



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2009-2010](#))

**Members:**

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2010**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Mrs N Kosseck (Ph: 6205 0435)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

## APPEARANCES

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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 21 January 2009*

## **The committee met at 9.01 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 and Minister for the Arts and Heritage

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Byles, Mr Gary, Chief Executive

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

Perram, Mr Phillip, Executive Director, Territory Services Division

Elliott, Mr Tom, Executive Director, Transport and Infrastructure Division

Colussi, Mr David, Acting Director, Canberra Connect, Transport and Infrastructure Division

Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT, Transport and Infrastructure Division

Horne, Mr Hamish, Manager, Canberra Cemeteries, City Services, Land Management and Planning Division

Hughes, Mr Stephen, Manager, National Parks, Reserves and Rural Land, Land Management and Planning Division

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

Ware, Mr Chris, Senior Manager, NOWaste, Territory Services Division

Roncon, Mr James, Acting General Manager, ACTION, Transport and Infrastructure Division

West, Mr Rod, Manager, Licensing and Compliance, City Services, Land Management and Planning Division

Kidd, Mr Michael, Manager, Yarralumla Nursery, City Services, Land Management and Planning Division

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services into annual and financial reports 2009-10. I would like to welcome you, Chief Minister, Mr Byles and the other officials who are here with us. Obviously, you are all very familiar with the privilege card. Chief Minister, would you like to make any opening remarks?

**Mr Stanhope:** No, thank you, Madam Chair. I reiterate that I, Mr Byles and all officials that are present today thank you for the invitation to attend. We hope we can be of assistance. I and Mr Byles, and the officers of TAMS, will provide whatever assistance we are able to the committee.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Chief Minister. We will go straight to questions about the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority and then we will go on to other questions after that.

**Mr Byles:** Thank you, Ms Porter, and good morning. Could I start the proceedings by making some corrections. I bring to your attention, Madam Chair, and to the attention of the committee, some errors in some annual reports—one in the 2008-09 annual

report and one in the latest annual report. In the 2008-09 annual report, the figure reported regarding waste and recycling data was incorrect. The figure reported was around 640,000 tonnes or about 75 per cent of total waste generated as being recovered. That figure was incorrect, as reported. Resource recovery in 2008-09 was in fact around 584,000 tonnes, or about 73 per cent of total waste generated. The department, unfortunately, only recently detected that error. It was caused by the provision of incorrect data at the time. So I apologise for that mistake.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So it is in these—

**Mr Byles:** It is in the 2008-09 report, Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can you give me some context? We are talking about the entire ACT here, I am assuming, on those figures?

**Mr Byles:** Yes.

**Mr Stanhope:** The global figure.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We are talking about landfill figures?

**Mr Byles:** Yes, we are.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We are not talking about TAMS internal figures?

**Mr Byles:** I would be more than happy during the NOWaste section of this hearing to elaborate on that issue, if you are happy with that.

**MR COE:** The process for collecting and collation of that data has been improved?

**Mr Byles:** My advice is that it has. We do not expect it was systemic or to be repeated, Mr Coe. However, I would ask Mr Ware, when he joins us later in the proceedings, to elaborate on that, if you do not mind.

**THE CHAIR:** That would be good. Did you say there was another one?

**Mr Byles:** There is a second one, Ms Porter—an error in the 2009-10 annual report. On page 136, it states that, as of 30 June, 34.5 per cent of ACTION's fleet was wheelchair accessible. That is incorrect. Indeed, the correct figure is 36.7 per cent, and that is correctly reported in volume 2. It is just an error in the volume 1 figures.

**THE CHAIR:** We will go to questions now. Ms Le Couteur, do you have a question?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. Firstly, there is the obvious question: when do we expect a decision about what type of southern cemetery is going to be built, where it will be built, and all of that?

**Mr Horne:** We do not actually have a date for the opening of the cemetery yet. We are still finetuning some of the financial figures. In terms of the make-up, the options that will be provided to the public on a cemetery, those details will be

addressed in detail in the planning phase. At that time, we will look at specific comments received through the consultation process. Those will be distilled to produce what we think is the right fit in terms of options that the community needs.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You sort of implied that you have decided on the location. You said you have not got a date for the opening, but you did not say there was any unsureness as to where.

**Mr Stanhope:** I want to clarify that. The government has indicated that it supports the proposal for a southern cemetery on the site indicated, in principle. We have not yet formally decided on or finalised that decision. Perhaps Mr Horne could give some further indication of the time lines in relation to the processes that the authority is still engaged in, as we get to that point where a submission will be put to government for a formal and final decision. Could you explain where you are up to in the process.

**Mr Horne:** Obviously, we have completed a large piece of consultation work. We have garnered a lot of what we think is good, solid information about what people want, indeed what the community needs, from a new cemetery. As part of the consultation process, we have come to the realisation that a natural burial ground, for instance, is an important thing and that there is a strong sense in the community that that would be something they would like to see offered on a new site.

**Ms Steward:** You asked for a date. At the present time, the board has almost completed, I guess, the feasibility assessments, the business case assessment. That report, which was in draft stage, is now being finalised. They expect that to be completed by the end of December. It will look at the full feasibility of the cemetery down south. Present indications are that, as we have said previously, there is a demand—there will be a future need for the city in terms of its growth.

In respect of timing, we will be in receipt of the report at end of December. We will then prepare a briefing for the Chief Minister about the options that have come forward. Then we will be seeking a view from government about where it wishes to take the recommendations of the authority.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My understanding is that the cemeteries authority does not receive government funding. It has its finances itself. Can you tell me a bit about how different models of operation at the southern cemetery would impact on the finances of the authority as a whole?

**Mr Horne:** The authority is actually charged with operating cemeteries. To that end, the model we operate under at the moment is that the authority has actually been given the cemetery—general speaking, with the principal infrastructure in place—and charged with operating that at no cost to the government. That is the basic model that we are proposing for the new southern cemetery. In other words, the initial infrastructure is provided and then the authority takes over the operation.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Are you saying that it does not matter what the financial results are of the southern cemetery? They would entirely stay there or make no difference to the authority's finances as far as Woden and Mitchell are concerned?

**Mr Horne:** Not necessarily.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is what I was trying to ask—how it impacts on the rest of your operations.

**Mr Horne:** Sorry. To a certain extent, there is a little bit of suck it and see, if you like, in that respect. However, we are modelling how a new cemetery will affect the operation of the other cemeteries. Obviously, if we have a new cemetery, people can choose to go there. There is no compulsion, of course, in terms of your geographical location or where you live as to what cemetery you choose to go to.

Obviously, the choices the public make about where they go will actually, at the end of the day, alter the mix and alter the balance in terms of income at the various sites. We are going to have to wait and see how that affects things, but we do have a good grasp of what it takes to operate a cemetery—what the costs are on any given site. From that point of view, we are very confident that all of that stacks up very well on any cemetery.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What about the types of services provided—natural burials, conventional burials and cremation? Have you looked at the financial impacts of the mix of those?

**Mr Horne:** Yes, that is what we are actually refining at the moment. We have done a very solid piece of work on a crematorium, per se, and what that will add to any cemetery that it is attached to, if you like. But how that affects the whole of our operations is what we are working on at the moment.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Will that become a public document when you have finished?

**Mr Horne:** I cannot say exactly what the situation will be with that at this stage.

**MR COE:** I think last time at either estimates or last year's annual report hearings we heard about the ongoing maintenance costs and how they are spiralling upwards. What is the plan for combating that?

**Mr Horne:** The problem with maintenance costs is not so much that they are spiralling upward, although they are, of course, increasing, as are all general costs. It is that when the current Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 came into force we had what could be termed an inherited liability. That is the issue that we are grappling with to try manage—to cover that off.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Are you going to be seeking to make, in effect, profits from this other cemetery to cover off the existing liabilities?

**Mr Horne:** Yes, it is not so much that we are looking to make profits; it is just that the more turnover you have, if you like, the more flexibility you have to manage these issues going forward.

**MR COE:** With regard to vandalised or deteriorating headstones, does the authority have the resources to actually contact descendants and ask them to contribute towards

maintenance or repair?

**Mr Horne:** The authority does not actually have any responsibility for monuments per se. They are owned by the exclusive right holder. If—

**MR COE:** That is right, but as they deteriorate or—

**Mr Horne:** If they reach a point where they need repair, we make all effort to contact the family. If the exclusive right holder is no longer with us at that point, if we cannot make contact with the family, we make the monument safe. That is the limit of our policy.

**MR COE:** Would you be able to say what proportion of headstones you think would be in need of repair, would be in need of some investment from the descendants?

**Mr Horne:** It is a tiny number at the moment. But our cemeteries are relatively young. The very earliest one we have got is the Hall cemetery, for instance. They are all last century.

**Mr Stanhope:** There is an issue for us there I believe in relation to the Riverside cemetery in Queanbeyan. I believe there is a genuine issue for this community, the ACT community, in relation to this very issue which you raise, Mr Coe. In fact, it is probably fair to say that, along with Hall, our oldest cemetery is the Riverside cemetery in Queanbeyan. It is the same age and vintage as St John's, of course.

In terms of the conventions of the time, all the Catholics are buried at Queanbeyan and Anglicans are buried at St John's. Their Catholic neighbours are buried at Queanbeyan and whilst I believe the headstones at St John's are reasonably well maintained and rendered safe, there are a number of headstones at the Riverside cemetery for people who were ACT residents. Their families are still ACT residents. Most particularly, I refer to those families that were on the land within what was New South Wales but is now the ACT. They are buried at Queanbeyan.

We provided \$50,000 in a joint program with the Queanbeyan City Council to do some heritage work. I think there is a continuing moral responsibility which I believe we need to pursue in relation to this issue of making headstones safe. Some to me have a worrying lean. I believe we should intervene. This heritage movement continues to confuse me in relation to the attitudes to some of these things. But there are a number of headstones in the Riverside cemetery of people who were New South residents—they were ACT residents but for the drawing of the boundary—whose headstones are I believe in need of intervention. I think it is an issue we need to continue to work on with Queanbeyan City Council to address, accepting something of an obligation for that cemetery.

**MR COE:** I think there are quite a number at St John's that also need attention.

**MR STANHOPE:** I am not as familiar with St John's, but on my last visit I did not think—that is an interesting point. Perhaps it should be investigated as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a question around water use at the various sites. With the

pressure that we have on us with regard to drought, not that you would know about it at the moment of course, how is that being managed?

**Mr Horne:** We have got a multi-pronged approach to managing water, particularly at Gungahlin cemetery where we have a number of options. We have an ability to collect water in a dam and we have a bore. We maximise the use that we can from those. Since the drought has started, we have turned off irrigation in areas that we do not think need it.

We are going through a program at the moment of replacing all of our cool season grasses, which use a relatively large amount of water, with warm season grasses. We expect to achieve about a 30 per cent reduction in the need for irrigation in those areas as well.

**THE CHAIR:** That is good.

**Mr Horne:** There are other options too in Mitchell with the new Flemington Ponds development. At this stage it is a bit of a waiting game to find out exactly how that is going to develop. But we are hoping at some stage in the near future to be able to tap into non-potable water that is available from there as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** When you say “tap in”, will you actually have a pipe or will it be anchored?

