2007, November 2007. Prior to that, for several years it had been privately managed. We were asked to take over the management of that hall while consideration is given to the long-term future regarding what will occur at the Albert Hall. We have got two roles there at the moment. One is a maintenance improvement role and the other is a management role. They are intertwined because anything we try and do to the building obviously has an impact on the users.

The government, in the budget last year, provided us with almost \$3 million in order to do a major refurbishment program of the hall. The hall had its 100th birthday last year. Although over the years there have been works done, there are areas where the hall looks 100 years old. With respect to the four major things we are working on at present, there is the replacement of the kitchen, so that when the community groups use the hall they can actually use the kitchen.

We are looking at fixing the roof. The tiles on the roof are 100 years old and there is a question mark about the tiles and more particularly the fact that it leaks. In the past, when we inherited the building there were major damp areas; the ceilings in the toilets had collapsed. There were all sorts of things that we have now fixed. With respect to the painting on the outside, it has been painted many times over its 100 years, and on the inside as well.

We have created a capital works reference group which involves the Friends of Albert Hall. As at the start of last week, through the use of heritage architects, we have agreed on the process for the replacement of the roof. When I say the replacement of the roof, most of the tiles on the roof will simply be replaced. They will be lifted. There is going to be a lot of work done on clearing the ceiling space, putting in additional wooden battens and then a ceiling unit. At present there is nothing under those tiles, so if there is a gap in the tiles and it rains, that is why we have the damp problem. When this process is over we will have put aluminium sheeting or an insulation sheet that goes under the tiles, and the tiles will be replaced.

We are also in the process of doing a contract with a firm in Tasmania, a heritage kiln that produces tiles. They will be producing tiles for us. We did a trial just after Christmas on what was the breakage rate on the tiles. When we lift them, you have to remove the nails and there was a worry that we would have a high breakage rate. The tiles are incredibly strong and the breakage rate was virtually zero. So there is an expectation that we will not break many during the replacement process. Just in case,

we are bringing in 5,000 tiles from Tasmania. The guy does them by hand at 200 a day, so we are about to do a contract.

With the paint itself, we had to get an expert up from Victoria. They have taken samples of paint and can go back through all the various layers, right back to the starting date, so that we get agreement on what colour, what type of paint and how we strip off the existing paint. Again, there was a trial done in January to look at some options for how we would do it. We thought sandblasting would be the answer, but it turns out that chemical removal is the only way. So that work has been agreed.

We are still working through the internal painting, but we wanted to get the outside done. The whole Albert Hall will be scaffolded shortly. With the scaffolding in place, that will enable us to start redoing the tiling at one end, and we will also do painting on the other side. As we work around, once the external work is done then the scaffolding will go inside and we will do painting inside. For the period that it is inside, the hall will not be able to be hired.

MR COE: How long will it be out of action for?

Mr Ryan: That has been a chicken-and-egg question that we have been asking for the last three months. We are about to go out to tender. As soon as the tenders are in, we will be able to answer that question. We have got guesstimates, but all the way along our guesstimates have had to keep changing because of the circumstances. I am hopeful that by the end of March, early April we will have let the first three tenders, for the scaffolding, external painting and tiling, and we will have the answers to that. We have got an Albert Hall web page on our Property Group website, on which we are working with the Friends of Albert Hall. We are now starting to load onto that all the information about this process. So as soon as the tender is let, the public information will be there, including timetables.

MR COE: So it is likely to be a matter of months?

Mr Ryan: I suspect it is going to be over the balance of 2009 that you will see work occurring.

MS LE COUTEUR: What progress is there on the plan of management for the hall? I believe there should be a formal plan of management?

Mr Ryan: The plan of management is being handled by the Chief Minister's Department rather than ourselves. As of this week, the officers there have circulated a draft plan of management across the territory to various interested people like myself, heritage, arts and a few other areas, with the aim of doing a brief for the Chief Minister through their capacity, and then to go out for a consultancy for a full public consultation process. I believe that is underway.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the situation with DA 53? Are we still anticipating development of this area?

Mr Ryan: That is the NCA.

MS LE COUTEUR: I know you are not the NCA, but I thought you would probably know what was going on with it.

Mr Ryan: When DA 53 hit the headlines, the Albert Hall had only just come back in as an asset on our books, but it was still being privately managed. We took part in public meetings at the Albert Hall and subsequently with the Friends of Albert Hall. But the NCA has been remarkably quiet on DA 53 for some months.

THE CHAIR: I am conscious of the time. We do have transport regulation and Roads ACT to deal with, before another major area. Unless there are some burning questions about Canberra Connect, could we put them on notice? I have one, but I can put mine on notice. Will you be happy to do that, members?

MR COE: Reluctantly, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have some on notice for the Property Group.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to transport regulation and planning and Roads ACT.

Mr Byles: Madam Chair, Ms Greenland obviously is on the regulation planning side. Would you like to address the roads issues concurrently? If so, Mr Gill will be required. Or would you rather do that separately?

THE CHAIR: Have members got some substantive questions for Ms Greenland now?

MR COE: To be honest, I am not sure what the breakdown would be.

THE CHAIR: If we bring them both to the table at the same time, that would be a good idea.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, because I do not know who I would be addressing.

Mr Stanhope: We will get them all here; that will solve the problem. It is a very multiskilled department. I have discovered that every officer knows everything about everything.

THE CHAIR: Well, be prepared, Mr Gill; I might ask you some tricky questions!

MR COE: It should just be you next time, Chief Minister. Don't worry about bringing your entourage.

Mr Stanhope: That is right.

THE CHAIR: I might kick off. Minister, my question is about the taxi service. Are there discussions with the taxi service in order to see an improvement in performance? Is that an area that we have anything to do with?

Mr Stanhope: I will defer to Ms Greenland, who is working very closely with the taxi industry, particularly on planning around our taxi service. I think we are all aware

that it has been an area of very significant public interest in recent years. Quite recently, Mr Byles and I met with Aerial Taxis for a discussion over lunch in relation to issues around perception and reputation, the reality of the perception, the point where perception becomes reality and the implications of that across the board for a service such as our taxi service.

As with every issue, there are always two sides to every story, every issue and every policy. I think we need to work our way through some of the issues which the taxi industry faces in relation to perceptions of its reputation and reliability. There are some real issues. There are some perceptual issues; there are some issues just on reputation. It is quite complex. The government, through transport regulation and planning, has been actively seeking to facilitate the development of a taxi service within the ACT that meets the needs of all of those that would use it.

It would be best if Ms Greenland went to some of the steps we have taken in relation to taxi supply, our support for wheelchair accessible taxis, our support perhaps for a whole range of new initiatives such as Nightlink and the work that we have been seeking to do with the taxi industry to deal with its issues. It is an issue where we need partnerships, cooperation and a genuine understanding of some of the issues which taxi owners and the taxi industry face. This is not just a case of an industry that is not coping; it is far more complicated or complex than that.

For the majority of Canberrans, I have to say that every time I have sought to access a taxi over the last year or so, they have always arrived on time and exactly as requested. So we all have different experiences. For me personally, I am not a heavy taxi user but I have no complaints in terms of the service that I have received. But I am aware of significant disquiet that others feel. I think we need to be fair and not to overgeneralise issues in relation to taxis. We are doing a lot of work, and Ms Greenland can go to some of the detail and some of the complexity.

