



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

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

**(Reference: Annual and financial reports 2008-09)**

**Members:**

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**FRIDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2010**

**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).

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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 21 January 2009*

## **The committee met at 9.03 am.**

### Appearances:

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

### Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Byles, Mr Gary, Chief Executive  
Elliott, Mr Tom, Executive Director, Transport and Infrastructure Division  
Clarke, Ms Liz, Acting General Manager, ACTION  
Polinelli, Mr Anthony, Director, Canberra Connect  
Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT  
Horne, Mr Hamish, General Manager, Cemeteries  
Zatschler, Mr Gerhard, Manager, Heritage  
West, Mr Rod, Manager, Licensing and Compliance  
Watkinson, Mr Russell, Director, Parks, Conservation and Lands  
Cooper, Mr Neil, Manager, Fire Management, Parks, Conservation and Lands  
Kidd, Mr Michael, Manager, Yarralumla Nursery  
Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, ACT Library and Information Services  
Perram, Mr Phillip, Executive Director, Territory Services Division  
Steward, Ms Fay, Executive Director, Land Management and Planning Division  
Ware, Mr Chris, Senior Manager, ACT NoWaste

### Department of Land and Property Services

Ryan, Mr Stephen, Director, ACT Property Group

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning everybody. We are here for the standing committee's annual and financial reports hearing. This morning we are hearing from witnesses from the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, ACTION buses and the ACT Heritage Council. I am sure you are very familiar with the privilege card and understand the implications of that. Chief Minister, do you want to make some opening remarks?

**Mr Stanhope:** I have nothing specific that I want to raise, Madam Chair, other than to say that I welcome the opportunity, and my officers are very happy to be here and look forward to assisting the committee in any way they are reasonably able to.

**THE CHAIR:** We will go through it in chronological order, dealing with ACT Property Group first.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Last year in estimates, the TAMS Property Group said they were doing a number of projects to improve energy efficiency in TAMS-occupied buildings. My notes refer specifically to Macarthur House and Dickson Motor Registry. How did those go? Following on from that, what heating and cooling regimes does TAMS have in its offices and how does Property Group influence those?

**Mr Ryan:** That is an interesting series of questions. In terms of the work we spoke

about last year and the projects that we are doing this year, some are underway and some have been completed. We have been in the process of installing smart meters in Macarthur House. This will enable the measurement of energy consumption by floor, with the separation of the tower and the annexe. You would be aware that in Macarthur House we have also got an InTACT data centre. It has a major bearing on the energy usage in Macarthur House, as the service centre at Callam does over on the south side. One of the advantages of putting in smart meters is to enable us to identify where there are opportunities to reduce energy consumption.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So you will be able to see the data centre usage now, which I gather you have not been able to do before?

**Mr Ryan:** Yes. Essentially, we will get reports that come through floor by floor. The occupiers will be able to see the smart meters themselves but we will also, through our building management system, be able to receive the reports and keep track of it. We have just put a resource in place to deal with the whole issue of management of green buildings and trying to identify what that means for all the agencies.

We are in the process of working with our interstate colleagues in the Government Property Group to come up with a national green leasing policy. An integral part of a national green leasing policy is a national green lease schedule. That schedule, essentially, if you are leasing a building, will be built into the sublease in the case of the ACT, and leases elsewhere. It directs the behaviour of both the owner of the building and the tenants. So there is a lot of work going on there. There is a lot of behaviour management that is going to be required. With things like smart meters, if you get a brand-new building, those sorts of things are now built in, but with older stock, like we have in the ACT, we have to go through and retrofit.

We are also in the process of completing getting a NABERS rating assessment of all of our buildings, which is an energy rating on all of the buildings. The commonwealth, in conjunction with all of the states and territories, is moving towards mandatory disclosure of energy ratings on commercial buildings. Again, the Government Property Group, which is the grouping together of all of the groups, have been working closely with the energy department of the commonwealth to come up with a strategy.

That national policy is going to be applied using the Corporations Act. So it does not actually apply to governments, but all of the governments have voluntarily agreed to participate in the scheme. So, for us, it is important to go and get the energy ratings on the buildings so that we can meet the requirements there. It will mean that all of our tenants—TAMS, and all of the other agencies as well—will be in a much better position to plan how they utilise their buildings. From our perspective, in terms of bidding for capital moneys, it will put us in a better position to be able to identify where we need to spend money to improve buildings.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I thought that commonwealth requirement was for the disclosure of energy used if it was over 2,000 square metres or—

**Mr Ryan:** Over 2,000 square metres will be where you have to have an energy rating. The way it is going to work is that if you are selling a building or bringing in a new

tenant, you will have to provide an energy rating. The commonwealth is also talking about your having to do a rating every 12 months or two years. There is a bit of debate going on about that. We found out, for instance, that if you are a BHP, a huge organisation, and you are moving your staff from one building to another, you do not have to have a mandatory disclosure requirement there. At an early stage they were talking about having governments do it every time we moved staff around, but we have said we think it is more sensible to do an annual or biannual rating and use that as part of our planning.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You mentioned you were involved in the whole-of-government behaviour or changes. One of my questions at the beginning, which we sort of diverted from, was about what heating and cooling regimes you have in TAMS offices and how you influence the rest of the government in that.

**Mr Ryan:** In terms of existing systems, I would have to take that on notice because they are all different; they are all old. We are in a program of upgrading. For instance, we have done some work on heating, ventilation and air conditioning at both Dickson Motor Registry and the Woden library. They have both been replaced. It cost \$1.4 million to put in new systems, and those new systems are designed to not only improve the ambient heating and cooling for staff but also are far more energy efficient than the previous systems that were in place. We have in the order of 60 to 70 buildings across the territory with government staff working in them which we would own, so I would have to take on notice and get you the details of what the systems are.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I should have used the word “temperature”. Do you know what temperatures you are aiming for and do you influence people on that?

**Mr Ryan:** We meet the guidelines of the occupational health and safety requirements. I think it is in the 20s. It is something that is set into building management systems or our technical staff work through it.

**THE CHAIR:** By way of clarification, Mr Ryan, you are progressively going through and auditing the heating and cooling systems of the existing buildings. Is that what you just said?

**Mr Ryan:** We do condition audits on all of our buildings. From that, we develop a five-year plan for the maintenance of those buildings. We then work through priorities. So there are things that you have to do because, if you do not, the building will fall down, and there are things that you do when you can. So we have a program, under our capital upgrades budget, of doing replacements of heating and ventilation. In the past we have already done things like look at the water systems to try and reduce the amount of water used. Bear in mind that the work we can do, of course, is on our own buildings. When you look at something across the road like Eclipse or Nara, that is where we work with landlords and encourage that.

**MR COE:** On page 29 it says that the ACT Property Group works closely with the Government Property Group. Do you know roughly what the set of indicators is that has been developed?

**Mr Ryan:** Our benchmarking?

**MR COE:** Yes, that is right, and also how that will impact on us here in the territory.

**Mr Ryan:** The benchmark report put out by the Government Property Group has in the order of a couple of hundred different bits of data in it. It is quite comprehensive. Over the last couple of years we have been doing a lot of work on benchmarks for sustainability. But the initial sorts of benchmarks were about square metres leased, square metres owned; it is about utilisation rates. If you look at the budget papers that come out annually, we usually have five key targets there, and they are all similar to the national targets.

There is the utilisation rate. For instance, the territory's target for utilisation is 15 square metres per officer. It is currently running at about 16.3, down from 22 or 23 in 2006-07. At the moment the whole government office building debate that is going on will have a bearing on whether we achieve 15 square metres in the short term or whether we have to spend a lot of money on doing major fit-outs for the last few areas to get down to 15 square metres. We have a cost per public servant, which is currently running at about \$7,000. It is actually lower than it was per public servant because we are getting better utilisation rates, and that is per annum. We have vacancy rate data. We run at a vacancy rate of about one to two per cent. That is space that is not currently being occupied by the territory, but you always need to have some form of churn available so that if an emergency occurs you can move staff around.

**MR COE:** How many of these indicators are driven by the Government Property Group benchmarks?

**Mr Ryan:** The utilisation rate is definitely driven by the national one. Nationally, we all—

**MR COE:** That is the 15 square metres figure?

**Mr Ryan:** Yes. And with the vacancy rate, most states are trying to run at about one or two per cent.

**MR COE:** When was this benchmark as part of the GPG set up?

**Mr Ryan:** Back in the 90s, I think. It is a voluntary arrangement. The Government Property Group is a voluntary coming together of state and territory property groups. The commonwealth talks about joining and sits on the edge but does not quite participate. That is mainly because the commonwealth decentralised some years ago. So unlike ourselves, who look after the whole of the government, in the commonwealth every individual agency does their own thing, which makes it rather hard for them.

**MR COE:** With the working group that the ACT Property Group is on, or is leading, in fact, what indicators are involved in that working group?

**Mr Ryan:** We are doing two things in terms of that. We have been leading that particular project for the Government Property Group, which means basically that we

have been leading the collection of the data and putting it together in a report. That report was tabled at our meeting in October. The chairman of the Government Property Group will shortly release a summary of it. Not all of the jurisdictions want it to go out in full detail, but they are quite happy to have an average report that gives an indication of what governments are achieving. That is likely to be released in the next couple of months.

The other thing we are doing is working closely with DECCEW. In that work that we are doing with DECCEW on sustainability, we are taking back and working with our colleagues on trying to come up with meaningful measures that can be used across the country in terms of sustainability.

**MR COE:** The cost per public servant figure, that obviously involves space, as well as the number of public servants. So either change is going to impact on the cost. How much of that reduction is being driven by having more public servants in the existing office space as opposed to actually a reduction—

**Mr Stanhope:** The reduction from 22 metres to 15 or 16.

**MR COE:** Or as opposed to getting rid of surplus space.

**Mr Stanhope:** We took out all the indoor bowling rinks.

**MR COE:** Except the Assembly one.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**Mr Ryan:** Since 2006-07 we have reduced the amount of space that we lease from the private sector by 12,000 square metres. That in turn reduced the annual rental bill by \$4 million approximately.

**MR COE:** Over the same time period how much did the government-owned space increase or decrease?

**Mr Ryan:** The government-owned space has stayed roughly the same, I think. Basically we have not built any new office buildings and we have not sold any at this stage.

**MR COE:** You haven't acquired any either?

**Mr Ryan:** We have done some new rentals but we have also got rid of some rentals. The figures will change again at the end of the year.

**Mr Stanhope:** Mr Coe's question is an interesting question. It is a significant achievement to reduce from 22 to 16. Do we know the extent to which that is through the better utilisation of space or through the employment of more public servants? I guess that is the heart of the question.

**Mr Ryan:** We believe it is through the better utilisation, Chief Minister.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, but can we confirm that? We probably need to do some work on that, Mr Coe. I think it is a very interesting question and we would be happy to take it on notice to provide a fuller answer.

Just by way of a bit of further explanation on that, the government took a quite determined decision to set a standard and a target and actually required of Property Group that they achieve or seek to achieve a 15 square metre allocation across the board. So it has been very much, over these past three years most particularly, a very deliberate policy. But the question you ask is a good question.

**MR COE:** I guess there are limits at the other end of the spectrum in terms of OH&S and other workplace issues. Would that be right?

**Mr Stanhope:** One of the constraints too is the age of the building and the time at which the fit-out was undertaken—standards of technology, capacity, fit-out arrangements. Floor designs and plates have changed dramatically so there is a whole range of issues and constraints that we work with. But there is a very deliberate policy. It is a very deliberate intent to meet the government's expectation that on average across the board public servants will be allocated 15 square metres. It is a very deliberate policy outcome that we seek to achieve. We will do some further work and get back to you.

**MR COE:** That would be good. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Any more questions?

**MR COE:** I hope this is a quick one, on graffiti. Page 28 refers to the graffiti removal program. How much of that is identified by the Property Group as opposed to by PCL or—

**Mr Ryan:** PCL runs the graffiti removal program and we are contracted to PCL to do the Woden-Weston area. Russell could explain about the other contracts but it was a program that was set up some years ago. It is a program that involves the use of staff with a disability. We employ up to three GSO3s, which is a low level. We have now moved to a six-month contract where they get training and an opportunity to get some work experience. We work with disability providers to bring on board those people and they work within our general works team which handles graffiti, fountain cleaning, flag raising, banner raising and all the rest. There is a range of activities. That team recently picked up maintenance of all the education department preschools. It is quite a good little team and it is a good outcome. We have a GSO5 on board, who joined Property last year permanently, who came out of that program, so it is quite rewarding.

**MR COE:** You said Woden-Weston area?

**Mr Ryan:** Woden-Weston Creek, yes.

**MR COE:** Why is a central agency like the Property Group doing Woden-Weston as opposed to all of Canberra?

**Mr Ryan:** The program initially started when that part of Property Group was in Totalcare and it tendered for and won the contract. You would have to ask parks and conservation how the contract arrangements have worked, but I believe the—

**MR COE:** So the Property Group tendered?

**Mr Ryan:** No, Totalcare. Then when the functions came back out of Totalcare some years ago they came with that function in place and, because of the special relationship with the use of staff with a disability, the decision was taken that we would continue to provide that service to parks and conservation.

**MR COE:** Do you want to broaden that to other areas of Canberra?

**Mr Ryan:** I would have to take that on board and work out with parks and conservation what that would mean. Running this as a program is beneficial to the community in terms of it being an outlet for staff with a disability, but it may not necessarily be the most cost-efficient solution for the territory.

**MR COE:** Great. Okay.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We should probably put that on notice in our heads and ask later today. This is very interesting.

**Mr Stanhope:** What Mr Ryan is suggesting is that there is an acceptance of a community service—not so much an obligation but a community service—opportunity that can be pursued by Property Group through participating in this program. What Mr Ryan is saying is that it is not core Property Group business, and in a harsh, rational world, Property Group would probably not be providing this service. But they are soft and cuddly in Property Group.

**THE CHAIR:** Any more questions of Property Group?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You talked about the performance benchmarks and I would like to ask more about the environmental part. You went through five of them. I would like to know more about the environmental ones, but we are running out of time, so I am happy to put that one on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Thank you very much, Mr Ryan. We will go on to cemeteries, the Land Management and Planning Division.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I recently read your second discussion paper on the southern cemetery and it was very interesting. The thing that struck me most was that you expect there will be an increase in cremation from 80 per cent to 90 per cent. You then had a paragraph saying that you thought there was a need for education for people about funeral options, which I would totally agree with because most of us do not get involved in funerals until we are in a situation of serious stress. But you went on to say that that would concentrate on cremation options. Why are you concentrating on explaining to people cremation options?