**Mr Horne:** The proposal is to install a mains pressure distribution system from Flemington Ponds to large water users throughout Mitchell and surrounds.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have some more questions but I am conscious of the time because we have to go on to DAS.

**THE CHAIR:** We will go on to the next agency. Thank you very much, Mr Horne and Ms Steward. We will move on to animal welfare now. Do members have questions?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, I have questions. Can I ask first about feral cats? This relates to some constituent inquiries I have had. Am I correct in understanding that DAS does not manage cats? What happens to feral cats on nature reserves and public land? Can you actually remove cats? What happens to cats, basically?

**Mr Stanhope:** Thanks, Ms Le Coureur. I will defer to the department.

**Mr West:** The issue of feral cats is a bit of a mixed issue. It depends if they occur on a reserved area or if they occur in the urban areas. It is true to say that Domestic Animal Services plays a very small role in the issue of feral cats in the urban environment. We do provide residents with traps that they can use to capture cats that are roaming through their yards. Then the process is that those captured cats are collected by Domestic Animal Services and taken to the RSPCA. The RSPCA really plays the major role in terms of cats. They have a cattery. Domestic Animal Services does not operate a cattery. That is the major reason we do not get involved with cats.

We are currently looking at a feral cat issue in Woden. There is quite a population of them apparently living in drains along Callam Street. The animal welfare officer within the department is currently looking at that issue. We are looking at the possibility of engaging a contractor to deal with that particular population. Feral cats in the rural area or park area, if they become a major issue, would be looked after by Parks Conservation and Land officers.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Those officers actually can remove cats or even kill cats?

**Mr West:** I am not sure if there is an eradication culling program in terms of feral cats but if they become an issue they could be captured and transported to the RSPCA.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You mentioned the RSPCA, which is my next question. The RSPCA has said publicly that they will have to cut services if they do not receive improved funding. Has it told you what services it would be anticipating cutting? What impact would any cut of the RSPCA's services have on the government's ability to manage domestic animals?

**Mr West:** The department is aware of the funding issues raised by the RSPCA, and we are currently working with the RSPCA to ascertain where the funding shortfalls are and what services are likely to be impacted if the funding arrangements with the RSPCA were unchanged.

My indications are that the RSPCA is particularly claiming that they have had an influx of stray dogs, which really is a Domestic Animal Services issue, although dealing with stray dogs does form part of the current agreement that government has with the RSPCA. There has also been a large increase in the number of cats that the RSPCA has had to deal with. My understanding is that those are some of the drivers for pressure on the RSPCA. But as I said, the department is actively working with the RSPCA to look at funding issues.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You said that dogs are really DAS's responsibility. Does that mean that one of the possible outcomes will be that DAS will do more with dogs?

**Ms Steward:** We are trying to develop a seamless animal welfare service to the community, to which the RSPCA and TAMS would provide services, along with some of the animal welfare groups, which they currently do. The discussions we are having at the moment are really about which of those services the RSPCA wishes to and is most equipped to deal with.

We recognise that the facility is in need of upgrading. As you know, we are looking at a new facility. The facility has been designed, and the design of that facility is being influenced by those discussions about which of the agencies will, in fact, provide what sort of service. But our goal is to have a similar service to the community, so that they do not have to make any distinctions in terms of whether the RSPCA or DAS provides a service. The RSPCA does have a core business, of which compliance is not a part, and that would clearly be one of the roles that DAS as we presently know it will continue to undertake.

**Mr Stanhope:** We do believe there is real potential for closer collaboration and

potentially co-location. The development of Molonglo will require the relocation of the RSPCA, and the government has accepted that it will meet the cost of that relocation. There have been very good discussions, which are ongoing, in relation to how to maximise the opportunity that the relocation presents. We are continuing to work our way through those issues.

**MR COE:** With regard to finding homes for dogs at the facility, what procedures are in place to make that happen?

**Mr West:** Domestic Animal Services operates a website. Every animal that comes into the facility is photographed and it is advertised on the website, so to speak. We also have some wonderful interactions with volunteers and rescue groups who are at the facility every day of the week assessing dogs and actively looking to rehome those dogs. It is a very cooperative arrangement. Domestic Animal Services rehomes approximately 95 to 96 per cent of the dogs that come into the facility. That is one of the best results in Australia.

The facility is open to the public for people to come in and look at the dogs. Generally speaking, the interaction between the DAS staff, the use of the website and the volunteers and rescue services results in a pretty good outcome for most of the animals that come into the facility.

**MR COE:** How many FTE staff are there?

**Mr West:** There are 10 staff at Domestic Animal Services.

**MR COE:** Has that been pretty constant over the last five years or so?

**Mr West:** The staff numbers over the last five years have been pretty close to 10, from memory. There was a recent period where we had staff leave and we had to fill vacant positions. That has resulted in some staff shortages. But it is currently at its full complement of 10.

**MR COE:** What about staff turnover?

**Mr West:** Two full-time staff recently resigned to go to other opportunities. We have had a couple of staff that have requested part-time work, and that has been facilitated. Apart from that, it has just been general transfer around within government, and those positions have been filled as they have become vacant.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I understand that DAS operated without a registrar for some time. How long has that been for, and is there now a full-time registrar?

**Mr West:** There is a full-time registrar. There was no time when a registrar was not in place. A number of positions within government are authorised as the registrar. Although the incumbent registrar took up an opportunity to move elsewhere, the officer that we put into that position was still able to operate as the registrar. At the moment, there is a full-time registrar onsite.

**MR COE:** Are you happy with the current arrangements with regard to the feeding

and walking of the animals?

**Mr West:** Yes. As recently as this week, we had a meeting with volunteers to talk through those sorts of issues. We recently appointed a volunteer coordinator, a government officer, to assist the volunteers in terms of rostering to make sure we make the most efficient use of the volunteer services, so we do not have a situation where one day 10 volunteers turn up and the next day there is only one. We are working through those sorts of issues, but, generally speaking, it works pretty well.

**MR COE:** With regard to the strategic direction of Domestic Animal Services, do you see any change in what you might be doing if the facility is co-located with the RSPCA?

**Mr West:** As Ms Steward just indicated, we are still working through what a cooperative model might be with the RSPCA. We are at very early stages of that. Essentially, early indicators are that, if it were to be a jointly operated facility, the RSPCA may be responsible for dealing with the actual animals and the running of the facility, whereas the Domestic Animal Services rangers might be more involved in strict compliance activity and patrolling the streets and park-type areas. Loosely speaking, that is the general concept. There is a lot of work to be done obviously to flesh that out.

**MR COE:** Has there been any further thought about whether DAS should even be in this place and whether the provision of care for dogs should sit within the RSPCA as well?

**Mr West:** The RSPCA have indicated that they would always be looking to government to provide the compliance—law enforcement, as it were—aspects associated with Domestic Animal Services.

**MR COE:** What about the provision of care?

**Mr West:** That is the sort of model that we are talking about. That may well be the end result—Domestic Animal Services rangers are responsible for compliance and law enforcement issues whereas the RSPCA may look after the animals. As I said, that is early stages of discussion.

**MR COE:** What is the rough time line for coming to a decision on this and actual construction?

**Mr West:** Land and Property Services is currently working with a consultant to come up with a draft master plan for a new facility. They have looked at potential sites. One of those sites is the existing Domestic Animal Services site and some adjacent land. I understand that LAPS will be preparing a brief for government in the near future about the feasibility of the draft master plan. I would not be able to comment on the time frames from then, I am afraid.

**MR COE:** Is it likely that the whole facility would rest in the assets of TAMS, or is it possible that it would be a shared asset with the RSPCA?

**Mr West:** I cannot answer that. That would be a matter for government decision on advice from Land and Property Services.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, on page 127 under the Animal Welfare Authority, it mentions that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee has met throughout the period looking at the various animal codes. Could someone brief us as to where we are up to with those codes that are being reviewed?

**Mr West:** The Animal Welfare Authority were recently reappointed by the minister, and I know they have just recently met. The minister recently referred a possible mandatory code in terms of the sale of animals in the ACT to the committee. I know the committee has received that brief and is looking at the issues surrounding that. I would have to take on notice the actual progress in relation to the other codes that are mentioned here, but I know that they are all actively being reviewed.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. We will move on now.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have a question that I will put on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** We will move on, Chief Minister, to the next area, which is the land management and planning area, the nursery, licensing and compliance, and parks, conservation and lands. Chief Minister, on page 22, the report mentions that the nursery gave away nearly 1,500 plants; would that be right?

**Mr Kidd:** Nine thousand.

**THE CHAIR:** It was 13,463 plants, to be precise. That is what I have got written here. I am hoping that is correct. These are the free plants to eligible homes. I remember when I first came to Canberra many years ago that that program was running. I think it was stopped and has now started again; is that right?

**Mr Kidd:** It has started again, yes. It is in full swing.

**THE CHAIR:** How do you decide what kind of plants to give away and how is the scheme received by the public? It is important for people to have those plants to put in their gardens.

**Mr Kidd:** All the plants are grown at the nursery, and they are hardy plants for the local region. We have an emphasis on Australian plants, but there are a range of exotic plants as well. There is a range of sizes homeowners can choose from up to a 200-millimetre pot. They cannot just come in and buy one plant and put it in the front yard; they are encouraged to buy a range of plants.

**THE CHAIR:** So they are purchasing them; they are not free?

**Mr Kidd:** They are free, up to the value of \$200 plus GST—\$220.

**THE CHAIR:** Do they get any advice about the plants?

**Mr Kidd:** Yes, we have a full range of advice sheets, and our staff are fully qualified

to give advice.

**THE CHAIR:** I can recall that when we got ours, because we had been living in the Northern Territory for a numbers of years beforehand, we did not quite know what we were getting ourselves into with some of the plants we planted in the wrong place.

**Mr Kidd:** We have what we call one-sheet answers which cover all areas—boggy situations right up to shade trees. Every subject for the homeowner is covered, and we encourage them to take them along. A lot of homeowners come in and register and take the advice sheets with them. They then develop a plan and come back to buy the plants for planting.

**THE CHAIR:** How many staff are employed at the nursery?

**Mr Kidd:** There are 25 altogether, but that includes production staff. We have seven in the garden centre, and they look after the plant issue people and general sales as well.

**THE CHAIR:** They are mainly full-time staff or are there some casual staff?

**Mr Kidd:** No, there is a mixture. We accommodate part timers and casuals. Because of the fluctuation of the seasons, we have quite a number of casuals and quite a few part timers as well, because we operate seven days a week.

**THE CHAIR:** How has the drought affected your production?

**Mr Kidd:** The drought affected it quite dramatically, and we cut back accordingly. This year it has been fantastic. It has been the best year we have seen in 15 years. The whole countryside is very positive, and our industry is really picking up. It is quite exciting to get back into a normal rainfall pattern.

**THE CHAIR:** Let us hope it continues for quite a long time, Mr Kidd.

**Mr Stanhope:** How is the English garden looking?

**Mr Kidd:** Terrific, fantastic.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is all restored?

**Mr Kidd:** Yes, it looks really good.

**Mr Stanhope:** How is the work on the second glasshouse going? This is a heritage project being pursued by apprentices. It is a fantastic partnership.

**Mr Kidd:** The carpentry apprentices have half-finished standing the walls, and they will be in next week to complete it. They got rained off, and they have to do it as part of their curriculum. That glasshouse will be finished by autumn. We will have all the glazing bars on and we will have out first crop in in autumn.