Ms Greenland: Some of the work that we have been doing with the taxi industry and some of the initiatives over the last few years, including initiatives that were underway last year, include the taxi release program. We had a situation where we had not had any licence releases between 1995 and 2005, and the former minister announced a taxi release program at the beginning of 2006 which involved releasing 40 new taxi plates.

There is monitoring that goes on every month of what the taxi performance is in terms of the waiting times that people experience. The taxi networks provide to the department a monthly report indicating what sorts of waiting times were being experienced by people using their services. In spite of the release of the 40 plates in 2006 and early 2007, there were still concerns within the community being expressed, obviously to the government and to the department, about taxi waiting times.

A subsequent decision was made at the beginning of 2008 to release an additional 50 standard taxi licences. Those releases occurred last year, in May and then in October. The vast majority of taxis associated with those 50 licences are on the road. There are probably about half a dozen that are still to be taken up. It takes a bit of time for a taxi operator to get a taxi on the road. They have got to acquire a vehicle and, if they are not already accredited to operate a taxi, then they have to get accreditation.

Once those additional 50 licences are on the road, we will have in the ACT a number of taxis per capita which is bordering on consistent with the case in every other Australian capital city, and that certainly was not the case at the beginning of the taxi release program; we were significantly under on a per capita basis.

We have also, in relation to standard taxis, worked on the Nightlink initiative. The Nightlink initiative was launched at the beginning of last year, in February. That is an initiative which utilises the larger taxi vehicles to carry people from midnight Friday and midnight Saturday in groups. The purpose of that was to alleviate the queues that were forming in the city. With nightclub patrons coming out and being in long queues, particularly with some of them being intoxicated, there were concerns about security and poor behaviour. Together with the taxi industry and the Australian Hotels Association, the Nightlink program was developed.

The government provided substantial subsidies for the first 12 months of that program for the taxi operators and drivers themselves, guaranteeing a minimum hourly rate, so that, while the patronage built up on that program, it was actually viable for the operators to be doing that work at that time of night.

In addition to the money that was provided for the operators and drivers, money was provided to assist with the cost of marshals on the Nightlink rank. Those marshals assist in grouping people together so that they can travel together. They collect the fare before the group gets into the taxi and that avoids any issues of non-payment or people absconding and not paying at the end of the journey. Money was provided as well for a security guard presence; so there are security guards contracted to be present on the Nightlink rank while it is operating.

The funding for the operator and driver subsidy was provided for the first 12 months, and that first 12 months is about to expire. We have had discussions throughout the Nightlink program with the taxi industry about how well the program is going. I think it is fair to say that the level of patronage that we had hoped for has not eventuated. It is being used but it is not being patronised to the extent that, without the government subsidy or some sort of change to the fare structure, it would necessarily continue.

We have been in discussions quite recently with the industry. They have come to us with a proposal altering the fare structures in a way in which they think that they could continue to offer the service; so that is something we are putting forward to the government and to the minister for some consideration in the next couple of weeks. And once we have got some views on that, we will know what we are going for. But certainly the industry is very keen that the service continue, irrespective of whether or not the government is able to contribute towards the driver and the operator income.

In terms of the work on the problems with taxis at the airport, we have been in close discussion with industry representatives—the Taxi Industry Association and Aerial—on what can be done to alleviate the queues at the airport. We have also spoken to airport management. One of the solutions, I think, to that problem was reinstating commissionaires. Commissionaires were in place at the airport who used to actually group people together in taxis travelling to the same destination, which obviously assists in reducing the queues of people who are waiting.

The commissionaires have not been in place at the airport since Cabxpress became the second accredited network because it has not been possible for Cabxpress and Aerial to reach agreement on how that service would be funded, unfortunately. The industry, I know, is in further discussion between the networks about how that might be achieved, in terms of trying to come up with an arrangement whereby they can agree on the funding of a commissionaire service. We have certainly indicated that we would like to assist them in any way that we can but, at the end of the day, there are issues on one of the networks not being comfortable paying for the cost of a service that the other network gets the benefit of without some cost-sharing arrangement.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you still going?

Ms Greenland: Yes. We can talk about wheelchair accessible taxis but if you want to talk about standard taxis, an issue about that, perhaps we could deal with that now and then I can go on with the wheelchair accessible taxis if you want to do that.

MS LE COUTEUR: I certainly want to talk about the wheelchair accessible taxis. At the airport, the other solution that we have seen is promoting the bus service more. I am aware there is a bus service and I am also aware it is not used very much and most visitors, I suspect, to Canberra airport would not have the faintest idea that it exists.

Ms Greenland: There certainly is a bus service and that would suit some patrons. But I think one of the views of the airport management—and I suspect this is probably correct—is that a lot of people do in fact want to use a taxi. There will be some people who will be quite happy to use a bus service but there will be other people who do want a taxi; they want to travel by themselves or just with the person they are travelling with direct on that route.

I should say that the other possibility, though, which is somewhere between the bus service and just a standard single taxi, is that the taxi industry has been in discussion with the airport about the possibility of operating what they are calling a high-occupancy taxi rank; in other words, getting some of the higher occupancy taxis, the ones that take eight to 11 people, to actually have a second rank at the airport which could be used to group people together who are travelling to Parliament House in sitting weeks or who are travelling into the city.

There are discussions occurring between airport management and the taxi industry on doing that. Again, as the regulator we have certainly indicated to the industry that we are very happy to facilitate the speedy introduction of that if there can be agreement reached between the industry and the airport about how that might operate.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you any idea how much this is influenced by the fact that many business travellers have a taxi paid for them, in effect, with their Cabcharge, whereas if they catch the bus they have got to pay for that and it is all a lot more hassle for them, basically?

Ms Greenland: We have not got any data.

MS LE COUTEUR: The financial incentives are basically for business travellers to catch taxis rather than buses.

Ms Greenland: We do not have any data, but I am sure that is a factor. But it is not a factor that is within the control of the government.

THE CHAIR: If you wanted to go on, Ms Greenland, and talk about the wheelchair accessible taxis—

Ms Greenland: Wheelchair accessible taxis, yes, sure.

MR COE: I have got a question about something you have raised earlier, if that is okay. Is that all right?

THE CHAIR: We might go to Mr Coe's question quickly.

MR COE: The cost of the Nightlink taxi initiative, do you have a ballpark figure for that or a precise figure even?

Ms Greenland: I think it was \$257,000 for the driver subsidy, from memory. I can check the figure for you.

THE CHAIR: May we take it on notice?

Ms Greenland: It might be easier. I can certainly tell you our annual contribution to the marshal cost is \$30,000 and the amount that was budgeted for the security guards was \$104,000. But because the Nightlink service was budgeted based on two ranks operating, the expenditure will actually be less than had been budgeted. When we consulted with the industry, ultimately they indicated that they did not have the capacity to operate more than one rank; so it has only been operating as a single-rank operation.

MR COE: And that is the one on Bunda Street?

Ms Greenland: The one on West Row.

THE CHAIR: Okay, now, wheelchairs.

Ms Greenland: Okay, wheelchair accessible taxis. There are a maximum of 26 vehicles that can be licensed as a wheelchair accessible taxi under the ACT regulations. Until quite recently, all 26 licences were operative, with people operating a WAT. We have very recently had one operator return his licence because he is retiring from the industry, I think for health reasons; so there are 25 licences in place at the moment. Of those, 19 are operated by the Cabxpress network and the other seven are operated within the Aerial network.