**Mr Horne:** I am not quite certain of the paragraph that you are referring to. Certainly

the intention is not necessarily to concentrate on cremation as the main future option. If the discussion paper alludes to that, it is not totally correct, and I am sorry if it gave that impression. That certainly was not the way we wrote it.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I was very pleased to see that you mentioned in it the possibility of natural burials in all the existing cemeteries, not just the southern one. Have you done any work on the environmental impacts of the different end-of-life options for people?

**Mr Horne:** No, we have not. There is one cemetery in Australia that has done some work. It is a very expensive thing to do and that is the reason why not many have done it. Centennial Park in Adelaide spent a lot of money—hundreds of thousands of dollars—looking at that. It essentially did a comparison between cremation and lawn burial—they were the two main areas looked at—and concluded that there was not really much in it. Depending on the life of the cemetery and the length of burial—for instance comparing burials in perpetuity to burials reusing spaces, limited tenure burials—lawn burials have a slightly higher carbon footprint than cremation, over time. That is really the only work that has been done in Australia to date.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I think the South Australian government put out a report which also said that natural burials would have a lower carbon footprint than either of those. Have you done any work or are you thinking of doing any work to educate the community in Canberra about those sorts of issues?

**Mr Horne:** When the time comes to plan the new cemetery and we look at the range of options that will be available to us, at that stage we intend to do further community consultation in terms of the balance of the various options that we will offer. Some work will be done at that point on what the different impacts will be. It is generally accepted that natural burials have a significantly lower carbon footprint than other forms of burial.

**MR COE:** What cemeteries in Canberra are currently available for earth burials?

**Mr Horne:** Woden, Gungahlin and Hall.

**MR COE:** A couple of weeks ago I believe there was a burial at St John's in Reid for somebody who did not have an exclusive right. Do you know what the legal status of the cemetery is with that site?

**Mr Horne:** I will just rephrase what I said before. They are the public cemeteries that are operating in the ACT. There are other cemeteries that are available for burial. In fact, the folk who did the burial at St John's did have an exclusive right there. They have a family plot with a number of unused spaces. The initial response from one of the church officers was that they thought that the particular graveyard was closed and there could be no more burials, but that was not correct and there were no problems at the end of the day.

**MR COE:** Okay. So, given the authority has responsibility for all earth burials in the ACT, what sort of ongoing communication is there with private facilities in terms of managing the burials?

**Mr Horne:** We are responsible for all burials in public cemeteries in the ACT. If that says something else, it is slightly incorrect.

**MR COE:** It says:

Trading as Canberra Cemeteries (RBN) the Authority is responsible for all earth burials in the ACT.

That is on page 5.

**Mr Horne:** Okay. Then that needs to be corrected. It is 99.9 per cent correct. In essence, under the new act—and that probably has not been updated since the new act came in—a burial can take place in any designated cemetery. That may be a private cemetery.

**Mr Stanhope:** What is the approval process for a private burial?

**Mr Horne:** As far as I am aware, there is not specifically one. The act just says that you have to be buried in a cemetery. As in the case of Hall, and as far as I am aware the last time a burial was done in a private cemetery, which was at Tharwa and before my time in fact, the cemeteries authority was contracted to conduct the burial, just because that was the simplest and easiest way to make it happen. Obviously we had the expertise.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can you give me some more information on your next steps for consultation on the proposed southern cemetery?

**Mr Horne:** From now on?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes.

**Mr Horne:** The discussion paper has been released. It outlines what we think we are going to do and some of the work that we have done to date. We are having another public meeting in Tuggeranong next week or the week after. In fact, I think it is on the 29th. I will have to confirm that date. Following that, tenders will close on 16 March—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Submissions?

**Mr Horne:** I am sorry; submissions will close on 16 March on that discussion paper. Following that, we will obviously analyse those submissions and make a report to government.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And then?

**Mr Horne:** Then the government will be in a position to make a decision about the time lines and makeup of the new cemetery.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** This is basically the last piece of public consultation now,

assuming the government accepts your report?

**Mr Horne:** That is our intention. Obviously there would be further consultations in the planning process and obviously a development application process. Other than that, the formal—

**Mr Stanhope:** The final consultation in relation to the decision-making process about whether or not to establish an additional cemetery and where to establish it. Of course, if a decision were taken by government to establish a cemetery as is proposed at Tuggeranong, there would then be further consultation, as Mr Horne says, about the issues around what would it look like and how would it be constructed. I think it is very important that when we get to the stage of the government committing and saying, “Yes, we will establish a cemetery on this site,” I would anticipate additional detailed consultation or conversation around: this is what the cemetery will provide; this is what it will look like; this is how it will be constructed.

I think there are some significant landscape issues. If we decided to establish a second crematorium there are some very significant issues that we would want to discuss around that, such as the issue of natural burial—how we might then engage quite genuinely with that particular issue and the implications of that. I think there will be some conversations over time. The cemetery still has capacity for some years, but it will run out fast. I believe we are allowing a significant lead time. I have previously indicated, on the basis of advice, that it might be appropriate, for instance, to look to an establishment or commencement date for an additional or third cemetery by 2013 or thereabouts.

There is no great rush or hurry here. We are allowing a significant lead time and we will be looking for detailed community input into the detail of the cemetery. Having suggested that there is no genuine hurry, I believe it is important that there is landscaping, additional tree planting and additional work where some lead time will be useful. If we do proceed then in the context of landscaping I think it would be important to have some decisions around appropriate advance tree planting, for instance.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is all I have on cemeteries.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Horne, those are all the questions. Thank you very much for appearing before us. Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The obvious question on heritage, I guess, is how many heritage claims are currently outstanding and how long is it going to take you to clear the backlog?

**Mr Zatschler:** The backlog in terms of nominations is approximately 240. We have been working on a strategy to reduce those but it is a fairly time-consuming process in terms of researching the nominations. A number of the nominations that we have had have been there for a while and the original nomination forms are fairly scant in terms of details. They were accepted at the time so it is a question of researching those. Some work had previously been undertaken and we have been reviewing that. In terms of a time line, it is hard to put it in detail, but we are looking at processing

somewhere between 20 and 30 a year. Some are simpler than others.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So in the order of 10 years, on my rough maths?

**Mr Zatschler:** It could be that long, depending on the level of detail, but we are looking at ways of expediting that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can I just ask you about a few higher profile ones—the Weston Creek caretaker’s cottage?

**Mr Zatschler:** The ACT planning authority have commissioned some consultants to do an independent assessment. The Heritage Council are waiting for that report to be submitted to them. Once that is received we will have a look at the information provided. We would need to put that into the format and make some adjustments. While we have been working with ACTPLA and the consultants, we have not received a report as yet.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The Northbourne Avenue flats may become even more important, given this committee is also involved in the inquiry into density in the inner north.

**Mr Zatschler:** That is a good one. That has been there for a while. A conservation management plan was prepared on behalf of Housing ACT a few years ago. That was forwarded to the Heritage Council for consideration. It was flawed. It has been sent back and it has not been returned for reconsideration by council. The consideration of registration or not to register has been delayed as a result of that because previous managers and council had made an agreement with Housing ACT that the conservation management plan would be the first step. Since that time council has had an onsite inspection and there are ongoing discussions with council.

The likelihood is that that will be considered this year, possibly without the conservation management plan being developed, but by council making a decision on that. What council has been waiting for is an outline from Housing ACT on what their intention would be, whether the place was listed or not. One of the issues that they are looking at is what happens to the buildings and the footprint. Should all of the buildings be retained or should there be a representative sample kept? Council has been waiting for some advice and direction from Housing in terms of their long-term plans.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Tralee and Couranga homestead?

**Mr Zatschler:** I can tell you where that is at. That was nominated in October last year.

**Mr Stanhope:** By me.

**Mr Zatschler:** It was nominated in October last year. Given the circumstances and the location of it and the development that was foreshadowed, an assessment was undertaken. Council considered that at its December meeting. It was decided to provisionally register the place. That was advertised in December. There was a four-week public consultation period. The responses have come in in relation to that.

That will go to the next council meeting which is in March. I expect them to make a decision at that meeting as to whether to proceed with full registration.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And Tralee?

**Mr Zatschler:** That is Couranga Tralee.

**Mr Stanhope:** They are collocated. It is worth a visit, Ms Le Couteur, if you have time. It represents some interesting challenges to the government in relation to heritage, particularly extant buildings such as Tralee and Couranga. There is the issue then of some adaptive reuse or use. There are some very challenging issues for the government and the community in relation to heritage. I think this is probably a conversation we need to engage in a little more closely.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. Possibly one of the broader challenging issues is Indigenous heritage in terms of the development in Molonglo, particularly by the river. How is that proceeding?

**Mr Zatschler:** Just on that, the Heritage Council, not the heritage unit, has made a submission to ACTPLA in relation to a whole of Molonglo Valley assessment. That would be the preferred outcome. The unit has been working very closely with ACTPLA on the archaeological assessments, both Aboriginal and historic. We have outlined what council's requirements are and we have been working with the consultants and ACTPLA to ensure that those issues have been addressed. That is progressing. We have had a number of representations over the last 12 months in terms of people who are aware of locations of historic sites. We have passed that information on to ACTPLA and the consultants and asked that those issues be explored and addressed in the archaeological reports that will be submitted to council.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Have ACTPLA's time lines give you enough time to finish this properly and have your findings been taken into account and implemented by ACTPLA in the development?

**Mr Zatschler:** We have been engaged with ACTPLA from the beginning in terms of outlining what the council's requirements are. As I have said, they have engaged consultants to undertake that work. I understand it is progressing in a timely manner.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My last specific question is on Gold Creek homestead, which is an example of reuse, Mr Stanhope. How is that going?

**Mr Zatschler:** Council considered Gold Creek homestead last year and decided not to proceed with registration. That was advertised, I think, after the July meeting. There were no appeals during the public consultation period, so that decision stands.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a reconsidered position too, I believe.

**Mr Zatschler:** There was a second time that council considered that.

**Mr Stanhope:** Ms Le Couteur, Gold Creek was nominated and the council chose not to register it. It was then reconsidered as a result of some community interest and a

belief amongst many that aspects of Gold Creek have heritage significance and should be registered. This is an issue increasingly for government and the community. I must say I believe it is an issue for policy makers as well. There are many fine places and buildings, not necessarily pre-Canberra establishment buildings but some of the earlier residential buildings. Gold Creek, of course, predates the establishment of the formation of the Australian Capital Territory. I think that one of the issues that we would in government have to be conscious of and determined about is just because the Heritage Council does not accept that a particular building or site requires, deserves or fits the criteria for registration it does not mean that the place, the site or the building is of such historic or heritage significance, despite its non-registration, that it should not be protected.

I have been a little concerned about the view, “Well, if it’s not heritage registered, its value is not of an order that it cannot be just demolished and replaced.” I have a growing concern about some wonderful old 1920s and 1930s housing in north and south Canberra that will not attract heritage registration. There are areas and precincts. The Heritage Council has done detailed assessments and registered significant portions of the inner north early residential houses, but there are significant numbers of houses either side of the registered precincts that nevertheless are historically significant and they are lovely and wonderful houses. There is a tension for government, particularly when those houses are within the public housing stock and are very costly to maintain, inefficient and do not meet current housing standards, and Housing has a desire to upgrade or improve, refurbish, rebuild or redevelop. It is an issue that we are meeting more and more.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have to say that your comments, compared to the comments of most other governments on heritage, are quite refreshing, from a heritage point of view. It is usually the other way around. If it is not listed then—

**Mr Stanhope:** It is an area that I have a strong personal interest in, Ms Le Couteur. I ponder and agonise over it quite a bit. For instance, I think I do upset the Land Development Agency from time to time. Until I whipped in and nominated Tralee, I think the LDA had some very different views about what might happen to Tralee than I had. But this is an issue for us. Tralee Homestead is right in the middle of the next proposed expansion of the Hume industrial estate. It is an embuggerance; it is in the wrong place. There is a view in the hearts of those that are tasked with expanding our industrial estate that the best thing is to move it and get it out of the way.

There is Cargills Cottage over on the Causeway in East Lake, which does not fit with the world view of those that would establish a wonderful, new, sustainable estate at East Lake. Cargills Cottage is one of only three remaining extant 1920s dairy farmers’ homes. It is a very significant part of our development. So I have gone into bat for Cargills Cottage. I have sought to have that registered as well. But there are issues for us. It is a standard square box. It is a classic 1920s off-the-shelf, beautifully square weatherboard house with a tin roof. It is a significant part of our history. It is not that I have brought undue influence to bear or anything, but it has been reviewed. I think we should preserve it, but it is difficult. It creates a real difficulty for us. It is sitting on land that will be worth an absolute motza and its adaptive reuse is a challenge, but it is a challenge being looked at by Mr Byles, I am happy to say.

**MR COE:** Where are we at with regard to the Flynn primary school site in terms of their heritage application?

**Mr Zatschler:** I can give an update on that. The Heritage Council commissioned the Institute of Architects to do a comparative assessment between all of the Taglietti schools. There are four of them. Two of them have been nominated—Giralang primary school and Flynn primary school. That has been received. It is in the process of being reviewed by the Heritage Council. One site inspection has been organised for 18 February, where members of the register task force will meet on site at Giralang and Flynn.

**MR COE:** What date was that?

**Mr Zatschler:** 18 February. They are looking at the two schools. The report has come back and said that two of the four schools have got certain heritage values. It is the degree to which they have. So the council will go out, make an on-site inspection, have a look at the facts that have been presented to them and they will make a decision. At the moment it is highly likely that Giralang primary school will meet the threshold. With Flynn, I am not sure. It is a decision that the council will make. We are hoping that a recommendation will go to the council meeting scheduled for the beginning of March.

**MR COE:** Why do you say Giralang will and not Flynn?

**THE CHAIR:** I did not hear him say it would not.

**Mr Zatschler:** I am saying there is a strong likelihood that Giralang will be nominated. If you have a look at the Taglietti submissions in the report, from his perspective that is the school that he holds dearest to his heart, and it is where his gold medal award dinner was held. He had the choice of others. So out of the four that he designed and that were constructed, he himself puts that at the highest value.