**Mr Stanhope:** Is it a Charles Weston era glasshouse?

**Mr Kidd:** Yes, it is. He built all of those. Just as a point of interest, Madam Chair, we have actually got a funeral service in the English garden on Thursday, for a long-term Canberra resident who loved the English garden so much that he requested to have his service there. And that is not the first time that has happened.

**THE CHAIR:** That puts a thought into many people's minds, I am sure.

**Mr Kidd:** We have lots of weddings as well. Everybody knows about the weddings but not many people—

**THE CHAIR:** And naming ceremonies.

**Mr Kidd:** It was just a point of interest about a well-known Canberra person.

**THE CHAIR:** That gives me the thought, because I love English gardens, being British myself by birth. So we can file that one away for many years later, I hope. Any questions? Mr Kidd, that is the extent of our questions. Thank you very much. I think we should take up the offer of visiting the nursery.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is worth doing. It is a wonderful facility.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It is beautiful.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is beautiful and historic; it is a wonderful place.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And there is a nice coffee shop next to it.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** We will turn to licensing and compliance.

**Mr Stanhope:** Just to complete that, Mr Kidd, the committee have just indicated they would like to accept an invitation to visit the nursery. Would you see about that, please?

**Mr Kidd:** Yes, I certainly will.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much. The secretary will arrange that, Chief Minister. On a sunny day!

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I understand the tree register comes under this section of TAMS. Page 18 talks about the significant tree register. Do you have sufficient resources to manage the tree register and how often do rangers go out and identify trees that should be on the register?

**Mr West:** Yes, I think we have sufficient resources to deal with the tree register. In fact, just recently we have dedicated one officer to that particular function. The remainder of the tree protection unit, which is the unit that works in my area, are out on the streets of Canberra every day of the week dealing with applications for tree

damaging activities from members of the community. Their brief is to also be mindful of the fact that they need to be looking at trees for their worthiness to be placed on the register. They make nominations to the now dedicated tree protection officer on a daily basis. It is then a matter of putting together the necessary documentation and recommendations for the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and then that tree, if accepted by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, becomes a provisionally nominated tree. It can then sit on that provisional status for 12 months.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How many are nominated each year, approximately? You have 1,600 applications for damaging, 32 for development applications, and I have possibly missed where the ones that actually went on—

**Mr West:** The actual—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Forty-nine were actually entered but how many were nominated?

**Mr West:** I would have to take that on notice, Ms Le Couteur, because I do not have the figure in front of me. But the actual tree registration responsibility sits with the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, and that conservator's position is in DECCEW. So that may be the reason that it is not shown in this particular report.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** As you say, the conservator is in DECCEW. Is there a problem caused by the separation and the fact that administratively all the resources are in TAMS but the conservator is in DECCEW? Also, the conservator is meant to act as an independent person but he is also, of course, the CEO of a government department. Are there any issues with this?

**Mr West:** I do not, from a practical point of view in the tree protection unit, find any difficulty with that. In fact, TAMS has appointed a conservator liaison officer, so all of our interaction from the tree protection unit, which involves tree damaging activity, approvals, registration of trees, provisional registration of trees, is coordinated through one officer who sits within our department. I have not found any difficulty with that system.

**Mr Stanhope:** I might add to that, Ms Le Couteur. I believe that it is reasonable, for a statutory position in relation to conservation, for the decision maker to be distant from the operational area or the managers. In the context of perceptions around transparent and objective decision making, there are very good arguments that would justify a degree of separation between an operational area, a manager, the doing arm of the organisation, and the ultimate statutory decision maker in relation to what are sometimes decisions of great public interest. That might be argued to be a strength of the separation.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We are on trees; is this the appropriate place to talk about the urban tree renewal program and the response to the commissioner's reports—or is that somewhere else in TAMS?

**Mr West:** That is not an area that I deal with.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do we know where it is going to come up?

**Mr Byles:** It will be in the next section.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay. I do have other compliance questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Coe, do you have any compliance questions?

**MR COE:** Possibly. It may well be one for the environment committee. With regard to tree protection zones and their removal, I understand that, even if trees are legally removed, if they are part of a tree protection zone, the tree protection zone does remain. Is that something that you are familiar with?

**Mr West:** No. If a tree is approved for removal then that particular tree protection zone for that individual tree would cease to exist. So the conservator can impose a tree protection zone. Generally, that is done where construction may be occurring on a site where a number of trees have been identified to be retained. We ask that fencing be erected, for instance, around those trees, so that heavy vehicles do not park near them and damage root systems and so forth. But if a tree protection zone did exist for a tree and then it is subsequently removed, perhaps on planning grounds, that tree protection zone would cease to be relevant.

**MR COE:** Is that so in all cases?

**Mr West:** I would have to take it on notice to have a look at the finer detail, but certainly what I have explained is the general process.

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

**Mr West:** Yes, I will.

**MR COE:** I am aware of one particular case, and I think it was reported in the *Canberra Times*—

**Mr Stanhope:** The tree was removed but the zone remained?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes.

**MR COE:** That is right. So there is a tree protection zone protecting a tree that does not exist. I was wondering whether there had been any progress with regard to that, because at the time—

**Mr West:** Mr Coe, I am happy to take that on notice and I will provide the committee with a full report.

**MR COE:** That would be good, thank you.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** While we are on compliance, it behoves me to mention trolleys, of course. How often do you think that the department will be able to go out and do the trolley blitzes of the suburbs?

**Mr West:** We have yet to work through the actual schedule for that. There is some work that the department still needs to do in terms of engaging the contractor. We met this week with the major retailers to talk through some of those sorts of issues. There is a lot of work still to be done. We are on track to have the scheme up and running by March of next year. We would anticipate that there will be a phase-in approach with the retailers, to make sure that they understand their responsibilities and also so that the department understands how the scheme will operate. We would anticipate at this stage that we would probably be looking to do fortnightly or perhaps monthly sweeps of areas that are declared by the Chief Executive of TAMS to be trolley collection zones for that particular day.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And what is the reaction of the retailers that you have been talking to?

**Mr West:** The retailers have been very supportive and very cooperative in terms of understanding what their obligations are going to be under the new legislation. I had retailers fly in from Queensland, South Australia and Victoria this week to discuss the issues and they are very keen to make sure that they do the right thing, as is required under the legislation.

**MR COE:** Do you have any idea of what the cost of that scheme is likely to be?

**Mr West:** No, I do not. We have not actually gone to the procurement process for the tender. The cost to government would only be in terms of the contractor relationship in terms of those trolley collector days. There would also be, I would anticipate, some cost recovery through the mandatory fee process that is imposed for seized trolleys. So the actual financial analysis of that, as it were, has not been undertaken at this point.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr West. We will turn to parks, conservation and lands.

**Mr Byles:** Madam Chair, if you would like to discuss the issue of trees further, I will call Mr Corbett, our Director of City Services.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I would like to ask about the urban tree renewal program. I understand the commissioner's report is due around the end of the year. The TAMS report says that the program is currently suspended. As I understand it, there is still a small amount of funding. Given that there is, is any work being done before the commissioner's report? When you get the commissioner's report, when do you think you will be able to fully restart the urban forest renewal program?

**Ms Steward:** Mr Corbett has asked me to respond. He has only just arrived with us; so he is still coming up to speed on matters of detail. I am happy to answer that, if you like. In terms of the program itself, the funds from this year's budget, \$950,000, are being put to good use in terms of tree planting.

In terms of our future plans, we will be certainly influenced by the commissioner's report when it is considered by government. Are we ready to respond? Yes, we are. We work very closely with the commissioner throughout the entire review process, to

the extent that she has been quite willing to share with us her draft recommendations and report, to be able to assess our responsiveness as well as our ability to adapt some of those recommendations immediately to deal with some of the issues that have been of greatest concern to government. I can say that we have found that to be very useful. Her recommendations have been very practical, particularly in terms of notification. We have started to adopt some of those practices immediately.

If the government were to decide to allocate significantly more funds towards the program, I am quite confident that we are in a much stronger position to be able to roll out that program more successfully than perhaps we previously were able to.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My memory is that from next year the funding goes up again. Mr Stanhope, you would probably remember even better than I do.

**Mr Stanhope:** I would probably need to check this as well. My memory is that there is essentially \$1 million a year over the forward period. Ms Steward just said it was \$950,000. I thought it was \$1 million. There are mysteries in budgeting even for me still. But I understood that the decision of the cabinet was to retain \$1 million a year over the period. As you are aware, Ms Le Couteur, the government has responded positively to a motion of the Assembly in relation to the future.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That was what I was referring to.

**Mr Stanhope:** At this stage, no decision of course has been made on a quantum increase but the government has always accepted and acknowledged that, when we get our processes right in relation to this, we will need to significantly increase resourcing for urban tree renewal.

I understand, just by way of example—and we have spoken previously about the enormity of the issue that we face in relation to our urban forest, an urban forest of around 650,000 trees—an audit undertaken as part of the urban tree process reveals that there are today 20,000 spaces that might usefully be replanted. I think it has to be said that the department budgets on the basis, which is surprising—I am always surprised about how much everything costs—of \$300 per tree. An audit of the urban forest has revealed essentially an immediate capacity to replace 20,000. The sums are a bit daunting—\$300 a tree, for 20,000 trees, as a start-up.

This is a task which we have to grapple with and which we will have to grapple with through very significant funding for decades, which is the position I have always put. But this is a project that we will need to pursue to make up some of the backlog, at reasonable expense, but over a long period of time.

I think one of the issues we face now is that we have not had an urban tree renewal program in place, so over the decades we accumulated a significant backlog. We now need to deal with the backlog, but I would hope in the future—and I am talking 30 or 40 years into the future, when hopefully we are through the major renewal—governments at that time will maintain an urban tree renewal program as just an ordinary part of the business of government.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So we can anticipate additional funding in the next budget,

I trust?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Significant additional funding?

**Mr Stanhope:** We have indicated that we will use our best endeavours, through the next budget process, to increase funding. But, as always, there has to be a caveat. I think we are all aware of our deficit position—indeed, the deficit in the context of the announcements which Treasurer Wayne Swan made yesterday, in relation to a midyear review, that budgets around Australia, flowing from a blow to the commonwealth's budget position in relation to GST payments, took a downward, negative hit. That was in the announcements made yesterday by the commonwealth in relation to its budget position. It is not as good as it was at the time of its budget, which means it will certainly impact on GST payments that we might anticipate.

So our budget position is potentially not getting better; it is potentially getting worse. But, subject to that caveat, yes, the government has indicated that we will seek to increase funding for the urban tree renewal program in the next budget and to do it in a significant way.

I might say, just to flesh that out a little further, that I met last week with the management advisory committee and the flora and fauna committee. I met with a significant number of other community organisations and academic experts in relation to issues around trees, most particularly the non-urban tree restoration renewal programs, which we also need to invest in. I am hoping that, subject to our budget position, there is some capacity for us, in tandem with increased funding for the urban tree renewal program, to provide increased funding for the non-urban forest restoration. I look forward to discussing that further with colleagues.

**MR COE:** What policy work is being done with regard to encouraging residents to actually get involved in this program and to even assist with the trees out the front of their property, for instance?