Some of the things which have occurred over the last 12 months, which we feel have provided some more viability for WAT operators—you have to remember that they have to give priority to wheelchair accessible taxi bookings, that they are not able to accept standard taxi work if there is a wheelchair taxi booking that needs to take

priority—to assist them in terms of the viability of their operations, we have modified the regulations on what sort of vehicle can be operated. Originally, when the licences were issued, you could only operate a vehicle that could accommodate two wheelchairs, those quite large transit van type vehicles. A lot of the operators have indicated that they would want to operate a smaller vehicle that is capable of just accommodating a single wheelchair. Operators who require a licence now can make a choice between what sort of vehicle they want to operate.

But in order to maintain the fleet with at least some proportion of the larger vehicles, because there are some wheelchairs which will not fit into a modified Falcon or something along those lines—some very large wheelchairs have to go in those larger vehicles—we have put in place some limitations: if an operator has more than one licence, how many of those licences they can use to operate the smaller vehicles and the larger vehicles to keep some sort of reasonable ratio of large and small vehicles in the fleet.

The lift fee program was extended. This is the arrangement whereby, when a wheelchair accessible taxi operator undertakes a wheelchair booking, they are paid a lift fee for the time that it takes them to actually lift the person into the vehicle and unload the wheelchair at the end of the journey. There is a payment of \$11.25 which makes up for the charging of waiting time which the passenger would otherwise have to pay.

We also have operated for the past two years an incentive payment arrangement over the Christmas period. It has been difficult in the past to get drivers to undertake work over Christmas because, obviously, they want to be with their own families as well. As an additional incentive, a daily rate payment has been offered where an operator can keep the vehicle on the road or available for hiring for a minimum of 15 hours on given days over the Christmas period. We have also doubled the lift fee for any wheelchair journeys that are taken on those days.

I should say that one of the issues which I think confront the industry in terms of keeping vehicles on the road, whether it is the wheelchair accessible taxis or the standard taxis, is driver shortages. The industry is experiencing significant driver shortages and I think that has been a function of the fact that there has been very high employment generally around the country and in the ACT in particular and it is actually quite difficult to attract people to taxi driving.

THE CHAIR: We might move on now, I think.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are there any other initiatives you are considering with disabled taxis? My parents use disabled taxis, so I have firsthand experience of waiting for considerable periods for taxis to turn up. Are you looking at anything further or does this need to be a question on notice?

Ms Greenland: I can say that I think the ACT has probably attempted as many initiatives as any other jurisdiction in the country to try to get the wheelchair accessible taxi system to work. That is not to say there might not be other things that could be tried but, if you look at the incentives that are in place, the licence fee is \$1,000 per annum compared to a standard taxi, which is a \$20,000 per annum licence

fee. As I say, we provide the lift fee to try to make up for the time it takes to unload and load the wheelchairs. We have got the Christmas incentives in place.

We have tried to provide funding in the past for micromanagement; in other words, having someone who actually gets all the bookings, links them up the day before and makes sure that the taxis are organised and they know whom they are going to pick up and it is all organised in a way where they go from one job to the next in a sequence and avoid dead running. The government provided considerable funding to implement that model a number of years ago. Unfortunately, at the time, Aerial was the only network operating and it was disinclined to actually take up the offer.

Cabxpress, when they became a network, did take up the offer to implement micromanagement and, for a period of about three months at the beginning of their operations, were doing it very successfully. Regrettably, after three months, changes within their organisation and a change to the approach to how they wanted to dispatch their wheelchair jobs meant that they were no longer actually willing to undertake micromanagement in the way that we were requiring it, which was to ensure that the jobs were allocated and people took those jobs ahead of the other regular wheelchair work. And so it has not been possible—in a sense, relying on the networks themselves to implement it—to actually make it work.

There are models in other jurisdictions which might be worth looking at. South Australia, for example, has an independent tendered contract for someone to actually micromanage all their wheelchair accessible taxis but those are things that have not been considered because we have tried to work with the networks until now to actually get them to assist us to improve wheelchair accessible taxi networks and their services.

MR COE: If I could ask a final question on taxis: the balloting of extra licences, how successful was that?

Ms Greenland: It was very successful in terms of the numbers. I can indicate, for example, the number of entrants we had to the ballots recently. In the October ballot in 2008, we balloted 25 licences. Actually I should say in relation to those, again to try to encourage more wheelchair accessible taxis which are not subject to the wheelchair accessible taxi licence conditions but are generally accessible within the standard fleet, what we did was we said that people who took up any of those licences, if they operated a standard taxi, would be charged \$20,000, which is the standard rate, but, if they wanted to operate a taxi that was wheelchair accessible, then we charge \$10,000 for those licences.

We had 97 applications for the 25 licences to be balloted and, as I say, most of those are now on the roads. We have only got about half a dozen waiting to go on the road out of the last ballot. With most of those, it is a case of the person actually waiting to get their vehicle delivered.

In the previous ballots, for example, the May 2008 ballot, again there were 25 licences balloted and there were 129 applications or entries in the ballot. In the preceding ballot, there were 170 applications in the ballot in May 2007. So, we are still seeing a quite significant number of people coming forward who are interested in operating

a taxi.

THE CHAIR: I will put on notice a question I had on the integrated transport framework and an update of it. Given that we are running so far behind, I think we might move to the next area, which is roads. Do members have questions on roads?

MS LE COUTER: Is it possible to provide the committee with a copy of the draft ACT car parking strategy; if not, when will it be available?

Ms Greenland: The car parking strategy is still in draft form. I can provide a copy of the draft strategy because that document is a document that is in the public domain; so that exists. But what needs to occur now is that it needs to be considered by government in terms of whether it is actually adopted as the ACT car parking strategy. I can provide the draft strategy because that document was the document consulted on.

MR COE: What is the policy on road sweeping? Is it just on demand? Is it when you get complaints or is there actually a schedule for every street in Canberra?

Mr Gill: There is a program of road sweeping in the ACT. Arterial roads get swept once a month and residential streets get swept every three months. That is increased during the autumn when there is heavy leaf; that frequency is doubled in residential areas during the autumn period. There is a street sweeping program that we have made available on our website. If people have inquiries about a particular instance, we will inspect that, and that frequency can be increased based on this particular requirement.

MR COE: So, in a nutshell, no street should go more than 12 weeks without being swept?

Mr Gill: No.

THE CHAIR: Any questions on roads?

MS LE COUTER: Road sweeping, no.

THE CHAIR: Roads generally.

MS LE COUTER: Not so much on roads, but what we do on the road. I have more questions but they are not on roads, they are on things we do on them.

MR COE: I have got a few. The airport road upgrade—how is the project going with regard to the budget?

Mr Gill: The airport road upgrade is making good progress. Some \$31 million has been authorised; the first two stages of that are nearing completion and the final stage will be completed by around September this year—basically working within budget and within the time frames that we have indicated.

MR COE: Thank you. With regard to cycle lanes, there has been a bit of an uproar with certain streets where cycle lanes have been put on, such as Ginninderra Drive or

Streeton Drive. Can you please explain what the policy is for either removing lanes and putting in bicycle lanes or designating existing emergency stopping lanes as cycle paths?