**MR COE:** In terms of the process, you obviously have a fair idea about the applications to be able to say that Giralang will have a stronger chance than Flynn. Is it your responsibility to advise the council or is it simply to provide information and leave the council to make the decision?

**Mr Zatschler:** We provide support and advice, but at the end of the day it is the expertise of the council that makes the decision. That is why they have been appointed as an independent council, to review all of the information, to go on site, to talk to people, deliberate and then make their decision.

**MR COE:** Is the view that Giralang is more likely to be registered already in the public domain or is today the first time?

**Mr Zatschler:** I think that has always been in the public domain. That was the initial school that was registered. Certainly, in the discussions I have had with various people, that has always been considered to have the highest values in terms of the architect's eyes and also the community's. The Flynn nomination was more recent. It was for that reason that the council decided to ask for a comparative assessment. The

question is whether you list one, all four or two. They want to make sure that there is an informed decision in terms of the process. They do not want to be seen as necessarily rubber stampers of the listing process. They want to have an objective view on this.

**MR COE:** Did we talk earlier about the Heritage Act review?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No; that is a good question.

**MR COE:** I understand the Heritage Act is due to be reviewed this year. I think the review period ends on 9 March or thereabouts and then on 9 September the Chief Minister has to table something in the Assembly. I think the report says—and I can't find it at the moment—that some preliminary work was being undertaken at the time of publishing this report. Do you know where that is at?

**Mr Zatschler:** I can give you an update on that. The discussion paper is in the process of being finalised. It has been developed. An interdepartmental committee is being established that will review that discussion paper and finalise it. That will happen in the next two weeks. So there is an expectation that the review will commence on 9 March.

**MR COE:** Have the terms of reference been established?

**Mr Zatschler:** They are in the discussion paper.

**MR COE:** Will they be public?

**Mr Zatschler:** Yes, they will be publicised on the website and they will be made available for interested parties.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What guidelines does ACTPLA use when sending applications to the task force? This is getting back to the backlog question. How is it worked out what gets to the top of the list to be worked on, given that it is going to take 10 years?

**Mr Zatschler:** I am not sure that ACTPLA has a role in that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Maybe I should rephrase the question. How does the task force work out which of the 240 developments it is going to work on? I thought ACTPLA had a process for prioritising these with you, but I could be totally wrong about that.

**Mr Zatschler:** I have been in the chair for three years and we have inherited a backlog there. One of the first things that the council undertook was to review the backlog that was there and they have come up with an order of priority that they have been working through over the last couple of years. To that extent, I had some consultants in to do an assessment of some existing nominations that have been progressed. We are gradually working through those.

One of the issues is to make sure that the historic details are correct—there were some mistakes in those—and making sure that the formatting was correct. Basically, council has driven its agenda and we are working through that backlog as best we can.

Obviously, there are some high priority items and we have had discussions with Housing to have a look at the nominations of the units and the flats. They have some decisions that they need to make in terms of refurbishment. They were looking at engaging a consultant to do a comparative assessment of their units down Northbourne Avenue and in Civic that have been nominated over the years, to provide input to the process and to help to fast-track that. So we are working with different agencies to work our way through government-owned assets. We are also working with individuals to make sure that they are progressed. Obviously, the nomination process is not static. Every time we reduce it, other places are being nominated. So they are being factored in.

Doing the research and providing that advice to council is time consuming, but equally the appeals process is as well. A number of decisions that council made last year to register and not register have been appealed, and they have been before the Civil and Administrative and Tribunal. There is a lot of effort that goes into providing information to all of the parties. Also, a jurisdictional issue has been raised by the Government Solicitor's office in terms of whether or not the proceedings can happen, and we are waiting for a report back on that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But ACTPLA does not have a process of sending you things when—

**Mr Zatschler:** They do in terms of development applications. ACTPLA sends us development applications that have been submitted for heritage-listed properties or places in heritage precincts, and we have a 15-day turnaround period to provide advice.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have some more heritage questions but I will put them on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** We will turn to Yarralumla Nursery. Are there any questions? Members do not have any questions. That is so disappointing!

**Mr Kidd:** On a rainy day as well.

**THE CHAIR:** On a rainy day when I am sure everything is going swimmingly.

**Mr Kidd:** The trees will love the rain.

**THE CHAIR:** You are needing to grow more trees because of the replacement program?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will ask a question. I have not been able to get back out to inspect it, but there was some heritage work undertaken on an original glasshouse. Has that all worked okay?

**Mr Kidd:** That is 95 per cent complete and we expect to put our first crop in next month.

**Mr Stanhope:** In the refurbished glasshouse?

**Mr Kidd:** In the rebuilt glasshouse, yes. It has been quite a win-win situation.

**Mr Stanhope:** Have members visited the Yarralumla Nursery? You should have a walk around inside.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, I think that would be a good idea. We might discuss in one of our private meetings as to whether we could do a site visit out to the nursery.

**Mr Stanhope:** These glasshouses, for instance, were actually built by Weston.

**Mr Kidd:** Over 80 years ago.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that part of when he was doing the arboretum?

**Mr Kidd:** No, it was part of when he was the superintendent, in the beginning, to develop Canberra and planting the original trees.

**Mr Stanhope:** I went up there once and all the wood had rotted and glass was all stacked up. Actually, I think some apprentices rebuilt it.

**Mr Kidd:** They did, yes. We did a partnership with the Master Builders Association and we did it as a live project with the second-year carpenter apprentices. They treated us as a real customer and they went through and rebuilt the timber frames. It was such a successful project. We have got two houses and we need to rebuild the other one, and it will be rebuilt this year as well.

**Mr Stanhope:** Go and have a visit; you should.

**THE CHAIR:** You are right; it would be worth us going out and we can get a better understanding of what is going on at that site and your other sites, because you do have more than one site, obviously.

**Mr Kidd:** Yes, we have a tree farm at Pialligo as well. You are more than welcome, whenever you feel.

**THE CHAIR:** We will deliberate on that in private and make some decisions. Parks, Conservation and Lands is the next topic.

**Mr Byles:** I will ask Mr Watkinson to join us at the table.

**THE CHAIR:** Would you do animal welfare if that came up in the course of this conversation or do we need another person at the table?

**Mr Byles:** Mr West—this is his chance—might join us.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. We will move ahead on Parks, Conservation and Lands. I understand that the department has developed a subregional bushfire management plan to inform its activities, to undertake the management and risk of bushfires in the ACT. Could you talk about the scientific reasoning behind this strategic plan?

**Mr Watkinson:** The regional fire management plans were an exercise that was done to assist the development of the strategic bushfire management plan, version 2. It was a complex and difficult exercise where we looked at the science that we had on the fire needs of different vegetation communities here in the ACT, looked at the need for asset protection and then tried to find the right balance between doing asset protection burns and doing burns that would not impede the natural development of vegetation.

There is always some compromise in these types of activities. There are those in the community who would like to see more burning. There are those in the community who would like to see less, and more attention paid to the values of the ecological communities. So the regional fire management plans were the exercise to find that balance and to feed that into the review of the strategic bushfire management plan.

**THE CHAIR:** So it was on a scientific basis and you believe you have got the right balance now between those people wanting to burn and those who—

**Mr Watkinson:** It is a fair comment to say that we have achieved a high level of consensus among the different stakeholder groups. Various meetings were held with the conservation sector, with rural landholders and with a range of other interested parties. Generally, the feedback we have had from the presentations has been very positive. People have been impressed with the science that we have been able to show about how decisions have been reached in terms of what is in the regional fire management plans. The plans through the regional strategic bushfire management plan have now been endorsed through the Bushfire Council. So I think people should feel confident that we have got in place a good framework for balanced fire management in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** That is very pleasing. Thank you very much, Mr Watkinson.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The Namadgi management plan has been coming for some time. When will it arrive?

**Mr Watkinson:** The final version is currently waiting for release at the moment, so you can probably expect to see that in the next few months, if not sooner.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** There has been the vexed issue of large-scale events in Namadgi. Are there going to be guidelines about that in the plan, and particularly is it going to implement the recommendations of the Assembly committee inquiry of 2008 for a cap for large-scale events in Namadgi?

**Mr Watkinson:** We have provided a report, with the amended proposed final plan, to the minister. From our point of view, the appropriate approach is to assess large events on their merit. There does not seem to be much of a basis for setting what we would see as fairly arbitrary limits on large-scale events. The park, whilst it has a primary conservation objective, is also available for a range of recreational opportunities. So our view would be to have a set of criteria where we judge the merits of whatever proposals come for different scales of events in the park.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I think the next big one coming up is the orienteering event at

Easter. How will you assess that?

**Mr Watkinson:** That event has now been approved and we are putting in place a monitoring program so that we can assess whether there will be any unforeseen impacts from having an event of that size in Namadgi. That, of course, will then guide any future applications we might get for similar events.

**Mr Stanhope:** Some of that event is outside Namadgi, isn't it?

**Mr Watkinson:** The event goes on for a number of days. I think only one day of the event is actually in Namadgi.

**MR COE:** Yes, it is all over the ACT.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The 25th anniversary of Namadgi: is there going to be a celebration?

**Mr Watkinson:** I think there will be some celebrations and I think we might see coincidence with the release of the management plan.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay—just by sheer coincidence. Is there going to be a management board once the plan is released or do we have to wait and see?

**Mr Watkinson:** I do not think the management plan will specifically influence whether a new board of management is convened or not.

**MR COE:** I understand that a 1,800-hectare burn was due to be conducted in Namadgi but that due to weather it could not be undertaken. Is that correct?

**Mr Watkinson:** That is correct.

**MR COE:** So for the entire season there was not an appropriate day to do a 1,800-hectare burn?

**Mr Watkinson:** No. Planning a 1,800-hectare burn is quite a complex exercise. These types of burns would go over three or four days. They involve mobilising a large number of people to participate, with overnight camping and all the logistics that go with that. The number of times you can plan to undertake that scale of burn with the type of logistics and resources involved means that you fix a weekend some time in advance, you spend several weeks planning how that is going to happen and then, if the weather conditions are not right for the times, either too wet or too dangerous, you are forced to put that plan on hold and see when you can mobilise that level of resources again.

If you want to go into more detail on that, Neil Cooper, the manager of the fire unit, is here and could probably answer questions in more detail.

**MR COE:** That would be good. Thank you.

**Mr Stanhope:** That is Neil Cooper PSM. Congratulations, Mr Cooper. Mr Cooper

was a recipient of the Public Service Medal in the Australia Day honours list. It is a significant honour and recognition of Mr Cooper's service.

**MR COE:** Mr Corbell has mentioned in the chamber quite a few times the size of the burn-off each year. Roughly, what sort of area is covered by the hazard reduction scheme?

**Mr Cooper:** It is not based on a fixed area. It is based on a risk approach, looking at the vegetation type, the fuel loads and then just assessing what is appropriate for that season.

**MR COE:** Is there an average, though, for what we have done over the last five or 10 years?

**Mr Cooper:** We would have an average, but that would be fairly misleading to provide to you, given that we had a fire in 2003 which burnt about 90 per cent of the territory anyway. Since then, obviously those areas need to revegetate. If we stick fire back into those areas too soon, we will do irreparable environmental damage.

**MR COE:** What I am getting at is that 1,800 hectares does not mean a great deal to me; I am trying to get a perspective of what that is in terms of what you actually do in any given season. What sort of area did you cover in this year's hazard reduction?

**Mr Cooper:** I guess we cover about 20,000 hectares per year in hazard reduction, of which burning is one part. We do physical removal. We grazed 4,000 hectares last year. We do slashing—many thousand hectares of slashing. We put in new roads. We maintain roads. They are all things that go towards minimising the risk of a landscape fire. So burning is only one part and unfortunately most people focus on that small part.

**MR COE:** So is the prescribed burn that is specifically referenced in the annual report, as at 30 June, planned to be done in the upcoming season?

**Mr Cooper:** Most definitely. We have already set up an incident management team. We had a meeting on Tuesday this week and we are just trying to work out a time frame when that may go ahead. As Mr Watkinson mentioned before, we planned that burn last year to the extent that we had 10 remote water dams filled up with 10,000 litres each. So we had put those in place. We had prepared all the roadworks and we were ready to go. The logistics of filling those remote dams, with their plastic-sided buoy walls: it took about two weeks with a large tanker.

The area we are talking about has no water, so it is fairly restricted. When we were ready to do the burn, with everything lined up, we received snow. We had about a foot of snow down there, so we could not even get into the burn to assess the fuel loads. Then we went into winter.

Just adding on to that—pull me up if I am raving on a bit—you asked before whether during the whole year there was not much time available to do that burn.

**MR COE:** The season, yes.

**Mr Cooper:** We do not do burning in summer, for obvious reasons. We cannot burn in winter, for equally obvious reasons. Spring is a really bad time to do a burn of that size, because you are going into summer. If you do a spring burn, you are then putting resources down there for a significant period of time through the summer period. So really the period to do those sorts of burns, which will be all lit by air, is in the autumn period. To get the timing right with the fuel loads at the right level of dryness, and the weather conditions right, in the autumn period you are really restricted to seven or eight days. So out of the whole year there are probably seven or eight days that are appropriate to do that burn.

What we need to do, and are doing, is to have all our planning in place so that as soon as the planets line up we can swing straight into doing that burn.

**MR COE:** So when will those planets line up in the clear range area?

**Mr Cooper:** We are hoping, and planning at the moment, for just after Easter. There are some other factors in that. Mr Watkinson mentioned that we are camping people down there. It is a two-hour drive down there and a two-hour drive back, so we lose a significant amount of time per day. So we are looking at overnight camping with people. We are involving New South Wales and ACT Rural Fire Service volunteers and we are talking to those agencies at the moment. It is also school holidays at that time.

This will probably take up most of the firefighters in Parks, Conservation and Lands, which is about 150, so obviously that has an effect on our other operational activities that we need to deliver. We need to swing some continuity plans into place within Parks, Conservation and Lands, so for the other activities that those firefighters would normally be doing—cleaning toilets, cleaning garbage bins, mowing—we have some backup people come in to assist.