**Mr Stanhope:** I must say at this stage that I do not have a detailed understanding of the processes that the commissioner has engaged in in what has been an extensive inquiry involving very deep community consultation and engagement, but those issues have been pursued by either Mr Corbett or indeed by the commissioner in her report. Perhaps Mr Corbett and Ms Steward can assist in answering.

**Ms Steward:** Thank you, Chief Minister. We have really ramped up our community engagement throughout this process. Corroboree Park might be at the extreme end of community consultation. Where it is an area that is of sensitivity to local community, whether it is a park or a streetscape, we will be developing the strategy for that location. We will be inviting people to meet on site. We will have a qualified arborist with us. We will talk through their expectations, what they see as important to retain, and get their views.

In lots of ways we treat that as the opportunity to inform them about what our management practices are, because our whole aim is to try to extend the life of every

tree for as long as we can, which means that we do have to do some lopping and pruning every year. Sometimes explaining that to people will help alleviate their concerns. We have put that in as an additional step right from the outset.

In terms of other ways of engaging with the community, we are looking at other models such as we have with the landcare groups, our rabbit control groups, weed control groups and all sorts of friends. We are looking at applying that model in a similar way to our tree care program.

We have had some early discussions with Greening Australia to see whether or not there is an opportunity to tap into their network, because, as you know, they have been established for a very long time and have been very successful in getting community groups to work on targeted areas and to maintain that interest for a very long time. That is a new approach we are taking. I only had discussions with them yesterday but I am really keen to look at that model so that we can get more community engagement in our tree management program.

**MR COE:** I am interested in the planting of trees and expediting it. If you know that your street is going to be done at some point in the near future and you would like to expedite it, could there be some capacity whereby an individual could throw in some money and have almost a partnership to get the trees out the front of their place done sooner rather than later?

**Ms Steward:** Yes, we are looking at that. We have done the audit of trees across the city; so we have a sense of what the tree conditions are and what the species are. What we have found is that, unfortunately, in the past in some local streets people have well meaningly, either when the estate was first established or subsequently, put in a species of tree that has ended up impacting on their driveways, their drains, utility boxes and so on and so forth.

What we would prefer to do is take a tactical approach with that treescape. It is almost impossible to go in and remedy the entire street if the species is not quite appropriate to that location, but we are encouraging people to plant and are coming up with some species. If somebody wishes to plant a tree, then we will give them some advice on the species.

There are issues in terms of neighbour consultation because solar access then becomes an issue. So it is the sort of thing that we encourage people to talk to their neighbours about, because invariably we do get involved on an individual tree by tree, street by street location, which can sometimes take us away, I guess, from the greater part of the city where we need to be concentrating our effort. We will be coming up with some guidelines and spending more time working with community groups to try to get an acknowledgement of, yes, we would encourage them to be able to replant if they so choose but that it is the species choice that is going to be important.

**MR COE:** Is the same level of consideration that is going into the tree renewal program going into the consideration of what trees to plant in the new suburbs?

**Ms Steward:** Yes. That is an area from the past that in fact we really need to improve upon. We have made some changes within my division. We effectively now have

a qualified arborist who manages the entire division on anything relating to trees, any decisions about trees—species, planting, spacing—rather than perhaps an uncoordinated approach that may have occurred in the past.

We now have almost the equivalent of a curator, a person who is qualified, through whom those plans for new estates go to ensure that the species that are being selected, the spacing and the location fit within a strategy that will mean that that treescape is able to be maintained and is appropriate to that location, against some of the problems we have got now. So we are putting in much tighter controls in terms of decision making, I suppose, relating to that.

**MR COE:** Does that mean the trees that are currently being planted in new suburbs are being sourced locally?

**Ms Steward:** In terms of the sourcing, I would have to defer probably to Michael Kidd to get some insights on that. I would be surprised if all of the trees were being sourced locally. If I could take that on notice, that is probably the best way to deal with that. I am guessing on that one.

**MR COE:** Sure.

**Mr Stanhope:** An interesting issue for us as a community too is that the audit that has been undertaken gives us a closer understanding of our forests. It shows that the eucalypt species, most particularly in Belconnen, are dying quite young, dying much earlier than non-Indigenous species. Exotics live longer, are hardier and are less likely to blow over in the wind. Indeed, TAMS has statistics on the species of trees in the last major windstorm of a month or two months ago. The statistics are quite important, are quite interesting. Eucalypt species are far more prone to blow over, far more prone to split, do not live nearly as long.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Could we have some of the stats?

**Mr Stanhope:** Would you like those statistics? There are statistics on that last storm which I think are quite interesting. In that storm, for instance, Belconnen, which is essentially a eucalypt urban forest, much more so than other areas of Canberra, suffered far higher levels of falling trees than any other area in Canberra. Almost all were eucalypts.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have a question in this area, Mr Rattenbury? We are going to go to more general parks, conservation and lands?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I want to ask about the feral species. It probably comes in the next section.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. We will now go more generally to parks, conservation and lands. We are going to finish this area at approximately 10.30 for morning tea. Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am not sure if this is the right part of TAMS. If it is not, please tell me which is. Last week I went to a presentation by Charles Landry about Woden

Green. A lot of things were discussed, and one of those was what Hindmarsh called the ditch which, once upon a time, we used to call Yarralumla creek—what is currently a concrete stormwater drain through the site where Woden Green is going to be developed. The question I am asking is this: people said, “Surely you can do something about that?” and the answer, basically, was—

**Mr Stanhope:** Restoration.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. “We thought about it. We were going to do something but it was too hard because of TAMS requirements.” There was no-one there from TAMS. There were a lot of people from LDA but no-one from TAMS to advance that discussion. It is a significant development.

**Mr Stanhope:** This is a stormwater issue.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It is stormwater. It is probably also, I imagine, an issue of resources required for off-site work. I do not know, I am not—

**Mr Stanhope:** It would be two. There would be a money issue for sure and there would be a technical issue around the capacity of the creek to actually move—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is this the right part to ask this, or should I in fact be asking this on notice? I am not too sure really where to—

**Mr Stanhope:** Stormwater is Roads with Tony Gill.

**THE CHAIR:** We will ask it then.

**Mr Stanhope:** Issues around stormwater would be Roads.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I suspect it will not just be Roads. The solution may well involve off-site water pond-type works.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, it would.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And that has not been done in the inner north by Roads.

**Mr Stanhope:** No. That is why I say there are two issues. There is the technical issue, but Roads would certainly have been involved in any decision around the capacity for ponds in north Canberra to safely and appropriately deal with the stormwater. There are technical and engineering issues as well as resource issues. You are interested in whether or not ponds could do the job.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am not sure whether ponds would be the answer.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, sure.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** There was also a significant discussion there about the Woden master plan that was never actually put into legislation. It talked about swales. The statement was made that TAMS would not agree to this stuff. I do not know what—

**Mr Stanhope:** That is what everybody says.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What I am trying to tease out is—

**Mr Stanhope:** It is not what TAMS says. ACTPLA would never agree to it.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We have got TAMS. What are the issues? I do not know what part of TAMS it is.

**Mr Stanhope:** It would be Roads.

**Mr Byles:** It would be Roads, but may I suggest that if it is not Roads—and these will be remarks through the chair—and there are more issues related to your question, we can take that on notice and we will provide a full—

**Mr Stanhope:** It will be a combination. I think it is Roads. It is ACTPLA, Roads and more probably LAPS.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** TAMS were fingered—

**Mr Stanhope:** As I say, in terms of technical engineering and capacity, that is a TAMS issue, but Roads do stormwater as well as roads. The issue around the technical possibilities of converting that part of Yarralumla creek back into some form other than a concrete ditch, which is your interest—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is my interest.

**Mr Stanhope:** Your interest is how could we convert that part of Yarralumla creek back into a proper creek?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Or, at the very least, something which is a bit more attractive than a concrete drain down the middle of a high density new development.

**Mr Stanhope:** In the first instance, the person to ask is Tony Gill.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay. I will ask him.

**Mr Byles:** Ms Le Couteur, may I add: I was at the Charles Landry presentation and, with all due respect, while he was very informative, some of his comments were controversial. So the comment that TAMS would not consider that is probably a little bit misaligned with reality.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It was not a comment made by Charles Landry.

**Mr Byles:** It was made by somebody else?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It was made by somebody else, yes.

**Mr Byles:** Of course, they did not make that to me. But now that I know, I would be

very interested in following that up.

**THE CHAIR:** Did you have a question, Mr Coe?

**MR COE:** Yes. Obviously there is a considerable strain on operations at the moment with regard to mowing the grassland that is growing like crazy, I imagine. Presumably for several years the growth was less than it is in usual times. Has the staffing level changed? Were there periods in the past when there were excess staff for what needed to be done? How does it work?

**Ms Steward:** Through you, Madam Chair. The way we respond to mowing is that we use contractors to a large extent. That gives us the ability to be able to get in additional resources when we need them in circumstances such as this. So it does not affect our core staff levels to any great extent, although at present we have got basically every able person who is able to push a mower or do anything associated with it being redeployed away from other activities—

**Mr Stanhope:** No, that is not quite right. I offered one weekend to mow and I was told it would not be appropriate.

**Mr Byles:** I think it was qualified—

**Ms Steward:** Well, that is true.

**THE CHAIR:** You are only allowed to mow your own lawn, Chief Minister.

**Mr Stanhope:** I offered to do it for free. I think that was the problem. I could only do it by charging the contractor's rate.

**MR COE:** During October!

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, Ms Steward.

**Mr Stanhope:** I was serious, actually. So with that caveat, I did offer and was rejected.

**Ms Steward:** Does that answer your immediate question?

**MR COE:** What I would like to know is this: did the cost of the mowing program go down during the drought years over a long-term trend and are we now above the long-term trend? Were there savings in the drought years? If we are going to be spending more now then there should have been savings in the other years.

**Ms Steward:** Through you, Madam Chair, it is really related to our service levels. Our service levels have not changed. We have a different mowing regime for different parts of the city depending on where it is located, whether it is a park, whether it along a major arterial route or a gateway to the city or ovals or the like. That has not changed.

We are in a position now where, with the additional rainfall, the question then is put

to us whether or not that service level needs to change, meaning do we need to do it more often? The pressure point is now for TAMS because if it is decided that the service level needs to be lifted for amenity reasons then that would mean needing to get additional resources to be able to do that work. It is not a case of in the past having resources to spare that we did not need. Those resources are still maintained in the current service level. As I say, it is a question of whether we do more mows, effectively, in order to deal with the current appearance of the city.

**MR COE:** Are there not policies and systems in place which govern that sort of decision making? Even in the last 10 years during times of drought there were still three, four and five-month periods when we had above average rainfall. Surely these decisions would still have had to have been made, albeit for a shorter period of time. It should not be a great surprise that now that we are at average or above average rainfall this sort of situation is upon us.

**Ms Steward:** Through you, Madam Chair. Again, it is not the policy so much as the service levels that we set. For different parts of the city we might say during a particular period of time we will mow once every four weeks or once every six weeks, depending on the location. There are peak periods, obviously, when this happens. We have a whole heap of other work that we do in terms of maintenance of the city. If it is a drier season and we do not need, for whatever reason, to maintain that service level, which is usually very unusual, then we can redeploy those staff elsewhere.

It is also noteworthy—I have just got a note here—that since 2006 we have had another 600 hectares added to our mowing program. So basically we are getting more to mow. In terms of the service levels, they have not changed. There is an expectation that they should be higher.