Mr Gill: I can, yes. The ACT government in 2004 released a sustainable transport plan which promoted greater use of pedestrian, cycling and public transport. From the department's point of view, in terms of implementing its policies and services, it seeks every opportunity, where reasonable and practical, to increase the amount of provision for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

In terms of on-road cycling, which is, I sense, the focus of your discussion, each year as part of our reseal program, which is when we are resurfacing the roads, we look at opportunities to improve public safety and also to increase the extent of provision for cyclists, particularly commuter cyclists.

The case of Ginninderra Drive we touched on—the section between William Webb and Coulter drives, where there has been some comment. That section of Ginninderra was marked as three lanes wide going west. One of the lanes was a very long, left-turning lane—a captive left lane. That had some public safety issues: people not realising that it was a captive left lane and that you had to turn into Coulter Drive were continuing straight through the intersection. There were some public safety concerns there.

Also, Ginninderra Drive, for the greater length of Ginninderra Drive, is marked as two lanes in each direction with a shoulder. As part of the reseal program, an opportunity was taken to address the concerns that were expressed about the extent of the trap lane and also to provide an on-road cycling facility. The amount of general traffic on Ginninderra can be easily accommodated at a good level of service with two lanes in each direction. Also, we have taken the opportunity to provide a connection to extend the on-road cycling lane. It is part of that process.

We take the opportunities. The most effective and the most cost-effective time to implement, particularly for on-road cycling facilities, is when the road is being resurfaced, because all the markings are being reinstated and—

Mr Stanhope: Sorry, Mr Gill. I think Mr Coe was also interested in the rationale behind some of the changes which we inspected in Streeton Drive. Did you mention Streeton Drive?

MR COE: Yes, I did.

Mr Stanhope: That was a particular response to a particular situation. Perhaps, Mr Gill, you could explain what the department was seeking to achieve on Streeton Drive.

Mr Gill: In terms of Streeton Drive, that work was not part of the on-road cycling rollout program. It was very specifically trying to address a road safety problem—the intersection of Streeton Drive and Namatjira Drive, which is the access to Cooleman Court.

Mr Stanhope: It is an identified black spot.

Mr Gill: An identified black spot. Over the last five years, it has had 32 crashes, including one fatality and four crashes involving the hospitalisation of people. It is a clear black spot. The problem at the intersection is cars turning right out of Namatjira Drive being involved in right-turn collisions with vehicles on Streeton Drive because of being screened by vehicles turning left into Namatjira Drive. As part of the treatment, the solution was to reduce Streeton Drive as it passes through that intersection to one lane so that cars turning out of Namatjira Drive had a much easier task of turning right out of it and to clearly identify the left-turning vehicles into Streeton Drive.

The solution adopted was a reduction of lanes from two lanes to one lane. The opportunity was taken to provide on-road cycling at the same time. Most of the focus has been in terms that there has been a loss of a general traffic lane for on-road provision, but the focus of the improvement is trying to address a demonstrated—

MR COE: Is it considerably safer now?

Mr Gill: The advice we have had—we have had with discussions with the Weston Creek community—

MR COE: If it is not considerably safer, should there be an on-road cycle path there?

Mr Gill: It is very early in the piece. We have had discussions with the Weston Creek Community Council and had some meetings with some residents out there. The general view from the community is that it has improved the safety of the intersection, but there are still some issues about a loss of road capacity for general traffic. It is an area where we have given a commitment to the Weston Creek Community Council that we might revisit it.

MR COE: Is there scope for some sort of safety audit there, especially for on-road cyclists?

Mr Gill: There is, yes. But with any improvement you need to allow some time for it. It has been implemented only within the last few months; in terms of looking at it from the point of view of whether it has reduced crashes, that will be too soon. In terms of usability and operations, we are looking at it from that point of view in terms of an audit and safe application.

MR COE: Should that safety survey have been conducted before an on-road cycle path was placed there?

Mr Gill: The arrangements that have been put in place meet accepted standards. There is no question that what has been put in place is substandard or deficient.

Mr Stanhope: I think the point that Mr Gill makes is that, in terms of standards, the road has not been made less safe for cyclists: it has been made more safe, we hope, for motorists. It is an engineering solution, and it is an engineering solution that is consistent with practice. Another engineering solution would have been to install

traffic lights. If traffic lights had been installed, Mr Gill, is it the case that there would not then perhaps have been the same narrowing of capacity for vehicular traffic?

Mr Gill: You are correct, Chief Minister. There is always a range of different options. When you are using public money, you are trying to come up with a solution that is most cost effective, that addresses the specific issue and that takes on board considerations of all road users, ranging from pedestrians, cyclers and public transport to general traffic. It is that mix.

MR COE: Yes, I understand that. It is just the concern of on-road cyclists that I have got a potential—

Mr Gill: I suppose we are trying to basically get to a situation where provision for cyclists on road is not seen as the exception but is seen as part and parcel of the services we deliver.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and I would like to say that I have noticed, particularly in Ginninderra, the amount of footpath repairs that have been carried out over the past period. I would like to say how pleased I am about that. Accessibility for people who walk—again, encouraging walking while we are talking about encouraging riding bicycles. I was wondering what the ongoing program for footpath replacement is.

Mr Gill: Of all the inquiries we get on an annual basis, we probably get most inquiries about footpaths—damaged footpaths, missing footpath links. We have a program of work that probably includes about 350 locations. In recent years, we have seen additional funding being provided for new footpaths as well as the maintenance of existing footpaths and the maintenance of cycle paths. There is a substantial program of works that are getting implemented, but there is still a substantial program of work waiting to be progressed.

MS LE COUTER: How are you prioritising this, particularly given the increased funding currently available to you?

Mr Gill: In terms of footpaths, in terms of cycle paths or—

MS LE COUTER: Both.

Mr Gill: In terms of footpaths, the priority ranges from public safety to proximity to schools and shops; local amenity type issues; whether it is a missing link on an important route; or whether there are alternative routes and, while it might be desirable to have an extra link, there are reasonable alternatives. We maintain a database. We have got a list of conditions that every application is assessed against. If you write to us and say you have got a missing link outside your house, we go out on the site, have a look at it and put it into a context. If it rates highly, it will get programmed within a six-month time frame; if it is of a lower priority, it will get put on the program.

MS LE COUTER: Talking about missing links, are there any plans for you to seal the alternative bike path which now goes round the Woden east development. It is currently gravel, which is not brilliant for bikes.

Mr Gill: That is seen as a temporary connection.

MS LE COUTER: I know it is temporary, but it is going to be many months worth of temporary, as I understand it.

Mr Gill: I could take that on notice. I am aware that there is a temporary gravel connection. I can take it on notice as to whether there are any plans to seal it.

MS LE COUTER: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: I think we could take that one on notice. I would just like to say that the program has been very responsive, particularly in my electorate but I am sure across the whole of the ACT. I congratulate you on that.

Mr Stanhope: I hesitate to digress and take time, but I might just say that these really are significant issues. I have to say that there needs to be a deeper understanding of some of the issues that we as a city, as a municipality, face. I grapple or seek to grapple closely with the funding and the cost implications. I received a brief this week. We have 3.3 million square metres of foot and cycle paths in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: I believe it is the most in the whole of Australia.