**MR COE:** You said that last year you had everything set up but that circumstances and the weather were not correct. What day were you all set up and ready to go when the weather did not comply?

**Mr Cooper:** I cannot recall the actual date.

**MR COE:** Roughly the month?

**Mr Cooper:** It was in autumn last year, so around the March-April period. We had, as I said, a snowfall event. All this is documented. It was part of our bushfire operational plan, which gets reported back through Bushfire Council and in the annual report. All that was documented, reported and photographed at the time, for auditing purposes. As I said, we physically could not get in there.

It was a shame, because we had also lined up the New South Wales Rural Fire Service so they had a whole lot of resources and logistical things in place as well. We had booked accommodation at Adaminaby for a whole lot of people, so it was not a decision that was taken lightly. Obviously, Adaminaby is not a big place and as they had a fairly large booking for us they kept other people out. Also, they were going to

provide the food, so they had forward planned and forward ordered a whole lot of food for 70 to 100 firefighters for five days.

But we are well down the track of planning it again, and if it does not happen this year we will plan it again for next year. This year another patch has been added on to it—Mount Clear and Brandy Flat.

**THE CHAIR:** So it will be slightly larger this year.

**Mr Cooper:** Yes. It will probably go for seven days. Also, we have to hire a helicopter, as it all has to be lit by air. There are contracts in place for that as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I will move into town now with my questions. Where are we up to with Green Square? I notice there is a contract for \$167,000. What is happening with Green Square and how does this relate to the master plan process?

**Mr Watkinson:** The work should be commencing in the next week or two. We will be doing a walk around to the traders a few days before works actually start just to make sure that everyone is aware that the works are going ahead. I am not quite sure what you mean in terms of the master plan.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** ACTPLA have just done a master planning process for Kingston and Green Square was one of the areas which was commented on extensively.

**Mr Watkinson:** It has not had any impact on the final design of what is going to go ahead at Green Square.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So what people said on the master plan did not impact on what you are doing?

**Mr Watkinson:** No, what impacted on what we are doing was the consultation process we ran for the detailed design of Green Square. We had quite a lot of input from the local traders and residents there.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What is the final—

**Mr Watkinson:** I do not know how you describe the final design. It will not involve grass. It involves some additional hard standing, a children's play feature—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I saw a picture and I am trying to remember what animal it was. It was an animal, wasn't it?

**Mr Watkinson:** I think it is a wooden totem in the shape of an animal. I cannot tell you which one. Essentially, the look is to create some low ground covers so that we maintain the green look of Green Square, to create some attractive sitting-out areas for people to enjoy the space and some additional play space for children and to avoid the excessive maintenance costs and use of water which we have had there in the past.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The consultation that you are talking about was over a year ago,

or have you done some since then?

**Mr Watkinson:** It would have been over the last 12 months, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So you say in the last 12 months, not over 12 months ago?

**Mr Watkinson:** I cannot remember when we first put forward the proposed designs for Green Square. I would guess it is over 12 months ago. Then there has been ongoing consultation with the traders and the property owners on the detail of those designs. That is why the plans have been modified in relation to the comments that you received. The main point of contention was whether there was going to be a continuation of grass there, which some people strongly wanted.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** From memory, regarding the Kingston master plan, basically people wanted grass in Green Square.

**Mr Stanhope:** Previously they wanted it—through both consultations—but it is not consistent with the government’s policy in relation to sustainability and water use. The government is not prepared to fund irrigated grass at Green Square. There are some that would wish that but the government is not prepared to provide it. The government provided the option to the retailers and shop owners at Kingston that if they chose to fund it then the government would facilitate it.

**MR COE:** Was the question asked of anyone who had taken part in this consultation: “Do you want grass at Green Square?”

**Mr Stanhope:** As Mr Watkinson said, it was really the only significant issue of contention in the consultation. There was a strong desire by some retailers, shop owners, within Green Square most particularly, a view not necessarily shared by other shop owners—

**MR COE:** Did you actually ask, “Do you want grass?”

**Mr Stanhope:** I do not know. I do not know whether we asked whether they wanted irrigated grass because we were not prepared to provide it. So I doubt that we did.

**MR COE:** That is the question, in effect, because if you were not willing to bargain on whether or not there was grass, what was the point in doing such consultation?

**Mr Stanhope:** We consulted on every other aspect of the upgrade. There is a whole range of aspects to the upgrade in relation to paths, seats and street furniture. As to the design of the entire upgrade, there is a whole range of things on which we consulted. The government’s position, and the position the government maintains, is that we are not prepared, having regard to our commitment to sustainability and most particularly water use, to begin a process at Green Square in Kingston which would inevitably as a matter of fairness and equity lead to something like 800 shopping centres across the ACT being provided with irrigated grass spaces.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How do you decide which shopping centres are irrigated? A year ago I looked at these things a bit more and the one that comes to mind is Linear

Park in Gungahlin. You have got a nice watered bit of grass there. Why does Gungahlin get it and Green Square does not? What are your criteria?

**Mr Stanhope:** I do not know about Gungahlin and the decisions that were taken there, but the government's position in relation to this, accepting the historical watering of some spaces—of course The Lawns at Manuka is a good example and indeed City Walk in the city is another example—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And Green Square.

**Mr Stanhope:** Green Square is different insofar as the issue that the government faced. Historically, a very small number of spaces within shopping centres have been irrigated. It is a very small number. I forget the number now. There are in the order of 80 or 90 shopping centres in the ACT now and there may be four or five that have inground irrigation. I would be inclined to remove it from all spaces that currently have it, but for places like The Lawns, Ainslie Avenue—over the road from where we now sit—and City Walk, the advice that I have is that if we removed the inground irrigation the trees would probably die. The trees in those spaces, the London plane trees, essentially have developed a dependency on a level of watering which, had they not been watered, they would not have developed—but they have. Our advice or expectation is that if we ceased watering The Lawns or if we ceased watering Ainslie Avenue or City Walk then almost certainly the trees would die.

The government's position is that we are not—I am not, as minister, and the government is not—prepared to embark now on the provision of inground irrigation as a matter of course, accepting there are some exceptions, at shopping centres. We believe we have achieved a very good design outcome at Green Square. It is expensive—everything is relative, of course—and it uses a very rare and valuable resource, namely water, where there are alternatives. A very good alternative has been provided for Green Square.

It is an interesting issue around consultation. We did consult and a view was put which the government does not accept. That does not mean there was no thorough consultation or that the government did not listen hard and earnestly to views being put by the community. It is an issue we face in a whole range of consultations. At the end of the day, yes, we did consult; yes, we did listen. It is just that, at the end of the day, we did not agree. I have to say we have experienced similar issues in relation to detailed and complex consultation around the upgrade of the Ainslie shops. The government, at the end of the day, simply could not agree with positions that were being put earnestly by two or three of the shopkeepers at Ainslie and similarly at Deakin.

**MR COE:** Would you agree, though, if you have just said that the government's policy is that you will not budge on grass in shopping centres, that if the question was asked when surveying participants or people at a drop-in centre, "Do you want grass at Green Square?" then that is a sham question? Would you agree with that?

**Mr Stanhope:** It is very hypothetical. I am not sure I have an answer. It is very hypothetical and I am not sure that I have an answer that would satisfy you or would be appropriate, Mr Coe. The position I have adopted in relation to Green Square is

that the government will not pay for the installation of inground irrigation. We did, having regard to views we received, suggest to the retailers at Green Square that the government would be happy to enter into a conversation with them and perhaps to facilitate inground irrigation at Green Square if they were prepared to pay for it and if they were prepared to facilitate the supply of water. They did not respond positively to that suggestion.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Given that most of those people, as I understand it, only had a one-year lease there, it was a conversation which was never going to be successful given the arrangements next to Green Square.

**Mr Stanhope:** Ms Le Couteur, there is a legislated levy for all retailers in the city which is producing incredibly good results and outcomes for the city, for Civic. You could say the same about the city. The levy initially received some opposition from some quarters, but it is now embraced and the results are there for all to see. All of the retailers and shop owners in the city pay a levy for this very purpose and, in fact, it is being applied now. The fruits of that levy are in West Row, with the complete upgrade of a city park. The government was saying: "Well, it's legislated in Civic. If this is an issue about which you feel that strongly, your brothers and sisters in the city are paying for the full upgrade of the park and you might wish to consider amongst you contributing the \$30,000 that would be required annually for you to maintain your grass." Of course, they responded negatively. It is being done in the city now. The results, the fruits, of the levy are paying for a \$500,000 upgrade of a park in West Row. So the precedent is there, the model is there. It is not and it was not an outlandish suggestion.

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The government allocates and budgets a certain amount each year for local shopping centre upgrades. What we see and what we have experienced in the three most recent consultations at Deakin, Green Square and Ainslie is a level of objection to the budget limit and to the government's proposals and to the design outcomes, which I have to say has led to me directing the department to completely reform the processes by which we undertake local shopping centre upgrades. In future we will actually forward design a significant number of shopping centres. We will have half a dozen or more at all times fully designed and we will not provide designated funding in future at all for a specified shopping centre. We will in future have advance designs on a number.

We will now be criticised in due course for not meeting our full capital works budget. We have three shopping centres under work at the moment, all of which were scheduled to be completed—some of them a year ago. As a result of consultation and objection and a refusal to agree or accept budget limits, all of them are running about a year late. I cannot countenance that. In future we will not proceed to allocate funding to any shopping centre by name in advance of agreement on a design outcome.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Chief Minister. Are there any questions on animal welfare?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have more PCL questions, but I will put them on notice. I just have one on animal welfare. It is basically a repeat of last year's question. Given our

strict Animal Welfare Act, what checking do we do to ensure that the ACT's Animal Welfare Act is implemented when shows come to town? I am particularly concerned about transportation to and from the shows.

**Mr West:** When all of these major events involving animals—and a lot of native animals, for instance—are brought to the ACT we require licensing for those animals to be imported into the territory and we set conditions around those licences. Regarding other animals—stock, pigs and those sorts of things—the senior veterinary officer visits those shows to conduct an inspection to make sure that the Animal Welfare Act provisions are being complied with. If we detect any breaches we provide advice on how to remedy that. It is a matter of putting people out, walking through these areas and just seeing what is going on and making sure that the act is being complied with.

**THE CHAIR:** There are no further questions on animal welfare, Mr West.

**Meeting adjourned from 10.33 to 10.52 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will now deal with ACTION. I have a question relating to page 44 of volume 1. It is about the gold card scheme for people aged 75 and over. I know that when it was introduced it was a great success, having regard to the take-up of that ability for older people to travel for free on ACTION buses. How is that scheme going, having regard to the take-up? Obviously, at the beginning, when it was a new program, more people were going to come on board. Has it continued to be an attractive program for people?

**Ms Clarke:** Certainly, it has been a great initiative. We have had over 7,000 Canberrans aged 75 and over take up this offer. We are getting about 1,400 boardings a day from our gold card users. We are getting a lot of older Canberrans that have not used buses before getting on board. We are totalling about 5.6 per cent of all boardings on a daily basis for our older Canberrans. So the initiative has been particularly successful, and it continues to be so.

**THE CHAIR:** On page 44 it also mentions that you had a new record set for total daily patronage in 2009. Is what we have just been talking about one of the factors? What other factors contributed to that record?

**Ms Clarke:** It is interesting when you get those sorts of peaks. It is always very pleasing to see. We are averaging probably around 23½ thousand adult boardings a day. But it also raises issues for us. When you get a peak, how do you provide those services? We have been really lucky to have new buses coming on board. We have had 16 new Scania CNG buses that were introduced over that period of time, as well as 100 new buses coming into the fleet. That will help us to do forward planning for our network to ensure that we have got our resources evenly spread for patronage spikes such as that. It is a challenge. Although you are looking at every person that is on a bus equalling one car off the road, you still need to ensure that we can meet that sort of demand. So, yes, it is good.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I would like to ask a question about Redex, which seems to have been a very successful trial. What work are you doing in terms of integrating that

into the rest of the network? What does this mean for Canberra's longer term transport planning? We have always had these maps of where the high frequency routes are going to be and the Redex route was never on any of those maps. So where is your planning going and how will it be integrated?

**Ms Clarke:** It is a two-part question, I think. As the bus operator, I am more than happy to discuss the Redex as it is in place at the moment, but for the future planning for those high-frequency routes, I will pass it on to Mr Elliott.

The Redex trial is looking very good. We have had an increase in patronage from the Gungahlin services. We compared five weeks prior to the introduction of the trial to now. It is about 4.2 per cent. That is not just transferring passengers from the Gungahlin services; that is actually new bus users. I have been on board a few times—or more than a few times: every time I go down to Macarthur House for meetings. The feedback that I am getting, as well as in our ACTION inbox, is very positive. The passengers are loving the new buses, as well as the information screens that we have on there. It is also interesting that, with the passengers that are boarding from the Kingston railway station, we are getting people from out of area actually driving to the station to get that service because it is such a direct service and there are limited stops. It is not an express service, so we are looking at a travel time similar to other services. Certainly, with the limited stops, it means that our buses do not have to stay on the kerb lane; particularly down Northbourne Avenue, they can utilise the middle lane. Customers are certainly on board with that as well.

**Mr Elliott:** To answer the part of the question about future planning, there has been a fair bit of work done in the last 12 months around the strategic network plan—where the buses will run and with what sort of frequencies on the relative transit routes they should travel. We are using the Redex as a pilot to see and test the principle that if you build frequency around a particular core transit area, patronage will result from it. What we are seeing with the Redex is exactly that principle in application. So the results are very pleasing. We are yet to evaluate it fully. With respect to the question about what will happen with Redex in the future, the route from Gungahlin to Kingston at the moment is on the core transit route. It is one of the high frequency routes in the network plan, and the future would be about extending it, at least past Kingston and out towards Queanbeyan in the future. That is what the plan says, and that is what we would be tending to do, subject to evaluation and budget.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** When you said “towards Queanbeyan”, that was interesting. Does that mean actually to Queanbeyan or stopping at the border? It would be great if we had integration of our bus systems.