**MR COE:** What is the total area that you mow, to put that in perspective?

**Ms Steward:** I have just been advised it is around 5,000 hectares.

**Mr Byles:** I think the annual report says 5,134. I stand corrected if—

**Mr Stanhope:** Thirty-two—5,132.

**Ms Steward:** Okay. The annual report is more accurate.

**MR COE:** So it has increased by 10 per cent or thereabouts. Over what period was that 600-hectare increase?

**Ms Steward:** Since 2006.

**Mr Stanhope:** There has been an issue with this season too, Mr Coe, about the regular rain and the difficulty in accessing some sites for fear not necessarily of bogging but of actually ripping up the ground. There is a double whammy this year in terms of the fact that the rain continues and the ground is very soft on some slopes and some flat areas. The tractors would bog, so there are areas that have not been mown.

There has been an additional difficulty and I think some strategic decisions have to be

made. I have met with Mr Byles and Ms Steward twice this week to discuss the issue of mowing in the context of bushfire preparation, accepting that Land and Property Services have a significant role to play in relation to our bushfire preparation and amelioration measures. We have to be strategic too in terms of urban mowing, the look of the city, the amenity issues, as well as the responsibility the department has for mowing. Bushfire amelioration mowing is a significant part of their responsibility as well.

It is a major task. The length of the grass itself is making it difficult for mowers, with the boggy ground and the continuing rain. As I say, I have met twice in the last four or five days to discuss mowing. We have a major issue and I do not deny it for a second. The grass is long—it is too long in areas—and we need to crack on. The department is seeking to do that.

The department has indicated to me that we can knock the grass over, but the difficulty is that it is coming back fast and it will not look good. We have a concern about not just knocking it over in the first instance, but knocking it over now and it is back in two weeks. The department has been concerned about nursing its budget. We have had conversations about a Treasurer's advance and the availability of additional funds. One run costs a quarter of a million dollars.

**THE CHAIR:** What is a run?

**Mr Stanhope:** Well, one mow.

**THE CHAIR:** Of everything?

**Mr Stanhope:** One mow of everything costs us a quarter of a million dollars. The department does not have a quarter of a million dollars in the bottom drawer. It has got to find it somehow.

**MR COE:** How many additional runs are you expecting this season?

**Ms Steward:** Again, it depends on the weather, but I would say we would at least be looking at anything from four to six, depending on what happens over January-February.

**MR COE:** So a Treasurer's advance in the vicinity of \$1½ million, at most, for—

**Mr Stanhope:** Is possible—that is right—and that is a big ask. These are some of the issues we are discussing. The department is in a bind in that the government has not yet made a decision. I have had a conversation with the Treasurer, but no decision has been made. The department is in a difficult position. In the absence of a decision from government that more money will be made available, the department is thinking, "Well, if we don't get any more money, how do we manage this?" That has been much of the thinking to date.

I have acknowledged to Mr Byles that the government accept that they will have to mow more than they had planned for this year and that they have funds for, but we need to go through a process to identify where those funds might come from because

the department at the moment simply do not have them. If they have to find them internally then some other programs are going to have to be cut fairly massively.

**MR COE:** Do you have a risk-based approach to mowing in the consideration of amelioration of bushfires?

**Mr Stanhope:** At the end of the day, I think that has to be the department's number one priority—those areas that it mows for the purpose of bushfire preparation. I happened to go into Parkwood on the weekend to drop off some green waste. The grass on the western edge of the city is as it is everywhere else—in places it is a metre and a half high—and it is frightening to think what it is going to be looking like in January when it dries out and cures. Something is going to have to be done.

Ms Steward informed me during a discussion this week that we have already accessed all the cattle that we normally access. I am a bit worried now that we have undertaken that kangaroo cull in terms of the role that they might have played. I have discussed with Ms Steward the possibility of trying to access a few more herds from somewhere because we have a major problem—not a major problem; it is a major issue, which of course we will deal with, but it is a very significant issue. But, Mr Coe, without any ambiguity, bushfire preparation amelioration, in the context of mass grass mowing, is the number one priority.

**THE CHAIR:** Before going on to feral animals, I just want to ask a quick question. Minister, pages 19 and 20 of the report mention feedback and the new parks that are being constructed under the capital works project. I was fortunate enough to be able to open a couple of these parks in my electorate. There are eight new community parks. I was wondering what kind of community feedback we have had about these new excellent facilities.

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you, Ms Porter. Ms Steward, I think, may be able to assist.

**Ms Steward:** In terms of our play spaces, we are never able to provide play spaces, I suppose, in the timing that the community wishes. We have had to prioritise these. There has been a lot of consultation in the lead-up to the design of those, as well as the construction. To date, what we do have is probably a very successful program. The community, on the whole, is using our play spaces to a greater extent than we had ever hoped, and that is really encouraging. I think it has a great deal to do with the design and the consultation that happens at the time.

The biggest issue for us is in terms of different age groups using those spaces. We have to take a different approach to the way we design our play spaces nowadays because open space is more precious than it ever has been before and there is a higher expectation that we provide more and more of that. Early next year we are going to be finalising a play space strategy and action plan which will set a clearer strategy for how we try to integrate use by different age groups of these most popular places. I think that is the biggest issue going forward.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Rattenbury?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. On page 122 of the second volume of the annual

report there is a reference under “Accountability Measures” in land management to a report on the delivery of the program for pest plants and feral animals. Is that report available?

**Mr Hughes:** We produce a report each year which summarises and details all the activities we undertake for both environmental weed control and vertebrate pest control on nature reserves and rural lands. Those reports are available. In fact they have been made available to our key stakeholders through the Conservation and Wildlife Stakeholders Forum, which is a meeting of interested conservation groups which we meet with on a four-monthly basis. Those reports were made available at the last meeting. But they can certainly be made available to this committee.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. And what did we achieve in terms of feral animal control in 2009-10?

**Mr Hughes:** There is a lot of detail in that answer, if I could take that on notice. With regard to rabbit control, which is one of our most significant pest problems, we undertook rabbit control in eight reserves last year. We prioritised those on the basis of the level of infestation and grazing. We spent about \$150,000 on rabbit control, on contractors.

The reserves that we undertook that on were Mount Majura, Mount Ainslie, Mount Paynter, Red Hill, Callum Brae, Jerrabomberra grasslands, Jerrabomberra wetlands and the Pinnacle, and we did that in cooperation with the local park care groups for all of those reserves, where they undertook the mapping and location of all the rabbit warrens. That was mapped and that was provided to contractors, who then undertook the poisoning. This financial year, we undertook follow-up work to ensure we picked up the remainder of the ones we missed last year.

**MR RATTENBURY:** That is something that comes up anecdotally at times. There is a sense of frustration that the work gets done one year and the follow-up does not happen the next year, as you have indicated it does. Can you tell us a little more about that?

**Mr Hughes:** Yes. Last financial year, there was a significant allocation in the budget. That was \$150,000. This year, we did not have such an allocation specifically targeted at rabbits but what we did this year was follow up on the work we did last year with our own resources, our own rangers and our own field workers to do that follow-up work. That is far less costly than the big hit that we had to give last year. We will be seeking additional funding next year, through the budget process, to continue the big hits, so to speak, in other areas where we need to extend the rabbit control program.

**MR RATTENBURY:** And do you have any measure of how successful that big hit has been in reducing the rabbit population?

**Mr Hughes:** Yes. In Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie, we achieved about a 90 per cent control of the rabbit population, as of autumn 2010, compared to before the rabbit control work started last year. At Mount Paynter, we had 94 per cent control. For the other reserves, I would have to take that on notice but we certainly achieved quite a significant reduction in rabbits. But I have to emphasise that it is an ongoing

program. You are right: if it is left, the rabbits will again build up their numbers, particularly with the weather we have got at the moment.

**Mr Stanhope:** Are you interested in other feral animals? Your question was broadly in relation to that.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes, I certainly was but I think Mr Hughes indicated there is a lot of information there.

**Mr Stanhope:** There is. We have active programs in place for dogs, pigs and horses.

**Mr Hughes:** That is right. We also undertake an extensive pig control baiting program, particularly in Namadgi national park in autumn each year. That is funded to around \$35,000 and that is followed up by monitoring. That program has been going for 15 to 20 years. It has achieved a very significant reduction in the number of pigs in Namadgi and the amount of damage from pigrooting, to the point now that it is under control as long as we keep going in each year.

We have a dog control program for baiting around the edge of Namadgi national park, to assist our rural lessee neighbours, to reduce the number of dog attacks on rural leases. We also have a fox control program, which is run in conjunction with the pig control program.

**Mr Stanhope:** And we monitor horses.

**Mr Hughes:** We do.

**MR RATTENBURY:** If we could go to the ACT weed strategy, which has been in place for just over a year now, if I recall correctly, when the Chief Minister released that he indicated in his press release that in the financial year 2009-10 the ACT government would spend more than \$2 million on weed control, focused on lowland grasslands, the Molonglo River and the lower Cotter catchment. How much of the \$2 million allocated to weed control was spent last year?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will ask Mr Hughes to answer.

**Mr Hughes:** That information is detailed in the environmental weed control annual report, which we are going to make available to you. I would have to take that on notice but my understanding is that the commitment was met. It is through a mix of—

**Mr Stanhope:** We will provide that information.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you.

**Mr Hughes:** It is through a mix of contractors being engaged to undertake environmental weed control and our own staff undertaking weed control, such as our rangers and our field workers. And that is costed in as part of that commitment.

**MR RATTENBURY:** And was that a significant increase on the previous year's spending, the \$2 million figure?

**Mr Hughes:** It is my understanding that that is about the same. It has not varied a lot. But, again, I would have to take that on notice because—

**MR RATTENBURY:** Sure. You may not be able to answer this one then. Do you know how much we are planning on spending this financial year, 2010-11?

**Mr Hughes:** No, I would have to take it on notice. I am sorry.

**THE CHAIR:** That is the end of that section.

**Mr Byles:** Madam Chair, if I may, subject to the Chief Minister's approval and your concurrence?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Byles:** Am I able to release my officers that have now completed their relevant sections?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. I would be happy for that to happen.

**Mr Byles:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**Mr Stanhope:** I might just say—I have not discussed this fully with the department—to respond to Mr Rattenbury's interest in ferals: I have a growing concern that cats are an overlooked feral species and that we need a far more active program, a target-specific program, to deal with the issue of feral cats. I believe, to the extent that there is an opportunity to enhance funding for feral animal programs, we should investigate the cost and benefit of better and closer control of cats.

The department has a concern about feral peafowl.

**THE CHAIR:** Where have we got the feral peacocks?

**Mr Stanhope:** Narrabundah.

**Mr Byles:** And Pialligo.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a serious issue and the community needs to be engaged on the matter.

**Meeting adjourned from 10.32 to 10.53 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back. I remind you all about the privilege statement. Is there anything in particular, Chief Minister, you want to say in regard to this area?

**Mr Stanhope:** No, I have no specific comments, thank you, Madam Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I would like to talk about the new returns system at the Woden and Kingston libraries. Much to my surprise, I had a number of constituent complaints about it, so I went out and road tested it. I can see their point of view that having to get your library card out before you can do anything but there being nowhere to put your bags is a bit of a problem. I understand you are going to extend this system into other areas. Are you going to look at the issues with the current system with the library card and fix those so that when the system is rolled out to other libraries you do not have 150 complaints? I am sure the answer is going to be yes.