Mr Stanhope: It is 3.3 million square metres, which costs \$120 a square metre to repair or replace unless you use some dodgy product.

THE CHAIR: Let us hope not.

Mr Stanhope: I am always interested in any discussion, though—we as a community need to understand these things in the context of our capacity to maintain this infrastructure, this ever expanding infrastructure. For 3.3 million square metres at \$120 per square metre for replacement or repair, these are massive undertakings and massive potential expenditures. We need to always overlay a discussion around our capacity to repair or replace with an understanding of the size of the issue for a relatively small city of 350,000 with 3.3 million square metres of footpaths.

MS LE COUTER: Can I just ask a supplementary on that, Chief Minister? Have you done research on what lasts better in terms of footpaths and cycle paths—whether it is concrete or bitumen in terms of how long, as it inevitably degrades, it is still functional, if not as it started?

Mr Gill: The answer is yes.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Gill is being rather modest in terms of the nature of the work and the understanding which Roads has of this infrastructure and of the different opportunities. Yes, there is a dodgy brothers cost—and there is an Australian standards cost and there is another cost. But I interrupted Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: We definitely do not use the dodgy brothers approach.

Mr Stanhope: I know. Heaven forbid.

Mr Gill: That is for a range of reasons. Across the territory, as the Chief Minister touched on—I will use kilometres because it is easier in terms of this discussion—there are over 2,000 kilometres of community path, over 300 of which is what people refer to as cycle path. Generally on trunk cycle paths, a smoother surface is preferable, which sees an asphalt finish. When you move away from that finish, where there is heavy use of cyclists, you generate other comments. Footpaths—concrete for general residential areas is seen as the most durable product. Asphalt is less durable; it is more prone to impacts by trees. That is an issue that we have in Canberra. We talked a lot about trees this morning, but one of their impacts on the surrounding infrastructure is the impact of the roots. If you travel anywhere on some of the older cycle paths, you will see the undulations from tree roots.

Having said that—we try to maintain a balance. Just this year we have started a program of rejuvenating cycle paths. We will be doing 28 kilometres over the next two years.

MR COE: Is that off-road cycle paths?

Mr Gill: Yes, off-road cycle paths. The on-road cycle paths generally are part of the resurfacing program.

MR COE: While we are on dodgy brothers, do you ever use bitumen or asphalt to fix concrete footpath?

Mr Gill: Bitumen or asphalt might—when, say, we get a report about a damaged footpath, a very initial response might be just to make it safe for the general public. We might do a temporary fix. A temporary fix would make it safe and we would come back and do some permanent works. It is most important from a public safety point of view to respond very quickly to it. The permanent works sometimes take some time. Ms Porter would be very familiar with that approach.

THE CHAIR: I am.

MR COE: What is the time frame? Perhaps I should ask Mary. What sort of time frame between the temporary fix and the permanent fix might you expect?

Mr Gill: The temporary fix is probably within 24 hours; a permanent fix could be up to three months, depending on the nature of it—because we try to program work.

MR COE: Does that mean that, if I was to go walking and I was to see some bitumen or asphalt in a concrete footpath, if I came back in three months it would not be there?

Mr Gill: That would be the hopeful case, yes.

MR COE: Okay.

THE CHAIR: We will move to the next area, ACTION. Thank you very much, officials. Before we move everybody, I want to ask members if they have questions of

Yarralumla Nursery or Capital Linen Service.

MS LE COUTER: No.

THE CHAIR: Because we would let those officials go and not ask them to come to the table if that is the case.

MR COE: I am happy to put questions on notice, if need be.

THE CHAIR: If you can put those on notice, that is fine. We can let those officials go, Chief Minister.

Mr Stanhope: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will bring ACTION to the table now. This is the last item. We are going to take a brief break.

Short adjournment.

THE CHAIR: Mr Elliott and Mr Swift, thank you for joining us at the table. I have an initial question, minister. On page 34, if my numbering is right, it talks about concessional travel for seniors. I was wondering if you could brief the committee on the success or otherwise—but I believe it is a success—of the gold card initiative.

Mr Elliott: The gold card initiative was implemented about a year ago. I can say that it has been a great success. There has been a very progressive take-up. I think the initial take-up was extensive, then it sort of plateaued a little and has got a bit more momentum of recent times. At the moment we have around 6,000; I think the actual number is 5,800 and something, so around 6,000 seniors using the gold card, and the weekly average for gold card users has grown to somewhere between 1,200 to 1,300 per week. So it has been a very successful initiative.

Anecdotally, people have remarked about the extent that more elderly people are utilising the bus service out of their normal precinct; that means moving from one part of the city to the other. Where they may have confined themselves, say, to the Tuggeranong district, they are moving more into the city et cetera and using the bus service for that purpose. We do not have any precise statistics on that; it is just anecdotal evidence about the nature of patronage at different times of the day.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. That is very good.

MS LE COUTEUR: How much have you spent on the new ticketing system already? How far has it progressed and when will it be installed?

Mr Elliott: We have spent, I think, about a quarter of a million dollars, on mainly project costs. This is design, preparation and also contract preparation. There has been a fairly protracted investigation of the right types of systems to be used; I think we had eight or nine in our first run of the tender process. We preselected or got down to two or three. Since that time we have a preference for a vendor and we are undertaking negotiations with that vendor as we speak. In fact, the representatives of

that company were in Canberra this week to inspect some of our facilities, to talk to our technology partners in InTACT, to look through our operations and have some discussions about how we will implement the project and what sort of support arrangements we would put around the project. So, for example, we have been speaking to Canberra Connect, which are also part of the department, about how we might utilise them for payment options et cetera.

In terms of the project proper, they are advising us—this is our new vendor with whom we are still in contract negotiations—that we ought to push the implementation time out, simply because, while we are buying an off-the-shelf system that just needs to be adapted to our own business requirements, their experience around these matters and the experience in other jurisdictions around Australia is to tread carefully and softly, build confidence in your community, and trial and test quite a lot before you go live. So their advice this week was to set back a bit our expectations around total project delivery and implementation.

I have asked them to reconsider that advice from a perspective of the age of our equipment, our current ticketing systems et cetera, which are quite old, over 15 years old. They have provided advice on that matter and said they will reconsider the project time frame and options. There are some things in place both in ACTION and the ACT government which they say provide us some advantages in terms of their project deadlines. They have also said that they will reassess where our current equipment is and work with the company that originally sold that equipment to us, Wayfarer, to see if there are some solutions that could be put in place in the interim, and that would be bolstering up our existing systems effectively. We have done quite a lot of work on that. At this point in time, we are facing a full implementation by June, and our vendor is telling—June 2010—

THE CHAIR: She got all excited there for a second.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Elliott: Yes, it would be lovely if it was June 2009. We are working to see if we can bring that forward in terms of date. But I hasten to add that my consistent advice around this matter is not to go down the path of other Australian major cities that have had significant failures at a contract level, at a community level and a systems level, and lose ground and take years to implement these things. Sydney are a good case in point: they are just starting again after 10 years and a huge contract issue. Melbourne have had to re-gear and go again. They were hoping to have their first systems up and running 18 months ago. I read in the newspaper this week that Melbourne are now saying they will do their initial implementations in 2010.