**Mr Elliott:** Canberra Avenue is the core east-west transit route that connects that part of the region to the city, and the plan is to build more frequent services along that route. How far we take it is a matter of some infrastructure planning and some debate. I guess we are thinking that, given the success that we are seeing, it would not be abnormal or beyond the realms of possibility to extend it to around the DFO, somewhere around there—towards Queanbeyan but perhaps not right up to the border at this point. As part of that—and you will see this in the public expression of the strategic network plan, when it is published, which will be by the end of this financial year, I expect—you will see a fair bit of emphasis on infrastructure and trying to build

a better level of frequency on that particular route, which, as anyone would know who tries to travel it, is a reasonably congested thoroughfare in the peak periods. So really the objective here is trying to move people into the public transport system on that particular transit route, if we can.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I guess it also clearly sounds like you have made a commitment to continue with Redex, because I know it was temporarily funded?

**Mr Elliott:** The government has made that commitment, certainly.

**MR COE:** On Redex, given that it is primarily for people living in Gungahlin, why don't the services integrate or link up with the route services that go to Gungahlin Marketplace?

**Ms Clarke:** When we introduced it, it was not at the stage that we had built a new network. When you add such a substantive route, you cannot just integrate into the rest of the network at that time. The proposal, as we continue to look at putting the Redex in the network, is that we would be integrating that in the next network change. So it was really to ensure, firstly as a trial, that it was going to be successful, otherwise we would have had to have reconstructed the whole network and made changes right across all the different routes. Then, if it was not successful, we would have had to try to pull that out. It would have taken a lot of work to do that and would have meant a lot of inconvenience for our customers as well, because there would be additional timing changes needed to do that.

Admittedly, we will make some efficiencies by introducing that back into the network and building it in. But at the moment I think it is also good that you can actually see how well it is going. It is totally outside of that network and we are able to see the patronage easily—particularly when we have our new ticketing system. We do not have the ticketing system, so it is very difficult to isolate some of those journey times and see where customers are travelling. So until we get the new ticketing system, it has also been an advantage for us to keep it isolated and outside of the network.

**MR COE:** Have you had any complaints from shop owners in Gungahlin—in particular managers of the G or the Marketplace—about people occupying their car parking spaces and treating it as a park-and-ride facility?

**Ms Clarke:** Interestingly, I have not had any representations about that. I understand what you mean—that it is not a connected service for them in the network. However, such a frequent service—every 15 minutes from 7 am to 7 pm—is very high frequency, so we are finding that if you are coming in with a service you have only got probably a maximum of 15 or 20 minutes to wait until the next service. Even though you may not want to use the Redex, there are alternative services that do connect with all the suburban routes in that area.

**Mr Elliott:** To go to the point of your question, what Ms Clarke is saying is that when we designed this we took a very conscious view that we would not integrate this service and that it was a pilot. We really wanted to test that principle about frequency and the build of patronage. By integrating into the network with the lack of sophistication around our ticketing system at the moment, we could not really have

done a proper evaluation on it, we thought. So we did it as a sort of overlay. We readily admit that the connectivity of that service with other regular route services is not ideal and might have other outcomes with regard to how people might want to get onto that particular service. The objective here, given the government's commitment to continue it, is to build that backbone—that trunk—from Gungahlin down into Kingston—and possibly extend it—and to build that right into the network. That is going to have an effect on related services that run parallel or close to it and also on the connections of the district of Gungahlin into that service, so they connect more elegantly. Certainly, that is the planning work that is being done now.

**MR COE:** Do you have any anecdotal evidence about whether customers are staying on the 51 or 52 service rather than getting off at the Marketplace and waiting and getting on a Redex?

**Ms Clarke:** I have a couple of colleagues who are actually getting the Redex from Gungahlin Marketplace and they have said they have seen that, depending on the time it comes in. But that is only my colleagues—

**Mr Elliott:** I guess it is qualitative, but you get the sense that, with a bit of careful planning and timetabling, you can make those connections work a bit better and give people choices about how they want to travel. I think the 51 and the 52, and the 5 is another route that we would probably have a good look at.

**MR COE:** And the 59 as well.

**Mr Elliott:** Yes.

**MR COE:** As I am sure you are aware from the media, I identified all the connections from the city. If you are getting the 51, the 52 or 59 to the city, and then you are going to Gungahlin in the evening, it is faster to stay on that bus to go to your final destination rather than transferring. It does surprise me that it was not integrated from the start, at least in part, because it is an overlay service, so it could have technically just gone over and linked into some of those services at least. But by the time the trial ends, we are not going to have the new ticketing system, so how are you going to make good improvements to the system after the trial if the new ticketing system is not in place?

**Mr Elliott:** It is a matter of continuous improvement of the transport system and the timetabling effort, and trying to get those connections better. Certainly, the ticketing system will give us much better data about how people are moving around the system, where they are getting on a bus and where they are getting off a bus, as opposed to knowing that someone caught the 59 today and not knowing really where they got on and where they got off. So we will be able to get those trips and have much better data so that we can plan our services.

Having started the trial at the point that we did, and we are in the middle of it, and given the government commitment to continue it, we will do the best we can, in the way we have done it for the last 20 years or more, to make those connections as right as we can. We will always get a better system of timetabling, in my view, and better connections after we get the data about where people are travelling to and from. We

will get that out of our ticketing system, and it will take some time for us to get the sophistication we need to get that timetabling right. In the meantime, we will get it as close as we can, given the evidence and the data that we have got.

**MR COE:** With that in mind, to encourage or perhaps to force people onto the Redex, do you envisage the 51, 52 and 59 will perhaps in future no longer go beyond the Gungahlin Marketplace and just serve as a feeder to the Redex?

**Mr Elliott:** I cannot answer that question. It is certainly a good one, and I guess we will be making some judgements about where patronage is as far as we know it. You might see some repositioning of routes and you might see some changes as to where they go and how often they go. We will have to make judgements based on the total patronage. I guess the good news is that the people of Gungahlin have a better service than they used to have, and one would expect to see a continuation of that. It is hard to get people into the public transport system, and it is a new and growing suburb, so if you can catch them early and get them on buses, that is a good outcome all the way round. So we would not be making decisions that would be a detriment to that objective, because our objective is to move people into the public transport system, not the reverse. Certainly, there are judgements to be made about how you move people and how you connect those services. It is planning work that is underway. We would expect to see that in the next financial year with the next network.

**MR COE:** What are the plans for a surfaced park-and-ride facility, a surfaced car park?

**Mr Elliott:** For Gungahlin?

**MR COE:** Yes.

**Mr Elliott:** There are two areas of work that have been done, partly by our department and partly by the planning authority. There is a bit of work that is predominantly done through ACTPLA around the Gungahlin centre, with public transport as an element of that—a town centre plan, if you like. I am not privy to the detail of that but I know the sense of it. The other part is a piece of work that our department is going to do, our transport planning area, and that is around where we would position a park-and-ride on the north side of town.

One of the things about park-and-rides is that what you do not do is put them in town centres, because they compete for space with pay parking, and what you need to do is put them in a logical place that people can get in and out of easily. So adjacent to a core transit route is where you need to put them. Mawson is a pretty good example—close to Woden but not in Woden, on the core rapid transit route. So it would be that sort of sense. Without wanting to presume to know the answer to that question, because the transport scientists will give you some options on that, I would expect it to be somewhere between north Canberra and Gungahlin—north Mitchell, perhaps; I do not know. Again, those decisions are made with a view to land and availability too. Land is a very scarce resource in the territory and there is a lot of decision making when you peel off a block and allocate it to park-and-ride, parking or whatever else you are going to do with it.

**MR COE:** With the gold card, will that tie up with the new ticketing system as well? Will that in effect be a passenger's gold card?

**Ms Clarke:** ACTION has been discussing the smartcard with COTA. We will be looking at having an ACT seniors card that will have a component as a smartcard. It means that anybody over 75 years of age entitled to the gold card will just be able to swipe on and have free travel.

**MR COE:** Perhaps not dissimilar to the eventual plan for going to school?

**Mr Elliott:** More than eventual. As part of the core strategy for implementation of the card, the two key community groups that we are targeting for integration on cards themselves are students—tertiary and school students, probably school students to start with—and our more aged community. So seniors card implementation and school transport card integration are a really core strategy for us in terms of the distribution of the smartcard to start with. There has been a lot of cross-agency work and community work done with relevant representatives of those groups to see exactly how we can make some compromises and fit that together. With the planned implementation of the card in October, I have not seen the finalisation of agreements that would say school children will use their current ID card as a smartcard transport ticket, but I do not think we are far away from that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You talk about encouraging bus use from the beginning. Molonglo is obviously the next frontier, as it were, in Canberra. How is ACTION involved in ensuring that there are buses there from the beginning?

**Mr Elliott:** I guess at the periphery at this point in time, I would have to admit. The planning for Molonglo is still in whatever stage it is up to in terms of design. Certainly, I know from my Roads colleagues that they are looking at what roads go in where. The public transport element is still in the domain of ACTPLA. They would be looking to apply the same sorts of principles in terms of stops and what have you. We have not been given any particular certainty about when things might happen, but we would be looking to pick that up within the next three or four months as the suburb designs and the development and infrastructure are laid in, and people start to come.

It is always a challenge for the bus service, as with other services that the department provides, to catch up with new urban development. We are challenged by Forde, for example, where now you are seeing a suburb that is really starting to move on in terms of its occupation and density, as the land is sold and people build their houses and move in there. We need to follow through at the right times with bus services. So it is about timing and about making sure we can leverage the resources we have got and cover those new urban developments in the best way possible. Molonglo is still in the design phase. There is not a lot of infrastructure on the ground out there yet, I think. There is still some debate going on about—

**Mr Stanhope:** There is a bike path going in.

**Mr Elliott:** There is a bike path going in.

**Mr Stanhope:** In the Deeks forest park.

**Mr Elliott:** So we will pick that up in the fullness of time. I am not privy here, but the planning authority will probably be able to tell you exactly when that development is going to start having residents and buildings. That is when ACTION gets interested, because then there are passengers to catch buses. There is not much use running services out there if there is no-one to get on.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No, but the point is being ready so that when the first person moves in, they can say, “I don’t need two cars in my household; I’ll catch the bus to work.”

**Mr Elliott:** Yes, exactly right.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You were talking about Forde and the issues there. How are you going to decide when to put buses into Forde? With the new suburbs, when do you do that? What is your critical mass?

**Ms Clarke:** Historically, we look at how many people have actually moved in. There is no formula at the moment. We get feedback from the residents and then we start planning for services. We are looking at areas such as Forde and West Macgregor at the moment. Both areas we will be addressing this year.

**Mr Elliott:** You would probably expect to see services going in there in the next network or two. I think we are planning to do two networks next financial year. So for different reasons, two networks—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So you will have two network changes in the next financial year. That sounds problematical.

**Mr Elliott:** Yes, it is problematic for us, but we have not not done that—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Not just for you.

**Mr Elliott:** We have not not done that before, so it is a bit of a challenge. Any new network is a challenge for us. They take a long time to design and make sure we have those connections correctly tuned. Primarily we are doing an earlier one than we would prefer because the Cohen Street extension and the Belconnen and Westfield development will, in fact, open—we understand from Westfield—in October. I think again my roads colleagues would tell me how their ends of the projects are coming along.

The fact of that particular very large transported-related development means that the timetables around the buses have to be amended, particularly in the way that the series of stops goes. We have tried to replicate that a little bit with the workaround we have now, but we are going to need to do a series of changes through the network. We expect to do a new timetable in October at this point in time, subject to that project getting its timetables. Normally in terms of, for example, some services like integrating the Redex, we would probably not do that until the next calendar year. That is why we will probably end up with doing two in the next financial year.

I hasten to add that the people who have to do the transport planning elements and the detailed network and timetabling do not like to hear those sorts of things because it is very complicated work and a lot of effort is put into it. The fact of the matter is that there is a lot of transport infrastructure being designed and built around Canberra at the moment. That just means that the services need to keep pace with that. If the infrastructure is going in you really need to have to step into that environment and do the best you can with it. It just means we work a little harder.

**MR COE:** Part of the upgrades to the network will be the integration of the suburb of Casey; would that be right?

**Ms Clarke:** We are looking at all the different areas at the moment to design the changes. I am not exactly certain of Casey. I do know of West Macgregor and Forde.

**MR COE:** Doesn't the 59 already go to Forde?

**Ms Clarke:** There needs to be some variation in that area.

**Mr Elliott:** It is about extending it and making it work because there are more residences there now. That is the answer to Forde. The answer to Casey—

**MR COE:** I am pretty sure the 59 does go, after it does a U-turn, doesn't it?

**Mr Elliott:** It does, yes. We might have to extend it because that suburb is just growing. That is why we are looking at it. It does not not go there now; it does. I think it is about extending it in and out. Your question on Casey is about the scope of what we can logically include in a network in, say, October, if that is when we do a new timetable, and if it does not go in in October then we would look at it for the one after, which would be in the same financial year. We have not really determined that. We are trying to make some judgements about, if you like, minimising the amount of change in that 1 October network, so we are making that a relatively minor change, if we can.

It is just about making some judgements about what we will and will not do in order that we can just push it back to the next network, which is a much bigger affair. That is the one where we are going to try and reposition that core transit right across Canberra. That has quite a lot of impact. That is our main game, if you like, but you would not see that until the next calendar year. What we are doing is a sort of an interim step in between. We will make judgements about which suburbs and which new developments we will bring into the earlier one and which ones we will do in the later one and just make some judgements about it as we go.

**MR COE:** I would think that with Forde the house furthest from the current stop would be 300 to 400 metres. With Casey at the moment it would be at least a kilometre, perhaps more, to go to the 51 or 52, Ngunnawal and Nicholls. I would think there was very high demand. There are already houses there that are occupied.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You said you were going to reprioritise the core network, if I heard you properly. Can you explain to me what you mean by that?

**Mr Elliott:** When we did public consultation on the strategic network plan we proposed that we bed down what is a rapid and frequent transit corridor. It replicates what is already in place in some cases—Belconnen to Woden, for example, what used to be called the intertown and is still called the intertown. It is the 300 series for those bus users et cetera. It is really about making sure we are bedding that down at the right frequency and making it consistent with what we are running from Gungahlin. We are just making sure that we have got that core running at 15 minutes all day every day—not every day necessarily, but all day—and in peak times in particular so we can carry that density and build that mass around that core corridor. We are just having another look at how we are doing that now and making sure it is consistent.