**Ms Little:** Yes, absolutely. We are very aware of the concerns of the community, particularly at Woden. The company that provides the equipment for that book chute has been working with us. On Monday they came up to rectify the problem and were unable to install the equipment on that day, but they will come back very soon to do that. In the future, you will not need your borrower's card to open it; it will be opened by using the RFID chips in the books. We now have had heritage approval and a DA approval to put a bench next to the chute so that people can put their books there and feed them in one at a time. The reason for one at a time is, first of all, for the book to come off the borrower's card, but also because of the unsavoury things we sometimes get through those chutes. The installation of these chutes was a recommendation of an occupational health and safety audit that was conducted by Shared Services. We are putting them in for occupational health and safety reasons.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So you are going to roll them out to the other libraries?

**Ms Little:** As we can afford that, yes, we will.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** They will all be activated by the book rather than the card?

**Ms Little:** Correct, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Good.

**Ms Little:** They are planned for Gungahlin, and they will be rolled out to other libraries as we can afford them.

**MR COE:** Back in September I asked a question about the cost of installation of the chutes, and the response was \$189,000. Was that just for the Woden and Kingston chutes and Gungahlin?

**Ms Little:** No, the chute at Woden is actually a two-part system. It is the chute, which is called a secure chute, which will open only with RFID tags. Behind it is a book-sorting machine, so the \$189,000 includes the price of the book-sorting machine. When you put your item in, it comes off your card. The computer and the system senses that it is a book that belongs to the library, and then it goes through into a machine which then sorts it into bins. It does not need to be shelved in Woden library. It could be a request for someone else or belong to another library. It cuts out a lot of occupational health and safety issues that we had at the Woden library.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Will it actually reduce staff numbers as well?

**Ms Little:** No. The Woden library does 567,000 loans a year, compared with 340,000 at Belconnen, which is another town centre. So you can see that it is a very busy library with a lot of manual handling issues around it. We took the opportunity with the new RFID system to put the book sorter in so that we would minimise those OH&S issues.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Kingston is the other one where it has started. Was that because Kingston has a high volume or because you were—

**Ms Little:** Kingston only has a secure chute; it does not have a sorter, for the reason that it is a smaller library and does not have the volume. It is an area where there is some risk of what could go through the book chute. I hope I have said that politely enough. We put it in straight up as part of the project, because of our concerns about the risk. The sad reality is that we have had fire put through our book chutes, and we have to address the fact that that can come through our chutes. That could be quite dangerous for borrowers, staff and the collection in the building.

**MR COE:** Have staff had to take leave as a result of objects going through the chute that are undesirable?

**Ms Little:** Not that I can recall. I can take that on notice. Certainly, we do counsel staff, and we have procedures in place for those sorts of things.

**MR COE:** I notice that the number of full-time equivalent staff at each library, which was also supplied in the answer to my question on notice, is going down slightly at Tuggeranong and also by a couple of FTE at Civic this financial year. Why is that?

**Ms Little:** We move our staff around according to demand, workload and the skill set they provide. The staffing is moved around on an as-needs basis.

**MR COE:** How long can staff expect to work at any particular library?

**Ms Little:** When they come to work for the library service, they understand as part of their employment conditions that they are employed to work at any of the venues. We tend to try and leave people there for a period of time for stability's sake, but if we end up with a huge need for someone who can do story time at another library, we have to move people around.

**MR COE:** The parking situation at a couple of the libraries would be much better now because of free parking at Kippax, Erindale and Gungahlin. Are there any issues with staff being deployed to areas where they might have to pay \$10 a day to park?

**Ms Little:** That is the way it is in Canberra—sometimes you have to pay for your parking and sometimes you do not. People are transferred around, and it is swings and roundabouts, to be honest. Sometimes people move to places where they have to pay and sometimes they move to places where they do not.

**MR COE:** But is that an issue for the staff when they are seeking a transfer or are

redeployed?

**Ms Little:** It has not been raised with me as an issue. It might have been raised with the people who do the rosters. However, we have libraries to staff and we have books to provide to the community, and people sign on to the library service knowing that at any time they can be asked to go to a different branch.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do you pay any attention to where people live? I have had a constituent complain about being moved from a library which suited someone to a library which was incredibly inconvenient for them to work in.

**Ms Little:** We certainly consider people's personal circumstances when we are making the moves. Of course, again, we have a library service to run and we need to build a team in each library that has particular skills. Some of our staff have particular personal circumstances that we do accommodate, but overall, we ask people to try it out and to move to where we need them.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do you provide bus tickets for people who have moved to somewhere else?

**Ms Little:** No, we do not. If we did that, then we would be having to provide lots of bus tickets to people and it would be a cost to the library.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a quick question in this area. I note on page 39 of the report that the library service has now embraced the use of social media in order to reach people online, and in its various forms. Do you believe this is a significant outreach that will bring people into the library?

**Ms Little:** Absolutely. It is very important for us to engage with young people using the social media. I cannot tell you how many followers we have on Twitter but there are quite a number. We do put some bits and pieces up on YouTube, so that people get to see video. We actually put up the YouTube video of our tagging process, so that people could see us tagging the library as we were doing the RFID. So it is very important for us, into the future, to keep moving in that direction. We are redeveloping our website and will hopefully link some of the social media to our website as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I recall when I went to open Kingston that we had the new wireless facility there?

**Ms Little:** Yes, we have wireless.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that available at other libraries?

**Ms Little:** It is now available in all of the libraries. At any time during the day, there would be between 10 and 20 people logged on to the WiFi. So that is a very good start, seeing that it is early days. But it is a very popular service, particularly at Kingston. At just about any time you go in, there are people at that table with their laptops.

**THE CHAIR:** And there are other technologies that have been introduced?

**Ms Little:** Yes. We have introduced the new Playaway system, which are little MP3 players with just one book on them, so people can take them. They are asked to use their own earphones, for obvious health reasons, but they can take them away, pop them in their pocket or put them in the car and listen to the stories as well.

Our e-books program is probably one of the most progressive in Australia and it is growing all the time. We receive a lot of requests to join our library from all over the world, because people want to access our e-books, and we have to say, “No.” We are having a bit of a debate with somebody at the moment who lives in Melbourne but studies by correspondence through ANU, about whether they are entitled to become a borrower. So our e-book program is going from strength to strength as well.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned this person living in Melbourne. How does our collection measure up against the collections in other states and territories?

**Ms Little:** I am delighted to say that, with the additional money over the last couple of years that has been coming into our collection, we have gone from a very poor 63 or 64 per cent of our collection being over the age of five, to 53 per cent being under the age of five. So that is doing very well. We have put a lot of effort into putting new materials into the collection and making them more accessible to people.

**THE CHAIR:** Any other questions in the library area?

**MS BRESNAN:** Page 39 discusses some of the wider programs that you provide in the library services around health and wellbeing and parenting. It notes the literacy program that runs across all libraries. Are the other programs in particular targeted areas or do they run across all the libraries at different times?

**Ms Little:** Are you referring to the English literacy programs?

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes. It notes that literacy is run across all the libraries and I was wondering about the other programs, the health and wellness and parenting efforts and whether they target particular areas or whether they are run across all the libraries.

**Ms Little:** At the moment the literacy programs are in partnership with a number of organisations, such as AMEP. They are pretty much focused on people from non-English-speaking backgrounds. It is an area that we really want to move into more. As you might be aware, 32 per cent of people in Canberra are functionally illiterate, and that is a frightening number when you consider the other demographic in this city. So it is something we want to do a lot more on.

The work that we do sounds a bit froth and bubble; we call it “giggle and wiggle”. It is specifically for children aged zero to two, and we spend a lot of time not only giggling and wiggling but educating parents on the importance of early literacy. We are doing a lot of work in that early literacy area. There is more work that we could be doing in the adult literacy area, and that is where we want to target in the future.

**MS BRESNAN:** You said you work with particular organisations on that. Is that with community organisations?

**Ms Little:** Yes. There is the AMEP, funded by the commonwealth government for migrants, and the volunteer tutors have their programs in most of our libraries as well. We have English conversation classes run by the volunteer tutor programs.

**THE CHAIR:** How many volunteers are working at the moment, because I know you have a very strong program?

**Ms Little:** We have about 150 volunteers who work in the library specifically. Most of those are home library service volunteers, and they service about 400 people. So there are 400 people on our books for home service that would not receive library services if it was not for those volunteers.

**THE CHAIR:** When I used to have the time to belong to a reading group, it was very popular at that time. Are those reading groups still popular in the library and do they actually come into the library and spend time there?

**Ms Little:** Yes, some of them do. Unbelievably, in a population the size of Canberra, we support 130 reading groups. We have about 150 titles that we can provide to them through the libraries. So at the beginning of the year they select what they want to read and we make them accessible. Some of those reading groups are actually run by the library. There is something called Read around Canberra where we provide an author to facilitate the reading club for the year. We have a children's reading group that runs at Kingston and we have a Jane Austen one specifically that also runs at Kingston. So we facilitate some of them, but you can appreciate that with 130 across Canberra we are flat out just getting the materials to them and getting them back and circulating.

**THE CHAIR:** Did you have any more questions on this area, Mr Coe?

**MR COE:** Just a quick one. Do InTACT provide all the IT services for the public, like internet and the WiFi at Kippax?

**Ms Little:** Yes, they do.

**THE CHAIR:** There being no other questions on this area, we will turn to ACT NOWaste.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** With respect to the figures that you tried to explain to us at the beginning, Mr Byles, one of them related to waste and you said you would come back and say some more. Do you wish to say some more about that?

**Mr Byles:** Sure, Ms Le Couteur. I just emphasise the error in the 2008-09 annual report. You are familiar with that. Mr Ware will give any detail in addition to what I have already commented on. Ms Le Couteur, do you have a specific question

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I wrote down "640,000 tonnes". That was the amount that was recycled, went to landfill?

**Mr Stanhope:** Ms Le Couteur asked before whether it was a TAMS-only error or

whether it was an all-of-ACT mistake and the implications for an understanding of waste to landfill generally.

**Mr Ware:** The figure that we reported in last year's annual report of 640,000 tonnes is what was recycled, mostly by private industry, through the private sector, through either individuals or companies. The figure of what was sent to landfill is unchanged. The revised figure that should have been in the annual report was 584,000 tonnes. So, when you take those two figures and get a percentage of what it should have been, what was recycled versus what was sent to landfill, you get a different figure from the 25-75 per cent split. The actual figure was 73 per cent that was recovered and 27 per cent went to landfill.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Why do you think you had the mistake?

**Mr Ware:** We did not have a mistake. We were given incorrect figures from industry.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay. Why did industry give you incorrect figures?

**Mr Ware:** We were told by the companies and individuals, or individuals concerned, that they made a calculating error. So they got the figure wrong when they were adding up their numbers to provide to us. When we got this year's figures and we said, "There's a big discrepancy here," we then asked all of our companies that provided information on the surveys to confirm their figures. We do not believe it was a purposeful error, if you want to think of it that way. We believe it was an honest mistake on their part and all we could do was report what they told us as an aggregated figure.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What methodology do companies use to work out how many tonnes are recycled? Are they actually weighed over weighbridges, or estimates? How do we get these figures?