I think Brisbane had similar but less well-publicised failures around their systems and are now starting to progressively implement in their various transport modes. So I do not think people should underestimate the complexity of these systems, the degree to which they, I guess, interact with all sorts of aspects of the transport system—on buses, within the community, around the back end of the accounting side of things—because it is patronage and revenue effectively. So they are quite complex.

Having said that, we are in a fortunate position in the ACT: we do not have multi

modes of public transport; we have one. We do have a singularly effective fare system. It is flat, it takes you anywhere and we gear our prices accordingly, and therefore there is some complexity that our new vendor does not have to build into its system which makes the job a bit easier from that perspective. But the real art to our ticketing system will be about engaging our community at the right levels in the right ways, building that confidence and taking the system forward progressively to ensure a successful implementation.

MS LE COUTEUR: You mentioned that we were having advantages because we have a simple fare structure. I am not trying to argue against that in any way; I am just asking the question: are we simplifying stuff so much that we are committed to our fare structure, once the new ticketing system starts, indefinitely?

Mr Elliott: No. I guess the key thing in this has been considered by government in our preliminary advice to them about the ticketing system. The key thing there is whether or not you stay with a flat fare or you have zones. We asked government to consider that and they have reiterated their preference for a flat fare arrangement. You can have different types of fares, different sorts of concessions. You can build in a new system. You can add things to the mix. But what is important from a systems perspective is whether or not you have a flat fare or a zonal system.

Zones really build complexity because if it is a smart card solution it is about how far you can get on that trip and what happens when you go over the boundary and go into the second zone; the system has to understand that. It is about where you get off and where you got on. In a zonal system you must tag off and you must tag on. If you do not do both of those things in a zonal system, what happens is that you will get billed for the full extent of a trip. In Sydney, for example, you might have five zones. If you do not tag off in Sydney, you will get charged for five zones. That means you have customer issues et cetera. So a flat fare system, no zones, is much easier to implement and in fact avoids a lot of complexity both in the system and with customers utilising the system at the end of the day.

MS LE COUTEUR: So what if we ever wanted to change—not that I am suggesting we do? I just want to make sure that we have not bought ourselves a system which is too simple and that in 10 years time someone is going to say, “We now have water buses and ferries on the lake and it won’t work,” or something like that.

Mr Elliott: I think that is one of the advantages of the technology: it is quite ubiquitous in some ways, and I think this will be one of the first smart card implementations by the government in the ACT. It has certainly been built and designed from a perspective of flexibility for the future and there are certainly other applications that it could be used for. But in both our advice and our correspondence on this we have said that we really wanted to make sure the transport aspect of the smart card works well before we consider any other applications.

I do not believe there is any risk for the government and for the community with regard to the technology that has been purchased at all. What has been acquired has been operating in many countries in Europe and overseas for over 20 years. Without wishing to give the company name away, because we are still in contract negotiations, it is the longest running smart card system in Australia, which is well over 10 years. It

is really the only fully implemented and successful system running in Australia.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given, from what you said, people will not be using their card when they get off—I thought one of the reasons—

Mr Elliott: No, they will.

MS LE COUTEUR: They will be? Okay. You probably are not going to answer my question because I was going to say that I thought one of the ideas of this was to get better information, but we do not know when people get off. We will still know—

Mr Elliott: Excuse me, yes. In a zonal system you must tag on and tag off. With a flat fare you do not have to, but we will ask people to—and in fact we may compel them to—because we need our patronage data. In order to design the system more efficiently and effectively, we really need to know how people are taking their trips. We need to know if someone is travelling from Tuggeranong to Dickson or if they are just travelling around the precinct. At this point in time our current system does not allow us to know that; all we know is that X sort of customer, a concession or an adult, used a particular route on a particular time or on a particular day. Whilst that is useful, it is not much use in terms of designing the complexity of trips.

MR COE: On that question of data, the data you get at the moment really comes from when buses leave interchanges, when they arrive at interchanges and the ticketing system? Is that about it in terms of actual bus performance?

Mr Elliott: With timeliness and the other performance aspects related to buses, most of it is built around the scheduling system—buses are scheduled to run at particular times—and then there are quality checks done on those things.

MR COE: Where buses leave and arrive at interchanges—is that recorded?

Mr Elliott: Yes, absolutely.

MR COE: So that is how you judge the timeliness indicators?

Mr Elliott: Correct, and it also has a—

MR COE: At those two points?

Mr Elliott: Pretty well. But there are also what they call “timing points” along the way. So you do checks on timeliness and that is something that we have to do. Unfortunately, that is a manual system. You really need someone to ride the bus and see how the timing points are going, and of course traffic and such things are variable so running on time is always a challenge.

MR COE: When someone like a cyclist gets their free ride if they use their bike, how is it recorded that they got a free ride?

Mr Elliott: They will be validating; they just will not be charged. So you are going to count them as a passenger, but you will not charge them a trip. It is a zero fare

basically. It is how we do some—

MR COE: I have not actually done it myself and I have not seen someone do it. How does that work? Does the bus driver click a button saying this is a free trip when they put their card in?

Mr Elliott: No, they should validate and it should be a zero fare.

MR COE: How does a bus driver know it is a free—

MS LE COUTEUR: How does the machine know? The bus driver can know, but the machine is the problem.

Mr Elliott: The machine knows because the ticket is coded and I guess that is in the complexity of how the ticketing system works. If your question is how we enforce the fact that a particular ride is free or not, that is a bit optional. It is about time and it is about people's responsibility to validate, and if they do not validate they will get a free ride.

MR COE: I am a little bit confused by it, to be honest. If I go and load a bike on to a bus do I then put the ticket into the machine or not?

Mr Elliott: That is my understanding. Mr Swift?

Mr Swift: What happens is there is a flash on the control panel of the driver and he presses a button. There are certain buttons for different things—concessions, adults et cetera—and one of those buttons is specifically for bikes. So he will press that button and you will get a paper ticket, which is a zero fare, and then that is recorded for us as a trip as a bike rider.

MR COE: On bikes, there has been \$45,000 to replace the usage that might have otherwise come in from people who had paid. Did that \$45,000 cover it or was it too much or too little?

Mr Elliott: I am sorry—

MR COE: Page 34, at the top of column 2 states:

To achieve this, the government provided \$45,000 per annum to cover the ongoing cost of fares forgone.

Does that cover it or is it too much?

Mr Elliott: It would have in 2007-08; that amount would not have covered it this year because we have a high utilisation of bikes.

MR COE: And what about demand for that service? You are getting a free ride; are there many examples whereby you have got three people waiting at the bus stop with their bikes and the bus comes and you load a couple on and there is one person waiting?

Mr Swift: It is an issue, but the thing is it can only take two bikes at one time and so really those first in are the ones that get it.

MR COE: That is right. Not that I am advocating for this, but if you were to put a fare back on to it would that regulate the arrangement such that you may not have as many instances of that happening?

Mr Elliott: A supply and demand thing: would it push the demand down? I do not think it would. I think it may, but I am not sure what the customer behaviour would be around it, because it is such a relatively new sort of thing in Canberra, although it has been around for a couple of years. It is a bit hard to say whether price would push the demand down. There are currently, on average, 376 weekly bike rides here.

MR COE: So if demand is inelastic and it is not responding to price, why do we have free fares?