The way we are going to build the network for the next 10 or 15 years is to bed down that core, that base, the red line on the map—if you have got access to one of those. It is to really bed that down and then build what are called the frequent locals on the edges of those and then have a look at the more suburban routes connecting to those. We are really trying to get that core corridor nudded down and firmed into place so that it is unequivocal, because everything else connects from it and that is where we are getting our density and that is where we will build our patronage.

There is also a land use aspect of that. That is the core corridor and we work quite closely with ACTPLA on their policy and land use framework to make sure about what we are doing on the transport side and what they are doing on their land use program. Flemington Road is a really good example of that. You now see that medium density development appearing all the way down that rather large road. Adjacent to that, of course, we are looking at the priority measures for buses as well. You can see a bit of infrastructure going in there as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Have you looked at priority measures for buses down Northbourne Avenue, near to my heart?

**Mr Elliott:** I have recently. There is a piece of work which was done a few years ago which was about the bit of Mitchell back down to Northbourne. I am not necessarily a subscriber to that particular view and I think Northbourne is particularly problematic. I think some of the bottom end, the southern end, of Northbourne will be tidied up a bit with the greater city area coordination plan, so there will be some changes to traffic management and traffic measures down at that end of the city.

I think the real issue is about the utilisation of that particular thoroughfare—three lanes of traffic and one lane of bikes and particular density in the peak hours. It is not probably any worse than some of our other major thoroughfares in the peak, I would have to say, but it does cause some problems given the amount of cross-traffic, the east-west. I keep referring to my colleague in roads, Mr Gill. Mr Gill points out to us very often that if you try and create greater flows through from north to south on that avenue you will disaffect the east-west sides because a lot of people travel east-west here. It is problematic. We are hoping to attend to that either by infrastructure or by some other measures over the next few years as part of the sustainable transport action plan.

**MR COE:** Have you done any modelling on proposed free tickets for public service employees?

**Ms Clarke:** No, we have not done any modelling.

**Mr Elliott:** We have not sought a government view on that, but I could provide an opinion from an administrative perspective and that would be that I read the *Canberra Times* yesterday—I did not get a chance to see it today—and saw a media line that suggested that there would be an almost cost neutral impact from the introduction of something like that. My personal view would be a significant revenue impact. We do not have data and we probably would never find data because we do not ask people how they are employed when they buy a bus ticket. We just hopefully promote the use of the system and encourage them to buy a bus ticket, but we do not ask them whether they are a public servant or not.

If you looked at it in a different way and said, “How many people are moving around the system in Canberra and what proportion of our population are public servants and how much revenue do we collect on trips to work?” and then said, “Let’s take out that revenue,” I think you would find that there is a significant impact on the revenue stream of the transport system if public servants are given free travel to work. Having said that, it would certainly encourage more people to catch the bus. Again, you have a negative impact there. Most of our buses are pretty well utilised in peak. It would have an impact in terms of the ability of our existing customers to get to work because you would have more pressure on the patronage. It is not something that you would necessarily run to quickly without some reasonable analysis, I would suggest, as an administrator. As I say, I do not think the government has necessarily proposed a position on that.

**Mr Stanhope:** I should just respond that implicit in Mr McDevitt’s CPSU position on this is that it would be cost neutral or cost little because there are buses running empty. The only buses that are not fully utilised or occupied are those in the off or non-peak, which is between nine and three. Implicit in Mr McDevitt’s suggestion is that ACT public servants only work between the hours of nine and three. The CPSU might have that view and regard—or lack of regard—for ACT public servants, but I do not. I am prepared to stick up for the ACT’s hardworking public servants. I refute absolutely Mr McDevitt’s suggestion that ACT public servants get to work after nine and leave before three. I have a grave concern with the throwaway suggestion that ACT public servants would be able to utilise the empty buses that Mr McDevitt apparently sees. I do not think I have seen an empty bus before nine or after three lately.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So, Mr Stanhope, does that mean that the ACT government is not in favour of flex time type arrangements which would enable people to spread the peaks, so that people who started after nine maybe finished later? We all know that the late buses are not full.

**Mr Stanhope:** Most certainly. We are a model employer, Ms Le Couteur. We embrace flexible hours and family-friendly working conditions.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That would seem to be a solution—

**Mr Stanhope:** I refute absolutely the CPSU’s suggestion that ACT public servants could use the buses that are not fully utilised. As we know, we are talking here about

buses that are not fully utilised. The most significant issue that ACTION faces is the significant underutilisation of buses between 9.30 and three. Mr McDevitt was just being Mr McDevitt, really.

**MR COE:** Can I ask how that procurement process is going for the fleet management inventory control computer software?

**Ms Clarke:** We have completed our TIMSS system. We did the evaluation and procurement process and have been able to introduce stage 1 of that system. It is going to provide some very good efficiencies with our workshop spare parts, plus improved reporting for managing our fleet.

**MR COE:** Okay. What functionality does the new software have that the old software did not?

**Ms Clarke:** The old software was not able to provide detailed reports on spare parts. This new system is a sort of control system, so it will just help us be much more efficient in our workshop area.

**MR COE:** Do you know what the total cost will be?

**Mr Elliott:** Could I add to that, before we go on to the cost of the system?

**MR COE:** Yes.

**Mr Elliott:** The point of this was that there was a very old inventory management system in the bus service, as a lot of the systems in the bus service were old and are old. There is an ongoing program of upgrading systems like the ticketing system and the inventory system. The benefits we will get out of this are twofold. Firstly, it will fit into a modern-day technology environment. The software we had simply was not supported any more, had some really poor outcomes technologically in terms of people in the workshops being able to utilise it at the same time as people in the back office. But the primary purpose was to get a much better handle on our inventory, our parts management and our warranty management at the end of the day. That is really the benefit of it. I might have to ask Ms Clarke about the cost of the system because I am not as sure about that as I am about the benefits.

**MR COE:** I see that Walter Turnbull undertook the examination of the software. The actual software has obviously been procured?

**Ms Clarke:** Yes, it has. I need to take that on notice.

**Mr Elliott:** To give you an indication, I think the project is around \$200,000 but I am not absolutely sure.

**THE CHAIR:** We will take that one on notice in any case. Any more ACTION questions now?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I could keep on—

**THE CHAIR:** I think we will put the rest on notice because we have a fair amount to get through by 12.30.

**MR COE:** Fairly quickly, what is the timetable for the new ticketing system? Do we have an update?

**Mr Elliott:** Interestingly, at this point in time, and not through any design of our own, it happens to coincide almost neatly with the new timetable in October and the opening of the new Cohen Street infrastructure and the Westfield infrastructure through Belconnen. Some of my colleagues in the transport planning system and also at ACTION are suggesting that perhaps that is not the best time, but that is when it will be ready, and at this point in time that is when it will be going live. I am not sure what the first day of term is in October but that is the date that has been targeted at this point in time. The last steering committee we had on the ticketing system suggested that that was on track and that is the delivery date. That is when the implementation will commence.

**MR COE:** Have you discussed with other users of the facility, like WA, how they went about rolling theirs out?

**Mr Elliott:** Yes, absolutely.

**MR COE:** And advertising and promotion and everything.

**Mr Elliott:** Yes, absolutely. It was one of the reasons that we selected this product as opposed to others that were being implemented around Australia. Western Australia, the Perth Transit Authority, was the only place in Australia that had undertaken a large-scale successful smart card implementation. It had been running it for eight years and it took quite a long time to work out exactly how to engage the community, the strategies for embedding the card, pricing incentives at the beginning of the implementation et cetera. The people we are working with, our partners in this, Downer EDI, who are the owners of the software and project managers for this, are helping us every day, making judgements about when we communicate, how we communicate and what strategies we engage with the community to implement the system successfully. That is an ongoing process.

**MR COE:** Where will the cards actually be printed? Will they be printed here in Canberra or interstate?

**Mr Elliott:** I cannot answer that question precisely but I think they are going to be printed and batched in another facility but probably not Western Australia. I think Western Australia gets the cards delivered from Melbourne, but anyway I do not think it is in the ACT. It will be in a factory that prints and makes smart cards, so a manufacturer. We provide our information and our business—

**MR COE:** That is a separate contract from the ticketing system, is it?

**Mr Elliott:** It is a part of the ticketing system. It is a subcontract by Downer.

**MR COE:** And do you know whether Downer's package can mean that you can get

tickets from another supplier, or do you have to get it from their specific contractor or subcontractor?

**Mr Elliott:** I will take that on notice as I honestly do not know, but I am assuming, because it would be sensible, that we would leverage off the back of Perth's pre-existing contracting arrangements because we would get a better price. So I would imagine that we will go with whoever is supplying their cards as long as they fit our quality standards—and our quality standards would not be too different.

**MR COE:** I would appreciate it if you would take on notice whether it does have a capability for other operators to actually produce those tickets, perhaps even here in Canberra?

**Mr Elliott:** Absolutely.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, and thank you, Ms Clarke, very much for your input this morning. We will now move on to Canberra Connect.

**Mr Byles:** Mr Polinelli will join us.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have one question for Canberra Connect. You must get a huge amount of feedback about what are issues for people in Canberra. Do you produce any summary of issues, and if so is it possible to get a copy of it? I imagine you must do something like that.

**Mr Polinelli:** We do have the capability to produce feedback reports and we usually do that on an agency by agency specific basis. We do that based around the volume of feedback that we receive. In 2008-09 we received 7,468 individual feedback submissions, which is a large number, but we can certainly break that down by agency, and even further if we are required to.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I would certainly be interested, particularly in this context with the TAMS ones, in whether people are complaining about footpaths, noise or whatever. Whatever you could give us would be fairly interesting.

**Mr Polinelli:** Sure. We can do that. We can categorise by complaints, compliments, notifications, requests for service et cetera.

**THE CHAIR:** In the TAMS area.

**Mr Polinelli:** Across government.

**THE CHAIR:** That's not additional work if you take out one section rather than doing the lot?

**Mr Polinelli:** I do not believe so but, given the sheer volume of feedback that we do receive, it is still a task to do that; but it can certainly be done.

**MR COE:** I see that you have doubled the number of concierge positions in the shopfronts. How does the cost of employing a concierge assistant compare to the cost

of a customer service person?

**Mr Polinelli:** We have two concierges in each shopfront and three in Dickson—given the size of Dickson. They are at the ASO4 level. Our customer service front-line operators are at the ASO3 level. So, in terms of actual cost, it is minimal for the benefit that that particular function delivers to us.

**Mr COE:** Did you do much analysis about whether it was better to go with additional concierge positions as opposed to customer service positions?

**Mr Polinelli:** We did, and the benefit of the concierge role, when we have two on each site, is that it allows us to do supervisory support back of house, but more importantly customer assistance front of house. Our objective is to meet and greet every single one of the 500,000 of our customers that come into a shopfront each year and to talk to them specifically about what transactions they need to complete. In many cases, people are arriving with incorrect paperwork, so that gives us the opportunity, before people take a ticket and start to queue, to send them away to get the right paperwork, thereby taking the pressure off the counter staff. It was a no brainer in that sense, because of that particular aspect—and given the complexity of the transport regulatory environment.

**MR COE:** So, with that in mind—that that should lead to greater efficiency—does that actually come out in terms of any data about how many people are taking tickets or how many do not have to go back and forth?

**Mr Polinelli:** We can look at that in a number of ways. If we look at average queue wait time across the shopfront service, our objective is to serve people on average within 12 minutes or less, and we are sitting at around nine to 10 minutes at the moment. So we are serving people faster than we thought that we would.

**MR COE:** Surely that is not due to the concierges? How can that be so?

**Mr Polinelli:** Because it is taking the pressure off. Instead of every single person coming into a shopfront and taking a ticket and queuing, we are probably turning away 10 to 20 per cent of customers up-front—for them to go and get the right paperwork.

**Mr Stanhope:** It means they do not have to wait in a queue and then be told it is wrong.

**MR COE:** Then they go home.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, but they do not have to wait in a queue before being told that they cannot be assisted because they simply do not have the documents that they require.

**MR COE:** That is true, but they did not actually take a ticket in the first place, surely, so you would not actually know what the data is?

**Mr Polinelli:** But before we had the concierges, they would have.

**Mr Stanhope:** They would have been in the queue. Having waited in the queue for however long, they would then have been advised, “Look, I’m terribly sorry, I can’t assist you. You don’t have the documents you require.” Now they are told, “There is no sense waiting in this queue, because we can’t help you.” So rather than waiting to be told, “Sorry about the wait, but we can’t help you,” we now say, “We don’t want you to wait, but we can’t help you.”

**Mr COE:** This might sound like a bit of a minor issue, but it is important. Is the concierge person actually greeting them at the door or after they are sitting down and already entered in the wrong queue—in the A queue instead of the B queue or whatever?

**Mr Polinelli:** In most cases, they are met at the door, at the touch screen, before they take a ticket. If people arrive with incorrect paperwork then our concierge will give them a checklist with boxes ticked about the sort of paperwork that they need in order to complete the transaction that they are there for—or, alternatively, will tell them whether they need to come to a shopfront at all to undertake their transaction.

**Mr Elliott:** But I think the point here is that, if you did not have the concierge, what would be happening is that people would be taking tickets, waiting a fair time, getting up to the operator and then there would be a conversation and a debate, which would take up the operator’s time, and a transaction would not be completed, because the people have not brought the paperwork. So you are just wasting time all the way through the system. You are wasting their time and you are wasting the operator’s time. What the concierge does is nip it in the bud at the point—now—before people take a ticket, and then people go away and get their correct paperwork, come back and then go through the system really quickly. That is making the operators more efficient and it is making the system more efficient and people do not have to wait as long. So, in effect, we are saying that it is a better system than we had before and that is why I think the emphasis has been on the concierges as opposed to extra operators.

**THE CHAIR:** I think they should institute the system in other places.

**Mr Polinelli:** It is a model that has been copied in other places as well, like Centrelink, for example. There is just one other thing I would add in terms of the ability to measure that: we track our specific feedback into Canberra Connect. Last year for the shopfront service we received 167 pieces of feedback and 99 of those were compliments and very specifically around the concierge service and what it does, particularly for people with accessibility issues.

**Mr Stanhope:** The discussion today has been very much about shopfronts but the majority of contacts are actually by phone and web. There are more than a million of those contacts now.

**Mr Polinelli:** In the telephone environment we are sitting at around 850,000 to 900,000 contacts a year and in the web environment it is up around five million.