**Mr Ware:** The majority of figures we get back are actual weighbridge figures. Some of them make an estimate because they are getting in material that they do not have a weighbridge for and they do a conversion ratio that is agreed—and nationally agreed, I must say. It is a methodology that is established and we have used that for quite some time. So most of the figures that we get, yes, are accurate and they are weighbridge figures. Of course, if someone sits down at a desk with a calculator late at night, there may be the opportunity for mistakes in that instance.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And do you ever audit the figures?

**Mr Ware:** We do checks, as I said. We did checks this year and we believe that the figures are accurate this year and our revised figures from last year are also accurate.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay, I will move off there. I noticed recently that EPIC received some government support to offer public space recycling. Is this now going to become ACT government policy to do public space recycling and why hasn't it happened in the past? Is it cost issues, contamination issues?

**Mr Perram:** Just on the EPIC side of things, that happens to fall within my purview.

We have another estimates day on that, but just as a brief overview—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I was taking it as an example that—

**Mr Perram:** what we have been concerned with at EPIC has been the amount of waste that has not been able to be recycled. This program came up at an opportune time for us to ensure that the increases there have been markedly increased. In respect of Canberra Stadium and also Manuka Oval, we have gone from recycling rates of the order of 38 per cent up to about 88 per cent at the moment because of like programs. But, yes, it is a difficulty in respect of the costs associated with quite a few of the public programs that are running.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So from a cost basis you are not anticipating rolling it out into the other public spaces in Canberra, or is this the beginning of something new?

**Mr Perram:** It is a government direction on where we will go with this as far as the way forward, and it will require funding. So the significant part, for example, out at EPIC was the capital costs associated with the establishment of the works there. So that what we are doing is coming back with proposals in respect of the way forward.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So is the major cost capital or ongoing?

**Mr Perram:** A mix of both. Capital is the initial cost. Certainly drum lifters, certainly recycling areas and certainly the capability of collection and distribution at EPIC were the major issues there; very similar issues at Manuka and very similar issues at Canberra Stadium.

**MR COE:** With regard to the reusable facility which has been operating with the new contractor since January, has the productivity of that facility changed under the new operator as opposed to the old one that was liquidated?

**Mr Ware:** You will be referring to the one at Mugga Lane, I assume?

**MR COE:** That is right, yes.

**Mr Ware:** The new operator out there has made significant strides in what he—when I say “he” I mean the group as a whole—has been processing, moving through. He has a policy of not having any fixed prices so that customers can haggle, in effect, and I believe that that is a good model because customers feel that they have got a good deal and of course that increases turnover so that when the public go out there they see new stock all the time. He has been moving reusable items through there quite quickly and has been assisting us to recover additional items from the transfer station.

**MR COE:** Right. Is he operating just on a monthly fee, or how does it work? If this operator has the capacity to haggle, he is obviously not on some sort of commission, or there is not some fixed percentage?

**Mr Ware:** We do not pay the operator any funding to be there and he does not pay us any rent. He meets all of his operating costs by what sales he makes. So if someone goes in there and says, “I believe that couch is worth \$30,” and the operator says, “I

believe it is worth \$50,” he and the customer come to an agreement as to what it is actually worth for them. So we do not support the company monetarily in any way, but they are expected to run a profitable business, which I believe they are.

As a sign of that, on the last Wednesday of every month, I believe, they run a charity day out there where the proceeds of all the sales on that day are given to charity. The present charity for this month is the McGrath Foundation and when they build up enough funding to reach \$10,000 a cheque will be handed over. I have recently seen several letters of appreciation to the operator of that facility—from five different people, I believe it was—saying what a good job he is doing and giving back into the community.

**MR COE:** How was that contractor selected? Obviously, it is not really a usual procurement insofar as no money is changing hands, so does it bypass the usual procedures or is there a special process in place?

**Mr Ware:** What was actually issued out was a request for tender. It was assessed in the normal way, but of course the value for money equation—there is no money changing hands—was based on a technical score alone. I was not on the assessment panel, so I cannot speak any further about what methodologies were used or how a decision was reached, apart from saying that it was undertaken through an open tender process and that probity was observed.

**MR COE:** So Shared Services conducted that tender?

**Mr Ware:** Procurement Solutions.

**MR COE:** Okay.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** TV recycling, I believe, started from April this year. Can you tell us how it is progressing? How many have you received and are we still having problems with illegal dumping of TVs?

**Mr Ware:** I will have to take the question on notice as to numbers. On the issue relating to illegal dumping, there is a small amount occurring, from what I see. Charities and some other sections of government do have some amount of illegal dumping and I will have to come back to you on the numbers that are involved with that. On the recycling of TVs, the uptake has been very strong. People are prepared to pay the cost when they understand that the fee charged covers the cost of the recycling of that item.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have been told for quite a while now that you are planning to introduce a facility at Mugga Lane to accept and recycle domestic batteries of all types. Is that now the case or is it still just car batteries?

**Mr Ware:** We are looking at a proposal for battery drop-off facilities, household battery drop-off facilities, at a number of locations.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do you want to tell us more about that?

**Mr Ware:** We are proposing that they will be placed at our recycling drop-off centres around town, as well as having them at our Mugga Lane and Mitchell facilities.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Where are other recycling drop-off centres? What precisely do you mean by that?

**Mr Ware:** We have four major facilities and two minor facilities dotted around Canberra. The major ones are at Mitchell, Belconnen, Phillip and Tuggeranong. We also have a facility at Parkwood, at the old west Belconnen resource management centre, and then we have two minor facilities at Gungahlin, in the town centre, and at Weston. We have got to look at the cost versus the benefit of placing those. There is a capital cost and an ongoing cost and we are still working through those issues.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And what is the capital cost?

**Mr Ware:** The capital cost is the installation of the drop-off chute, in effect, or the bin that will hold them there. Should alkaline and rechargeable batteries get mixed and start to leak, chemical reactions can occur, so we need to build something so that that chemical reaction is contained.

**THE CHAIR:** Generally, Chief Minister, do you think the education around recycling that we are trying to do in the community is now having some effect and people are more conscious of recycling and being more responsible?

**Mr Stanhope:** Without doubt. Our recycling record shows that. With the systems that are in place in the context of recycling percentages, even accepting the glitch that reduced our total recycling to landfill ratio by two per cent to 73 per cent, we still lead Australia. There is a high level of consciousness but there is always more that could be done. We in the ACT are at not so much the hard end but the expensive end.

I think we do need to be mindful of the cost-benefit ratio in relation to those further initiatives that we can pursue as a community. There are a whole range of initiatives that I think we could all identify that would be useful as part of the suite of consciousness-raising of and community access to recycling.

But this is an interesting issue around the educational, effective benefit of engagement with the community and the bottom-line cost benefit. I think one needs not always to be swayed just by the cost benefit that we know of, but there are very good reasons for engaging the community in an educative sense and an engagement sense. We do need to get the balance right.

Ms Le Couteur and I have had something of an exchange of correspondence over the last two years, it is fair to say, in relation to the issue of batteries and in relation to the issue of—what are they called?—on-street recycling bins. The government has been responding in relation to batteries, on the basis of some occupational health and some safety issues that Mr Ware has just outlined.

In an ideal world we probably would provide battery disposal capacity within supermarkets and public malls but, whilst ever offices indicate to me that they are concerned around some safety issues, then of course safety will predominate. But

I believe that in time we will deal with those issues. There is a cost too in terms of maintenance. It is the same with on-site bins.

I think there is more we can do. What I am trying to say is that I think we do extremely well—and this community is very aware—but I do not deny for one minute that there is more that we can do and that, over time, there is more we must do to move from 75 to 95 per cent. We have still got a long way to go. There is still far too much waste going to landfill. There is 20 per cent of material that is going to landfill that could be diverted. But it is the question of the cost, the capacity and the resources.

I am sure we will get there. We are all aware too of the outrageous behaviour of some members of the community in relation to recycling and their complete disregard for recycling. There is always more that can be done.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** With regard to the batteries, given that most of them are small and people would carry them in their bags, not necessarily in a car, why did you choose not to put them in shopfronts and libraries where we have more people, it would be a lot more convenient and thus have higher usage?

**Mr Ware:** As Mr Stanhope alluded to, there are occupational, health and safety concerns. I have concerns, as I have outlined before, about the chemical reactions that can occur. We would have to be of course concerned for not only members of the public but staff in these facilities.

As Ms Little has already alluded to, there are some very unsavoury things that are dropped down library chutes. To have batteries as another one of those, because people either cannot read or just do not care which chute they are putting it down, would be of concern not only to me but obviously to Ms Little and probably also to the shopfronts as well. This needs to be looked at and looked at closely, and that is what we are still working through at the moment.

**MR COE:** I do not want these comments to be taken out of context but if you only look at the financial element—one of the single lines and triple bottom lines of that financial element is the cost of recycling, say, a soft-drink can from collection to remanufacture—is that cost more expensive than the cost of production?

**Mr Ware:** To take up your point about aluminium cans, it is something like six times cheaper to recycle an aluminium can than to mine the virgin material, transport it, produce it, refine it, make it into an aluminium can. Of course, the average aluminium can takes about 12 weeks from time of manufacture to go through the recycling loop and back into another aluminium can. In relation to aluminium cans, it is very effective. Glass is another one, as is paper. As you drop down the waste hierarchy or the different waste streams, some things do become more expensive.

**MR COE:** I will not be advocating this but the territory is better off if you put it in a rubbish bin than in a recycling bin?

**THE CHAIR:** No, that is not what he is saying.

**Mr Stanhope:** In a financial sense, yes.

**MR COE:** In a financial sense, for some items, yes, that is right. I know there are a couple more lines in the triple bottom line but—

**Mr Ware:** I would not like to make generalisations of what should happen, what should not happen, as a generality.

**MR COE:** But I think it is important to understand this, because it is an opportunity. For every dollar that you spend in this recycling, you cannot spend it in that recycling and it is important to get the best bang for your buck, for environmental reasons.

Finally, I see that the annual total resource recovery tonnage per head of population has gone down by one per cent, from 1.5 tonnes to 1.49 tonnes. Yet you see on page 43 that there is a fairly considerable increase to landfill, mainly due to construction waste. We have got a raw number there. It is not a percentage. Surely, the resource recovery tonnage should have increased if we have a considerable amount more waste being disposed of?

**Mr Ware:** The figure that pops up there as well is taking into account growth in population; so one evens out another, to some extent. The percentage of waste to landfill per head of population covers off on the increase in waste, the increase in recycling, as well as the population growth, as I said.

**MR COE:** But this is not a percentage. This is annual total resource recovery tonnage per head of population. It is not a percentage. It is a tonnage.

**Mr Ware:** Yes. And the reason that the figure for this year was 72 per cent was, even though we had an increase in the recycling rate, population growth still went up.

**MR COE:** The percentage went down, but the line above that is the annual total resource recovery tonnage, which went from 1.5 tonnes down to 1.49 tonnes. It is not the percentage but the actual resource recovery that went down; yet we have got a lot more waste being disposed of.

**Mr Ware:** I must say that the 1.5 figure was our original target. The 1.49 figure was the actual outcome. So it is not a percentage drop, in effect. It is where we did not quite meet the target that we thought we would.