Mr Elliott: I am saying it may not be; I do not know that it would be. It has not been tested to see if it would or would not be.

MR COE: So that modelling was not done prior to removing the fare for bicycles?

Mr Elliott: I think the purpose of the initiative was to try and consider multimode trips and people's behaviour. There seemed to be a demand from people who wanted to both cycle and ride. We have responded to that demand in this way by progressively implementing bike racks on buses. We now have 115 bike racks on buses and there will be another acquisition this financial year. We will continue to do that.

The perspective on that and I guess the success of the implementation has been that there has been an increasing demand for bikes on buses and people are continuing to utilise the service. Some people might ride to work and then get a bus home—they have that facility—and I guess you will always see a high level of demand in the warmer months in Canberra as well. Whether or not pricing becomes a feature of that I think it is a bit too early to tell, but certainly we could undertake some modelling on that and see if price makes a difference in the scheme of things.

We are still in the pilot stage: see how the demand goes, watch it and see, grow it carefully. If we had thought that it would be a useful way to undertake this initiative by implementing a bike rack on every bus in the fleet, we probably would have done that modelling as it was. But, as it was, it was more a response to trying to shift the modes of travel and really meeting a demand for service. That is how we approached it.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have got a totally different line of questions. On page 34 you talk about how in March 2007 there was an inquiry into ACTION. I just want to talk about some of the recommendations from that. Recommendation 10 was about strengthening the role of community transport. What sort of links do you have with community transport and what sort of mechanisms do you have to ensure that you know what they are doing?

Mr Elliott: The primary implementation aspect of that was an initiative around what we called community buses, where ACTION invested in a number of minibuses made accessible with the implementation of wheelchairs et cetera. We sought a good community partner in that as we did not think it was a standard passenger service as far as it was. We found a good partner in the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and we worked with them and some of their key stakeholders, the regional community services, who in fact manage those services now.

So each of the regional community services—I think there are six—have received two buses, and those two buses are now managed out of those regional community services on an on-demand basis. There is some monitoring around the success of those services and discussions about their utility and as far as I am aware it has been quite a successful initiative. It was really pitched at people who were a bit more isolated, who were a bit more disadvantaged, who could not readily access a standard passenger service, and people who needed to utilise buses in a more sporadic way.

However, I understand that those particular buses are also used by community groups in a variety of ways for a variety of means, and from that perspective they are fulfilling quite an important social role in terms of accessing the city and accessing services around the city. So I think it was a very good initiative; it was the primary one coming out of the review.

MS LE COUTEUR: Continuing on with the consulting with the community line, in planning network 08, and more recently you also changed the timetable, how did you work with other service providers in the community in terms of working out how to make those changes?

Mr Elliott: The network 08?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. There was a lot of negative criticism about some of the timetable changes.

Mr Elliott: In the 2008 network?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Elliott: The public consultation process around the June 2008 network was probably one of the most comprehensive that had been done on the bus service for about 10 years. I do not think there was a stone left unturned in terms of people who wanted to have their say about what they thought would be the best solution. I do not think there was a community group who had an interest which was not able to provide some representations, from environmental groups to community groups and transport experts. I think the public consultation process was thorough. I also think that it is a complex thing and not everyone can get precisely the public transport system they require. There are some challenges and constraints. So I think the outcome we had out of the so-called network 08 was in fact a very good community outcome.

Having said that, that is not to say that things stand still. One of the things that we have needed to do and continue to do is to rebuild and redesign that network—

colloquially, to tweak it. We certainly have a lot of changes around schools this year. I think we had to amend services around 70 different schools for different reasons—changing start times, changing demographics, different communities using different schools and some changes in school arrangements. They all equated to around 70 changes in school services.

One of the complexities is that we build our school services in the peak, in the middle of our regular route services. So as soon as you change some school services you have to change everything else. We tend to, from that perspective, give a bit of priority to school buses. The constraints around delivering a group of kids to school are such that you need to pick them up at a particular time, or more likely to deliver them at a particular time. The policy rules are within about 15 minutes of a school start.

Mr Swift: Thirty minutes.

Mr Elliott: Thirty minutes, sorry. That is an agreement with school ed and their communities. So we try and drop off within that band. That makes it quite difficult to place our buses in the right places in the city and manage our commuters as well in the peak.

MS LE COUTEUR: Recommendation 16 from that inquiry was about pay parking, including encouraging pay parking in the parliamentary triangle.

Mr Elliott: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Has ACTION done any modelling about whether, if this happened, people would start taking the bus to work in the parliamentary triangle? If you have done some modelling, do you think you have the capacity to cope with it?

Mr Elliott: Parking is not quite ACTION's jurisdiction, but we are very mindful that what happens in that area very much affects the bus service. We have a view that there is a benefit to be had out of some dedicated services around the triangle which may in fact alleviate and assist the cross-jurisdictional discussions around parking in that precinct. We have a view on it but we have not done any modelling. We have put forward some submissions as part of the budget process to do some feasibility around that in the next financial year.

Mr Stanhope: It is something of a chicken and egg, of course.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, but I would assume that if we could get pay parking there, ACTION use would go up considerably.

Mr Elliott: It well may, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am just amazed that we have not even modelled that yet.

Mr Stanhope: Because the commonwealth's position on pay parking has been intransigently oppositional.

THE CHAIR: Over a number of years.

MS LE COUTEUR: Over many years, yes.

Mr Stanhope: Over many years. As recently as last year, the position of our federal colleagues of different persuasions has not been particularly enthusiastic.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was going to say that maybe now they are the same persuasion as yourself, you might be in a better position to persuade them.

Mr Stanhope: It is something that is being actively pursued, Ms Le Couteur, in correspondence with both the Treasurer and the minister for finance on the matter.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned before, Mr Elliott, the age of the ticketing system and how we are needing to replace it. What about the general replacement program for the whole network?

Mr Elliott: For buses in particular—the capital program?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Elliott: A couple of years ago, we wrote a submission to government and brought to their attention the age of the fleet and where the age of the fleet was going to leave the bus system within a period of time. After a series of discussions around that matter, there was an agreement on a 15-year replacement strategy. The first tranche of that, the first five years—there was a reason for the first five years—has been funded by the government. We are in the midst of delivering on that component.

What has been delivered out of that first five years, which is targeting 115 new buses, is 16 so far. We are not very far from finalising the contract with the two suppliers—because we have two different contractors here, or two different vendors—for the remaining 100. That sounds like a long time to get from where we were to here, but there has been quite a lot of debate about the type of bus required and what it does to the replacement program et cetera.

Cost is always a big consideration in this. So we have been challenged to try and get the best value for money that we could. There are a lot of aspects that come out of a new bus fleet that are both considerable as considerations and also in terms of the outcomes you want. I believe that, as the contract is getting ready to be signed, we have our production schedules embedded in that. My understanding about that is that the first chassis that will come out of Europe will arrive in March or April. The way this works is that the chassis are European and the buses are actually built in Australia, and the first chassis will arrive around March-April and the first buses will arrive in Canberra in July-August. That is a matter of the production schedule, and that is the point at which the contract negotiation is right now. It is about finding the right production slots.