**Mr Stanhope:** So in the context of the number of contacts, there are 500,000 visits to the shopfronts, five million web contacts and just under a million telephone contacts. So in the context of Canberra Connect, it is very relevant that members understand the

enormous importance of Canberra Connect to this community, the level of transactions and the staggeringly high approval ratings that the people of Canberra have for its work and assistance—always in excess of 90 per cent. It is a credit to Canberra Connect and the staff, particularly at that interface between government and the community that they deal with on so many occasions—6½ million interactions by Canberra Connect with the people of Canberra.

**MR COE:** Surely that five million is actually visitors to the website as opposed to requests that need to be carried out by an individual.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is contacts. There are 6½ million contacts with Canberra Connect—

**MR COE:** It is still a lot, don't get me wrong.

**Mr Stanhope:** with the overwhelming support and approval of the people of Canberra—it is a great credit to the organisation.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Polinelli. We will go on to Roads ACT now.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** In your statement of performance in December 2009, you did meet your target for the year to date for increasing bus transit lanes and on-road cycle lanes, but that was because it was zero. Why was it zero?

**Mr Gill:** Last year when we were looking at that particular measure we were basing it on some work we had done on the city to Belconnen bus connection. When we established the measure we were of the view that we would be able to install a bus lane from Belconnen Way through to Macarthur Avenue. It turned out that the impact of that was too significant on general traffic, so we revised that and so that did not proceed. Hence, it was measured zero. But we have subsequently decided to install a bus lane from the Macarthur Avenue intersection to link up to the existing bus lane that runs off Clunies Ross Street. So it is just a timing issue in terms of when the actual measure is to be put in place. That work is actually under construction at the moment.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And those cycle lanes?

**Mr Gill:** There are cycle lanes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But you have zero on that achievement.

**Mr Gill:** There are separate measures for bus lanes, cycle lanes and community paths.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So you did more cycle lanes?

**Mr Gill:** Yes, we have implemented cycle lanes. Most of our cycle lanes tend to be associated with our reseat program.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But in the December 2009 statement of performance, which does not have page numbers, it refers to “increase in length kilometres of on-road cycle lanes”. The original target was 50. Then you amended the target to zero. And

you achieved zero.

**Mr Gill:** In the full year we actually achieved 60 kilometres.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** In a full year, you will?

**Mr Gill:** We have achieved 60 kilometres.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** A full calendar year?

**Mr Gill:** A full financial year. That is the end of December.

**Mr Stanhope:** That is a part-year report.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, but I was thinking of a full year. Have you done 60 kilometres in January and February?

**Mr Gill:** In relation to provision for on-road cycling, it is very much linked with the road resurfacing program. Last year, the resurfacing program was delayed because we had to retender. So the actual timing of provision of on-road cycling basically was delayed as a consequence of that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But you just said you did 80 this financial year—

**Mr Gill:** Sixty.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Sixty in this financial year, and the report I have in front of me says that, year to date, 31 December, the figure is zero, and you have done 60—

**Mr Gill:** We will achieve 60.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I thought you were trying to say you had done 60—

**Mr Gill:** We will achieve 60.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** in January.

**Mr Gill:** As I said, it is associated with the reseal program and the timing of it is linked with that. We have identified basically 60 kilometres of on-road cycling that will be accompanied with it.

**MR COE:** On page 32, in the second paragraph, you talk about the \$3.4 million that is going to be committed to addressing stormwater sites. Whereabouts are those sites in Canberra?

**Mr Gill:** The primary site was in Deakin. That was covering a section in De Chair Street in Deakin and Macgregor Street and Le Hunte. That work, fortuitously, has been finished.

**MR COE:** With detours in place for a month or two.

**Mr Gill:** It highlights the significant nature of the work. You are talking about installing stormwater pipes that range from 1.2 metres to 1.5 metres in diameter. They have to be put in the middle of the road. It had an impact on general access. Most importantly, it achieved a good outcome in terms of stormwater and the rest of it affected by the previous year's storms is now protected.

**MR COE:** Were those residents informed beforehand by letterbox drop or something like that?

**Mr Gill:** Extensively, of that suburb, for a number of reasons. There was construction work that was going to take place over several months. Also, there was a fairly significant change to the bus route which had to be negotiated with ACTION. The bus route went down Macgregor Street. During these works it had to be detoured. So there was an extensive consultation by letter drop. Most importantly, there was very little community backlash because they understood why the work was being progressed.

**MR COE:** On a technical note, what is the difference between emulsion bitumen and hot bitumen?

**Mr Stanhope:** One costs more than the other.

**Mr Gill:** Hot bitumen is as it stands; it is a hotter process. Emulsion basically uses a product that does not rely on heat; it is a cold-applied product. It is just a different technique.

**MR COE:** And the outcome?

**Mr Gill:** The outcome is similar but from an occupational health and safety point of view it is easier for people to use emulsion because it is easier to handle. It is a slower process and it uses less energy to achieve the same outcome.

**MR COE:** And which one is cheaper?

**Mr Gill:** They are of a similar price in terms of the final product.

**MR COE:** Okay. So you would be able to advise what proportion of each is used in the ACT?

**Mr Gill:** I would take it on notice.

**MR COE:** Okay, if you could take that on notice.

**Mr Gill:** The use of emulsion is a relatively new technique, in the ACT at least.

**Mr Stanhope:** It does not look as dramatic. I like the steam going everywhere—

**THE CHAIR:** I feel sorry for them when they are out there in the middle of the summer, though, doing that. I would imagine it would be very hard work.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a bit of theatre, though, don't you think? It is much better to watch.

**Mr Gill:** Over time we might move more towards emulsion because of the safety benefits in terms of application and also the less energy required in producing it, given it is the same cost.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Hear, hear—and lasts as long.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is not as exciting, though, Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I do not actually find that I spend a lot of my time watching these. I feel as though I am missing something.

Can you talk a bit about what is being done on the traffic problems in the inner north, running through Hackett, Watson et cetera? I know you have been consulting and thinking about this.

**Mr Gill:** Are you talking specifically Hackett?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Really the whole of the inner north. I appreciate we can probably only spend a few minutes on this. Hackett and Watson come to mind immediately, but it is not just those.

**Mr Gill:** In the context of Hackett, Watson and the inner north, as you have mentioned them, I have been liaising with the Hackett residents association and the North Canberra Community Council over quite a while. Those residents do have a genuine case of people basically using residential streets as bypasses. Mr Elliott touched on the impact on Northbourne Avenue. If you were to put a bus lane down Northbourne Avenue and talk about that impact on east-west traffic, one of the bigger impacts would be the reassignment of traffic to residential areas.

In the case of Hackett, and in particular Madigan Street and Maitland Street, in the morning peak in particular, about 50 per cent of the traffic is using it as a bypass. It is being used as a bypass because it is easier to go through Hackett to get to Majura Avenue than it is to use the current arterial road system. That is why we think some improvements at the intersection of Phillip Avenue and Majura Avenue to better manage that would assist; also some traffic calming measures in Hackett, Downer and indeed Watson to improve amenity and perhaps distract through traffic would be beneficial.

Those are things that we are trying to develop through our various programs. When we are looking at Hackett and Watson, our processes enable us to look at the whole of Canberra and see where they rate in a relative sense, because whatever funding we have available we have to be able to demonstrate that we are making the best use of it.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do they rank high in the whole—

**Mr Gill:** Hackett and streets like Maitland and Madigan rank highly. Phillip Avenue and Majura Avenue rank highly too, as does Cowper Street. They are at the top end of our assessment process.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Does that mean they are likely to be funded in the next—or I suppose that is something you cannot possibly answer.

**Mr Gill:** We have put forward proposals through the department and ultimately to government to fund it. But, as I said, you need to look at the individual but then put it across the whole lot, because a whole range are seeking funding in any one year.

**MR COE:** Could you please give an update on Tharwa Bridge and whether it is running on time?

**Mr Gill:** Tharwa Bridge is running on time. You might have noticed recently that the bridge has been closed for three weeks while the foundation works were being upgraded. On Monday, the bridge reopened. The Tharwa Bridge conservation is a staged process. Stage 1 was to do some remedial works on the bridge to enable the bridge to be reopened and that was done in August 2008. The second stage was to upgrade the foundation works and the contract for that was let in July last year and will be completed in April this year. The next stage, which has just commenced and which is the reconstruction of the timber trusses and the timber decking, is happening in Wagga. Timber has been sourced, it has been cured for 12 months and the RTA in New South Wales, who are the contracted provider, have started the construction of the timber trusses. The first timber truss will be delivered on site to Tharwa in May. There are eight timber trusses. The whole project is on track to be completed by September 2011. It is a fairly significant project over a long period of time that is carefully guided by the conservation management plan that was approved by the Heritage Council last August. So it is on track but there is still a little bit to go.

**MR COE:** And the budget is looking good as well?

**Mr Gill:** It is operating within the \$26 million budget.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** On page 33 you talk about the work you did on the community paths in Lyneham, De Burgh Street, and where you have changed the right of way. I understand that under ACT design standards this is supposed to happen with paths in general if there is sufficient volume of path users. Why hasn't this happened in other places, in particular the continuation of that path? As it gets closer and closer to the city, the number of path users goes up. It would be lovely to see it the whole way along, to see a right of way for bikes and—

**Mr Gill:** The treatment in De Burgh Street basically was the first example of a physical trial of that measure in the ACT in a situation where you have a trunk cycle pedestrian path crossing a low-volume road. As you go further along that track, the order of the roads increases in magnitude and the volume of traffic increases in magnitude. Initially, that proposal in De Burgh Street was suggested for the street that goes past O'Connor shops, that crossing there. On assessment of that, the view was developed that it was too high a volume of traffic for it to be seen as a safe measure.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is there anywhere else where you are looking at doing this in the ACT?

**Mr Gill:** Not at this point in time, but it is a treatment for no-volume residential type roads. Where you have trunk paths, it would be considered an option.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And you would class it as successful?

**Mr Gill:** Even though it is heavily signposted, we have had mixed views on it in terms of who has priority. While pedestrians and cyclists have priority, they do not always take it, and vice versa on other streets; sometimes pedestrians and cyclists do not have priority, yet motorists give them priority. It is very similar to what is used in Victoria in similar situations. We think it is quite an effective treatment and we would put it in similar situations should they be identified. But it is not a generic treatment that you would put on every single crossing of a trunk route and a road. It has to be looked at carefully, in our view.

**MR COE:** Can you describe what the upgrade to Hindmarsh Drive and Melrose Drive intersection is going to involve?

**Mr Gill:** It is an upgrade of an existing traffic signal intersection to make it more efficient. At the moment it is a very large intersection. You go around each leg and it goes one, two, three, four. We are looking at introducing a more efficient traffic signal operation to improve the overall operation of that intersection and the turning capacity of the intersection.

**MR COE:** So it will not actually change the footprint? It will just—

**Mr Gill:** We are trying to make it more efficient. It is an old intersection and has old equipment, so it is a basic upgrade of the facility. Particularly given that it is close to the Woden town centre and a reasonable amount of buses use it, it is important that it operates as efficiently as possible.

**MR COE:** And is that intersection synchronised with other ones further down Hindmarsh?

**Mr Gill:** They are synchronised, but one of the issues if you have an old intersection with old equipment is that it does not tally. You do not realise the best potential unless you have up-to-date equipment.

**MR COE:** And the next one down has the speed camera; is that right? There is a real bottleneck along that road, so will this improve—

**Mr Gill:** It will, yes.

**MR COE:** What is the rough cost of that, by the way?

**Mr Gill:** In the order of half a million dollars. So it is not cheap.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** “Frangible” road furniture: it is a word I only learned recently but I understand it is road furniture that gives a bit when people, principally motorcycle users, hit it. I understand we have very little of it in the ACT. Is there any reason for this? I was told we had ACT design standards which might be the reason

why we do not have a lot.

**Mr Gill:** There is a reasonable amount of frangible road furniture in the ACT. We have 72,000 street lights and a good 50 per cent of those are basically frangible based, slip based. If you look at the design of them, you can see that if they are hit they will come away. If your question is focusing more on safety rail and crash barriers as opposed to—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. That is what people came to see us about as being very dangerous for motorcyclists.

**Mr Gill:** We do not have our own standards in relation to guard rails and safety rails. We would seek to comply with national standards. Most of our discussions with, say, the Motorcycle Riders Association revolve around the end treatment of safety rails and whether that is frangible or rigid. On a national basis, there is some debate about what is the appropriate treatment in a particular location. We will seek to conform with a national standard. So it is not an ACT standard that is limiting us. It is basically a debate about what is the appropriate treatment nationally for a particular location.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And is the national debate based on cost considerations as to why you would not want—

**Mr Gill:** It is cost, safety, functionality—so it is a range of considerations. Groups such as the Motorcycle Riders Association are contributing to that discussion as well. So we are not limited by something that we are only doing in the ACT. It is a broader debate.

**MR COE:** Do you have plans to reduce the speed limit around shopping centres to 40 kilometres an hour at any sites other than the Gungahlin one?

**Mr Gill:** As you are probably well aware, there is a current project that is looking at 40 kilometres in the vicinity of town centres, group centres and community centres. Some work has been done by the Australian Road Research Board at the moment. Some advice has been provided to government, which is being considered and there will be a statement in the Assembly in the short term in relation to this matter.

**Mr Stanhope:** Probably next week, Mr Coe. I think you are aware that the government has been investigating the wisdom of providing most particularly, apart from schools, additional 40-kilometre speed zones. That work is at a point now where it will be tabled—if it is a tabling statement; I am not quite sure. But certainly next week or the week after, the government will be announcing the outcomes of the investigation undertaken on this issue.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have another question on the Majura Parkway. The Majura Parkway website still advertises that the project is going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The government's own light rail submission makes the point that more road capacity can reduce congestion but it cannot reduce carbon emissions and it will not make Canberra's transport more sustainable in environmental terms. So why does the website say that the Majura Parkway will reduce carbon emissions?

**Mr Gill:** If you look at the existing situation on the Majura Road, you have got a country standard type road, carrying large volumes of traffic very slowly, stop-start. Compare that to a high standard road where traffic is travelling at speeds in the order of 70 to 80 kilometres an hour. There will be a reduction in greenhouse gases in that comparison.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** In that comparison. So you do not believe that there would be any additional traffic on the road if you were to—

**Mr Gill:** No, that is not the question you asked.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No, the website says it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but you are saying that it would only do that if the traffic remained exactly as it is, which I do not think is what you are planning.