I think the production of the 100 chassis from two different companies has been agreed. So we know what is going to come out of Europe and across the waves and land in Australia, and when. The next bit is to agree the production schedules with the bus builders. There is only one bus builder, so the same bus builder is building our

two types of buses. It is really about making sure that they can deliver what we require on time. Of course, if they could do it really fast, or faster, we would be more than happy. Unfortunately, they have other clients as well. Ours is not an inconsiderable order, however; it is 100. That is fairly significant in anyone's terms, so we are getting some sort of priority there. They understand we are a good customer; they understand we pay our bills. Some private sector companies are struggling to do that with their new orders right now. So I guess we have got a bit of leverage there. It has been a while to come, but it is going to make a real difference.

We will set our five-year target around our DDA requirement. That means we have agreed, or the government has agreed, with the federal government to deliver a percentage of accessible buses in the territory. That percentage is 55 per cent by 2012. This acquisition of 115 will deliver that 55 per cent of the fleet.

THE CHAIR: Very good. Thank you.

Mr Elliott: And 100 per cent, I should add, by 2022.

MR COE: The ACTION collective agreement states that there should be a 60-40 ratio of full-time to part-time staff. Does that ratio hamper your recruiting efforts, especially with regard to network 08 phase 2?

Mr Elliott: I do not think it hampers our recruiting efforts necessarily.

MR COE: Or retention?

Mr Elliott: Certainly, there are part-time drivers who would prefer to be full time. Anecdotally again, but I could get a number on this, I think it takes on average about two to 2½ years for a part-time driver to become a full-time driver under the current arrangements. It is true that it is a peculiar ratio to have embedded in something like an industrial agreement. However, it is a matter of how we manage the staff resources and deploy them back across the system.

At different points in time, and for different sorts and types of bus services, more part-time drivers might be an advantage. For different reasons, more full-time drivers might be an advantage. At this point in time this is a reasonable balance. However, we are always willing to go and have a look at how the bus system is operating and re-litigate and negotiate that with the staff representatives about those percentages.

MR COE: This weekend you are using Deane's and Transborder buses for the Brumbies game on Saturday night?

Mr Elliott: Correct, yes.

MR COE: I imagine you have got all sorts of conflicting demands this weekend in terms of the show and normal operations. There are obviously bus drivers out there because Deane's and Transborder have got bus drivers.

Mr Elliott: Yes.

MR COE: I imagine you have got the fleet to actually be able to provide the services, just not the drivers, this weekend. Would that be right?

Mr Elliott: No, that is not correct.

MR COE: So you do not actually have the buses?

Mr Elliott: No, we have both buses and drivers.

MR COE: Available this weekend?

Mr Elliott: We do, but that is not the matter in dispute.

MR COE: So what is the matter in dispute for Saturday night?

Mr Elliott: The matter in dispute is really regarding the people called transport officers who support our bus services and who are placed in interchanges. When we renegotiated our arrangements—and these are charters, so we have a client, and in this case we are talking about the Brumbies—the Brumbies have an agreement with the stadium to deliver a number of buses to get people to the game.

There is a historical thing here which is interesting, insofar as usually the Brumbies games attract a large number of bus users, to the degree that normally we have 23 ACTION buses going to that game. That is quite different from, say, the Raiders, who normally have four, five or six. So it is a different kind of behaviour from the Rugby League patrons, which is interesting. In any case, as each season approaches, we have an agreement with the client—the client here is the Brumbies and the stadium—about how many buses and how they will run.

This year, because of our increased costs—the increased cost of fuel and the increased price of labour, and some pressure on the budgets in the stadium end, at the Brumbies—we were asked to see what we could do to try and reduce our cost. We said, “Look, you can’t really reduce the number of buses; we will have a look elsewhere.” We had a look at our support staff and discovered when we looked at it that we had five transport officers through the full five-hour period of the game. That means at the start, at the end and in the middle. In the middle, the transport officers get to go and watch the game for free. We took the view that that cost was not to be passed on, or should not be passed on in full, to the Brumbies. We decided to reduce the number of transport officers who attended Brumbies games, which is a historical thing.

The arrangement that we asked to be put in place was to have two transport officers at the game through the full five hours and then send two other transport officers, one from Belconnen and one from Civic, in to the game, just to have a look at the beginning. As I pointed out in the media, we have a sophisticated community that actually knows how to get off a bus and walk to a gate. They do not need too much management around that. So we do not necessarily need five people telling them how to walk to a gate. We thought two was more than adequate.

In terms of upload, meaning getting passengers out, we are trying to move about

2,000 people, probably, in about half of a game—so 8,000 people who are going to exit from the east side. Of those 2,000, what you really need to tell those people is which bus to get on, because there is a big row of buses and they need to know which one goes to Tuggeranong, because that is the way the charter works. So we said we would get four people there to assist that. What was put to us is that that is a safety issue. I have made the point—

MR COE: Who put that to you?

Mr Elliott: The staff representatives put to us that it was a safety issue. We made the point—and we have made it again and again, and we will continue to make it—that our transport officers are not policemen and they are not security guards. They are there to ensure the effective operations of a bus service and to provide customer support as required. If they think they are there to undertake the work of police, they need to leave the bus service and go and get another job. There are people employed to ensure public safety in open places, and it is not ACTION transport officers. We have made that point again and again.

Unfortunately, and at times due to behaviour that sometimes occurs in our community, transport officers provide assistance, and they are well trained to undertake the work that they need to do. But they are not security officers and they are not policemen. This is a fundamental issue that we have been debating for some time, around the roles of these people. But the crux of the issue around charters is not one of driver availability, it is not one of fleet availability; it is one of support arrangements around it, a withdrawal by the transport officers of their services on the night, and then the drivers withdrawing their services as well. Faced with a withdrawal of services, we felt obliged to undertake and commit to the arrangement we had with our client, the Brumbies and the stadium, and we undertook on Wednesday to charter those services from Deane's.

MR COE: Do you think it is actually going to be cheaper for ACTION to offer the service on Saturday night through Deane's and Transborder than it would have been otherwise?

Mr Elliott: The Brumbies service will be marginal. The Canberra show, which was thrust upon us at very late notice on Wednesday, will cost us more, simply because of the nature of the service that we are providing to the Canberra show. In the scheme of things, if we decided that it was unviable for us to continue to try and deliver charter services of this type, we would just get out of the business. We are not in the business of having the community and the government subsidise events like this, necessarily. Therefore, clients pay. If clients cannot pay, we do not provide services.

If we look at our charter services over a full year of operation, we try and manage it as a negated cost. So we try and balance up the books at the end. The more we have instances like this, the more unviable that business line becomes and the more we will have to look outside. We cannot be making knee-jerk decisions around operations like this with moments' notice because we cannot rely on our staff to do it.

I would point out I have got no criticism of the staff here. They have a view and they are very well entitled to it. People provide these charter services as volunteers. It is

voluntary, it is overtime; it is not a core service. We cannot commit them to that service. They are well within their rights to say, “We’d prefer not to drive.” The issue from an ACTION perspective is reliability and the integrity in our relationships with our customers.

THE CHAIR: We need to stop there because the time for the hearing has expired. I would like to thank you, Chief Minister, Mr Byles, Mr Swift and Mr Elliott, and to all the officials, for attending today. With questions on notice, could we have them in a timely manner, please, and then we will send them back to you. If we can get them back in about a fortnight from when you receive them, that would be good.

The committee adjourned at 12.30 pm.