**Mr Gill:** There will be increased traffic too.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Which will have greenhouse gas emissions, surely. So how does—

**Mr Stanhope:** But it would reduce cars on other roads.

**Mr Gill:** The traffic goes elsewhere.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It will probably be the first road in the world to achieve a net reduction in traffic. This has not happened elsewhere.

**Mr Stanhope:** Do you think Canberrans will go out and buy an additional car for the family if we build Majura Parkway?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am not suggesting that people will go out and buy additional cars. We have just been talking about the issues of going down Northbourne Avenue. It is not that much fun. Historically we have found, not just in Canberra but throughout the world, that you build the roads and people drive on them. I cannot see why Majura Parkway would be different from that.

**Mr Gill:** The logic—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Frankston council quite recently did a whole study on an actual example of that. There are lots of them in America.

**Mr Gill:** Yes, but in terms of Majura Parkway, you can look at it from a number of points of view. You can look at it in terms of how it contributes to the national economy by improving a national freight route linking up the Monaro Highway. You can look at it from the point of view of contributing to the New South Wales and the Canberra region, providing better access to Canberra airport, which is a transport hub, and then you can look at it in a local sense, which is basically about local access within Canberra. For a project that is going to be considered for funding by Infrastructure Australia, those are the sorts of issues that you need to consider. That is the broader perspective that you need to consider. There are a range of considerations,

as well as environmental and greenhouse.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I do not dispute there are a range of considerations, but I do dispute that it is not the case that it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I do not think that has been made. That is what I was saying. As the website says it will, I think that qualifies some of the misleading comments because it is unlikely to achieve this.

**THE CHAIR:** We will move on. Are there any further questions before we move on to the next area?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I was going to ask a question about footpaths and whether they are compliant with Australian standards, but I can put that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine. Thank you very much, Mr Gill. We will now move on to ACT Library and Information Services and NoWaste.

**Mr Byles:** Would you like to start with the library, Madam Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**Mr Byles:** I might ask Ms Little to join us at the table—she is the director of ACT libraries—and Mr Phillip Perram, who is the new Executive Director, Territory Services Division. Phillip has been in the role for five weeks now so he deserves to come to the table. It would be remiss of me not to mention Ms Fay Steward, who is the new Executive Director, Land Management and Planning Division. I think this is her third week with us. I would not want to be unkind and leave the table just yet. She will get a turn down the track, I am sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Byles. I will start with the library service. As you know, I was fortunate to open the Kingston shopfront library recently. There are a number of innovative services available and they have introduced the idea of having a shopfront service located in a busy shopping area. Has it been well received? I notice it is quite early days, but I was wondering whether the library has been well received.

**Ms Little:** I am delighted to say that it has been very well received. At the moment we are getting between 250 and 450 people through the door every day. The loans are looking quite good—about 12,000 in the January period which, given it was school holidays, is pretty good. We are getting a lot of commendations through our website, people leaving messages to say that they love it. We have noticed ever since the schools have started to go back over the last week or so that we are getting more older people walking in to the library. Obviously when the kids are out of the way they are coming to the library. It is going extremely well and it is a credit to the staff.

**THE CHAIR:** When you say that the level of loans is pleasing, how does that compare with your normal—

**Ms Little:** It is not up yet to the level of, say, Kippax or Gungahlin, but it is very close. It is very close to the Gungahlin loans. We are expecting that that will grow. As I said, when school goes back, the world changes for us and our loans skyrocket.

**THE CHAIR:** And the use of the new technology that you have there?

**Ms Little:** A lot of people have been really interested in the new e-books. People have been coming to Kingston specifically to give them a try. It has been terrific. As you know, there are a couple of very young, funky staff members there who are showing the seniors how to use them. It has been going very well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Also on Kingston, I have been there and it seems beaut. I have only had one complaint about it and you probably know what that is: it is not open on Wednesdays.

**Ms Little:** With something new like this we decided that we should be very careful about how we opened. We are reviewing the opening hours all the time for the library service. We did not want to open it all up and find that it was not going to work. We are reviewing all of the hours all the time.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So, given the success which you have just been talking about, there is a good chance that it will be extended?

**Ms Little:** As I say, we have not made any decisions yet. We are having between 250 and 450 people a day. If the 450 a day was sustained then we might look at it. We need to make sure that we can manage and it works and then we can always add. It is harder to take away.

**Mr Stanhope:** The library has a budget, Ms Le Couteur, and it is expected to work within it.

**MR COE:** Do most of the staff there get 0.8 or are they working somewhere else on that day off from Kingston library?

**Ms Little:** It differs. Because of the nature of the library, being a shopfront and being quite different, we refresh the collection very frequently. Some of the staff who are full time spend that Wednesday usually in Dickson. The library manager at Kingston calls it the mother library. They go to Dickson and select material to go back into the library at Kingston. Part-time staff do not work on a Wednesday.

**MR COE:** I understand that, with the later opening hours that some of the libraries are open until, there are some security issues. Is the library looking at expanding the number of security guards? What issues would that raise internally?

**Ms Little:** Interestingly, the issues that you are referring to do not happen late at night. They happen after school. They are related, generally, to young people. In my experience—and there is a lot of it, unfortunately; I am a bit old—the provision of a security guard in a library actually causes more problems, for two reasons. First of all, it sends a message to the rest of the community that the place is unsafe. Secondly, it gives the kids a challenge. The kids know that security guards have no more legal rights than you or I have and that it is really a deterrent in a uniform. It gives the kids a challenge, and the kids rise to it.

Instead of all that, we are putting our staff through a very extensive security training program, which is partly underway. We work with the youth centres, particularly the Belconnen one, to create programs and activities that would engage these kids better. We have had meetings with the school, the church, care and protection, and a range of other agencies around Kippax with similar purposes, to integrate our services and try to address issues for these kids.

We have just appointed a young woman who has a youth work and psychology background. She is going to be our youth worker. We would rather deal with it that way than put the uniform in the place.

**MR COE:** The later hours are not bringing a higher than normal—

**Ms Little:** Not that anyone is reporting to me. We have had a couple of issues of vandalism overnight, most recently at Woden where the windows were broken. Most of the reports that I am getting and the discussions that I am having with staff are around the daytime. There is a core of young people who are clearly disengaged from society.

**MR COE:** Are the later operating hours causing any concerns for staff in terms of actually going from the library when they finish their shifts?

**Ms Little:** Not that they have raised with me. Certainly we would look at that if that was a concern of theirs, but they have not raised that with me.

**MR COE:** Is the RFID still on time, early in the new financial year?

**Ms Little:** The RFID system is all in and operating. It has been really well received. The public love it. It is good fun. The seniors stand there watching it go “bing, bing, bing”. It has been very well received in Canberra. There is one outstanding piece, which is the new chute and book sorter for the Woden library. That is here. We had to wait for Heritage Council approval to put the new book chute into the Woden library because it is a heritage building.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. We have finished questions on the library. Have we any questions on Capital Linen Service? No. We will go to NoWaste. I welcome Mr Ware to the table. I understand that the government has recently sought information from companies interested in developing the innovative waste business at the Hume resource recovery estate. What are the plans for the site and how are they being progressed?

**Mr Ware:** The Hume resource recovery estate is an estate at Hume, obviously, that will allow us to set up recovery operations for a range of wastes. During December, we went out to the marketplace and did some market research, with draft specifications for the release of land on that estate. We got submissions back and we are still going through those submissions, teasing out what the concerns of industry may be with the specifications. It is pleasing for me to say that there were not any substantial concerns from industry. They were merely around the edges on certain matters, wanting clarity on certain items.

We anticipate that the development of that estate will take a number of years. Obviously it will be a key plank in the conversion of waste going to landfill in the future. We are working quite closely with DECCEW and other agencies to move this forward, and we hope to have a tender out in the marketplace mid this year.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I could segue in a number of directions, but I will segue in the tender direction. I understand that you recently awarded a contract to a company for e-waste removal. I was told this was Tessan. Is that correct?

**Mr Ware:** We are in the process of finalising that contract. It is very close. The preferred tenderer is Tessan. Anything further than that I cannot say at this stage, until the contract is signed and finalised. We anticipate that very shortly we will be able to put out a media release stating what our new fees will be for the acceptance of e-waste. We do expect that there will be a lowering of fees that are presently charged for computers and monitors at our landfills.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I understand Tessan is an Asian company and that the waste would go to Asia. Regardless of where it is going, what process will you have for auditing what happens to the e-waste, to ensure it is not turned into hazardous waste somewhere else?

**Mr Ware:** My understanding of Tessan is that they do have a Basel permit, which allows them to ship the e-waste from Australia internationally. It will be processed in a sound manner. May I also say that our past e-waste supplier, Sims, used to export their e-waste for processing in Europe.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Regardless of where it is going, will there be an audit process to ensure they do the right thing with the waste?

**Mr Ware:** As I said, the Basel permit, which of course is international, sets up what they can and cannot do with that waste. We have done rigorous checks during the tender process and asked them about their disposal chain, if you like, and where it will go. We were quite satisfied with those checks that we did.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** But there will not be any ongoing checking, from what you are saying?

**Mr Ware:** No. That ongoing check, of course, is, I believe, undertaken by the Basel permit.

**MR COE:** Could you advise what the department's thinking is at the moment with respect to green waste bins and the collection of hard waste or solids from the kerb?

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

**MR COE:** Can you tell me what the department's thinking is at the moment with regard to green waste in terms of collection from properties and also bulky goods by the side of the road?

**Mr Ware:** DECCEW are about to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the various

options that are open to the government on the collection of green waste or residential organic waste, I should say. Obviously, with green waste, garden waste, we have a 95 per cent uptake of that service to our free drop-off facility at west Belconnen and at Mugga Lane. It is something that we are proud of—that 95 per cent of all garden waste is taken there, for free, and at very minimal cost to the government. It comes in at around \$3 a tonne. Other jurisdictions charge for that acceptance of green waste. It certainly happens in Eurobodalla and a lot of councils in Sydney where they charge upwards of \$150 for acceptance of green waste.

Going back to the cost-benefit analysis, it will inform the government of future directions, and that will be included, I believe, and I am told, in DECCEW's forward waste strategy. In relation to bulky waste, we put forward a budget initiative last year. Unfortunately, due to other competing budget bids, it was not successful. It has been put up again this year. We will see how that one goes against other competing government initiatives.

**MR COE:** How do you work out the percentage of organic waste that goes to—

**Mr Stanhope:** We need to differentiate in this discussion between green, garden and organic. We are at the point of discussing a third bin for green waste. Eurobodalla have a third bin for garden waste, garden clippings—enormously expensive. As Mr Ware just said, we have a system in relation to green waste. Eurobodalla has a system, and I see people applauding it and berating me and the ACT government because we do not have a third bin. The third bin in Eurobodalla takes only garden clippings. It does not take domestic household waste. We have a highly successful practice, an Australian-leading program, in relation to green garden waste. We really must differentiate between the two.

When we talk about a third bin, a green bin, I presume we are talking here in the ACT about what we do about domestic waste, household waste. I think there is a degree of confusion in minds about this. At the moment, on the basis of green, in other words garden clipping type waste, we believe, in the context of the amount that is diverted from landfill as a result of our green garden clipping arrangements, it is around 95 per cent. But it is a very important distinction that needs to be made about what we mean when we talk about the third bin, the green bin, the magic bin. I have just spent a couple of weeks at Malua Bay, in Eurobodalla, and observed it. It is extremely inefficient and an extremely expensive way of dealing with household garden clippings.

**MR COE:** The percentage in the 90s that you quoted earlier, how is that calculated?

**Mr Ware:** We recently did some waste surveys. We do them on a periodic basis. We found that, in residential garbage bins, there was a percentage of that—I do not have the figures in front of me—and we calculated it from that and from what we receive at the facility in tonnes and quantities. It would be around 95 per cent that we are capturing through the free drop-off centres that exist in Canberra. I must go on to say that one of the two operators that we have cannot get enough green waste to meet his developed markets and sources material out of Sydney.

**MR COE:** Did you say that figure was 99 per cent or thereabouts?

**Mr Ware:** Ninety-five.

**MR COE:** Surely, that takes into account industrial disposal of green waste?

**Mr Ware:** That also includes the trash pack industry that will take green waste out of people's homes.

**MR COE:** That would be a huge proportion, I would think, of all the green waste that is collected. Therefore, to compare it to the rubbish collected from wheelie bins, isn't that comparing apples with oranges?

**Mr Ware:** It is all coming out of residential homes or parks and gardens around Canberra. So it has to end up somewhere, and we do not want it to end up in landfill. So by offering that free drop-off service, we are giving the public somewhere to take it at no cost to them rather than paying commercial rates for disposal of waste into landfill of \$113.85. Obviously, if you have got a free service versus \$113.85, it should be a no brainer as to where you take it. That is what we encourage commercial businesses as well as the public to do, or to fill up their existing rubbish bin at their home.

As the Chief Minister was saying regarding the provision of a third bin for domestic organics—kitchen scraps, if you like—they typically, on our waste survey, make up a very small proportion of what goes into the residential waste bin. Of course, you then have costs, if you are going to provide a third bin, and you have got costs for the collection of that, even if the bin has only got a small amount in it, whereas the bin may have a capacity to take four or five times that amount. So it is a very inefficient way of capturing that very small stream of kitchen organics. Of course, we do encourage people to compost, have chickens and find other ways of disposing of those kitchen scraps that they generate.

**MR COE:** I would have thought that a better percentage would be the percentage of waste that goes out in a rubbish bin, as opposed to the rubbish that is actually delivered by an individual household to the tip, and rather than taking into account the commercial disposals.

**THE CHAIR:** We will take that as a comment.

**MR COE:** Or a question requiring a response.

**THE CHAIR:** It is past half past 12 so we will take that as a comment, and if you want to put any questions on notice, that is fine. We will get those to you as soon as possible. We do appreciate very much your attendance, Chief Minister, and all of your officials.

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It has been a pleasure to be here. We look forward to your report.

**THE CHAIR:** That is the last hearing for these annual reports hearings. We will get that to the Assembly.

**The committee adjourned at 12.31 pm.**