**MR COE:** Can you take on notice what population you use to work out the tonnage, for both this year and perhaps the previous two or three years as well?

**Mr Ware:** We will give you that.

**MR COE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** We are now going to transport and infrastructure, where we have got ACTION, transport regulation, planning, Roads ACT and Canberra Connect. Welcome to Mr Elliott and Mr Roncon. Have members got some questions?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have got a question, yes. ACTION says in its description of its

public transport output that ACTION provides a range of express and route options to and from all suburbs. It does not appear that that is in fact what ACTION does do, because there are some new suburbs in Canberra, such as Bonner and Casey—and there will continue to be new suburbs in Canberra—which do not have bus routes servicing them. Given that you say that you provide them to all suburbs, why do you not provide them to some suburbs?

**Mr Elliott:** I might take that question and I will defer to my colleague James Roncon, who is the acting director of ACTION bus services. When we plan bus services around the city, we are in a lag situation; so we do not tend to run bus services into suburbs that are under construction because there are no people there. The statement in fact refers to an intent and there is always a lag between when we are able to provide services into a new suburb and when we cannot.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I guess that is my question. Why is there a lag? You say you do not put a service in where a suburb is under construction. That is fair enough. Houses do not need buses. When the people come to the suburb, why can't you introduce the bus service then?

**Mr Elliott:** It is really a matter of economics and getting the best value for money out of a public transport system, from our perspective. There does not seem to be a high level of value trying to run a fairly expensive bus service into a very low-populated area. We tend to try to move the bus system around where we have got density. In new suburbs, which I appreciate is a challenge for us and for those people who move into those suburbs, we tend to have a bit of a lag situation. So we will tend to run buses at a later date, when there is sufficient population to warrant it.

I understand that a different attitude to that would be to have the services running at the start and running them virtually empty for a period of time and thereby capture some of the passengers right at the outset, if you like. It is simply a matter of trying to get best value for money out of our service dollars that we have and trying to service the community where that density lies.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I can see your point from a short-term point of view, but the ACT is supposed to be having a sustainable transport policy. We are putting people in new suburbs and telling them, "You've got to have a car because there's no alternative." When the buses finally come, they have already got their patterns and they are not as likely to use them. If we looked at it from an ACT point of view, would it not make more sense to provide the bus from the beginning, given we do have targets which we have not yet met in terms of increasing bus travel?

**Mr Elliott:** I think that is recognised as quite a challenge for the territory, both from a land release and planning perspective and also a broader planning perspective for the territory. We work all of the time with our colleagues in ACTPLA and LAPS in trying to bridge the gap and reduce the lag.

We are certainly in a position at the moment, from a transport perspective and an ACTION perspective, where we are playing a bit of catch-up. The land release program is moving ahead at some pace. It is beholden on us to try and work with our colleagues to bridge that gap and get the services into those suburbs as they come

online. That is always a challenge for us to do and we will often be criticised for running empty buses around town, particularly to new suburbs—or old ones, in fact.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Coe?

**MR COE:** I was wondering if you could please give me an update on the ticketing system and when we are likely to see it brought out.

**Mr Elliott:** The ticketing system at this point in time is just going through a regular and standard upgrade of software. I think the general process is to upgrade the software about every two weeks or so. As we build new functions and attempt to make sure that all the processes work as we would want them to do, we are doing a software upgrade. Right at this time we are uploading a new version of software and making sure that the system works properly for a trial that is scheduled to commence this month.

At this point in time we are proposing 22 November for that trial. I think we have identified up to about 500 users. It may be less, but certainly no more than 500. That is the maximum load we would want to put on the system. That trial is to run about three weeks, after which time we would want to start distributing cards to seniors, who are our first community group. We will be doing that before Christmas, if the trial proceeds and if all goes well.

As I have said on a number of occasions, we are taking a particularly prudent approach with this deployment. I have made the point many times before that it is a fact that around Australia there are only two jurisdictions so far who have successfully implemented smart card ticketing systems in their transport environments—that is, Perth and Queensland. Perth has been running since 2007. They only had 61 per cent of people using their smart card as of last July. In Queensland—they went about nine months later—after a couple of hiccups, they now have about 60 per cent of their users. They are both multimode systems. While our system is somewhat simpler—it is a single mode, flat fare structure—and relatively easy to implement, it is still quite complex to ensure that the system works for customers, that it is easy for them to use and that all our back office processes which collect data and revenue are in place and working properly.

The short answer to your question is that we would expect to be on target to have smart cards in the hands of some areas of the community by Christmas. If the software is not ready to go, we will push that back. We would intend to run dual systems. If you use buses you would be unlikely not to have seen the new technology as you were sitting on the bus. I am not sure where we are up to, but at least 70 per cent of buses have been fitted out. Between January and March, we will be running both systems. That is just to ensure that if there is a failure we can flip back to the old. So we will be doing that and then from March we will be phasing out the old. It is an incremental approach to implementation.

**MR COE:** When you say “flip back to the old”, what is that going to mean for a passenger that has only one type of ticket?

**Mr Elliott:** It means that we will have to manage them and give them access to the

old system in some way, but we are not expecting to do that. It has been taken on advice from our contractor, after their experiences in Perth. They said that running a dual system for a period of time is not an unreasonable thing to do. It is a bit problematic, I would have to say.

I would also acknowledge the ACTION driver staff in all of this. They are looking forward to the new system because (a) they think it works well and (b) they find it quite a sophisticated and helpful piece of technology for them. They have been very good in terms of having to do a few workarounds with both pieces of equipment on the bus. The driving staff have been, I think, very generous with their time and also with their commitment to getting the new system in place. Physically working round those two systems is a bit of a challenge, but it is, again, a prudent approach to the implementation of a fairly sophisticated piece of technology.

**MR COE:** So the old system should not be required beyond 31 March?

**Mr Elliott:** Our aim would be to have it all off, if all goes according to plan. That is correct. There might just be the physical aspect of taking the machinery off the buses as they come in for their regular service. But the aim would be by that quarter, yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** There are quite a few buses where the old ticketing systems are not working. If that happens, will we just have a situation like we have now where some people are essentially getting free transport because the old ticketing systems are not working? That could potentially happen, I guess.

**Mr Elliott:** That is correct. It is not desirable, but it would be correct.

**MR COE:** What percentage of buses have new ticketing machines?

**Mr Elliott:** The last I was told is that it is about 70 or 75.

**MR COE:** And when will the last bus have the system installed?

**Mr Elliott:** I am not quite clear on that, but I would have expected that we would be completed by Christmas time. The trial is one of those things where a number of users—as I said, a maximum of 500—move around the system. If they do get on a bus where there is no ticket machine, obviously they are not going to do anything with their new smart card. It is a progressive implementation as we go forward.

Really, we are doing that and keeping the bus service running at the same time. Most of this work is being done within standard scheduling regimes, which is a fair task as well. I do not think we have missed a service because we have put a bus off the road to do some rewiring or anything like that. Again, it is a fairly huge acknowledgement to the fleet services people in ACTION. They have really been working overtime in trying to get this stuff done.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Are you still intending that people will, in effect, log out when they get off a bus so you can tell when they got out?

**Mr Elliott:** Yes, absolutely.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What sort of publicity program are you going to do on that? It is pretty intuitive that you have to sign on, but I do not expect to have to sign off to get off the bus. How are you going to convince us that we need to do this?

**Mr Elliott:** As we get into the trial phase what we are going to do is have a good conversation with our trial users and say, “How did you behave, and how do you think the general community might behave when we bring this forward? How are we going to get them to comply with that?” We are looking for communication, but we are also looking for incentivisation. We may look at tools within the pricing structure that would assist people to tag off, because we want the data. We want to know where people’s trips are. We want to know where they got on and where they got off so we can actually optimise the route planning at the end of the day. We are having a look at a few incentives. We have got a lot of flexibility in this system in terms of how we run our pricing structures and there are plenty of opportunities to incentivise people to tag off.

**MS BRESNAN:** They have done that in other jurisdictions, presumably.

**Mr Elliott:** They have. They have also used penalties. In Sydney, for example—and I am not sure if they are continuing with this, but certainly they did in their old system—they were using penalties. Because they use a zone fare, if you did not tag off you would end up paying the full zone fare. So you might end up paying four zones if you did not tag off. That was a great incentive for people to tag off, but it became a bit of a communications difficulty for them in that regard, as in their trial period. Again, New South Wales have had to stop completely and start again. I think they are looking at 2012 to implement at this point.

**THE CHAIR:** I just wanted to ask a question about the new network 10 and the rollout of the new bus arrangements in Belconnen.

**Mr Elliott:** Imminent.

**THE CHAIR:** Imminent. I wanted to ask how that new network 10 plan is going and the frequency that is anticipated with the buses.

**Mr Elliott:** The new network commences on Monday, 15 November. There is a bit of a dry run, I think, through the new Belconnen bus station system on Saturday and there is a media event tomorrow just to run a few people through that. It is a rather spectacular piece of infrastructure, I think, for the money that has been spent through those stations. It is quite a revolution. Again, it warrants a very large tip of the hat to Roads ACT and Tony Gill and his team for delivering that.

Quite an amazing piece of work has been done in a very short time period. It was a very challenging project in terms of what they had to dig up underneath the old station. I would commend it to anyone—go out and have a look, if you can. If you had been in the old station and known how the Belconnen town centre was structured you would be able to see what they have tried to achieve and appreciate the level of work that has gone into that.

What we are doing with network 10 is coinciding its release with the opening of those bus stations. As that road opens and as the dedicated bus lanes open, network 10 will start and that will be next Monday. From that perspective, we have tried to promote the new timetables through the website and letterbox drops—that is a very standard thing that we do in ACTION—and also on the platform to capture all the existing passengers. We try to ensure that our existing passengers know what is going on.

We have certainly pushed the point about our long-term plans for network and frequency on route services. You will see in the brochure, which I can share around and show you if you have not seen one—if you are not a regular bus user then you may have missed this, but you should have got one in your letterbox—that the Redex service, the high frequency service, is now called a rapid service. We have preferred to cement down what we call a blue line, which really runs from Belconnen to Tuggeranong. That is a five to eight-minute service from 7 am to 7 pm weekdays.

We are trying to let people know that there are very high frequent services on our frequent network and really promote it very heavily. We are trying to send some messages to people that that there is a very easy way to get around the ACT if you use the public transport system. The centre series of maps in the brochure that has been sent to all households points out, I think fairly well—it is a bit of a read, I would have to say, and there is a lot of information in there—that if you live in the north and you are trying to get to the south through the centre there is a very frequent bus service and this is how you use it. If you live in Gungahlin and you are trying to get towards Queanbeyan and come through the centre, there is a very easy way to use it. And if you happen to be trying to commute in and out of the parliamentary zone there is a massive level of bus service through that particular zone on a daily basis from seven to seven.

What we are trying to tell people visually is that, as we implement this new network, there is a very high frequency of regular public transport that you can catch. That is the point of delivering at this stage the 2001 public transport strategy and also bedding down some of that frequent service in the routes. The aspirational goal for us is 30 minutes everywhere all the time. If you read this brochure, you will know that we are getting that and then some on those core frequent routes and it is a first step towards that goal.

**MR COE:** Are you going to be adjusting delivery of the buses on the gold route or—

**Mr Elliott:** Adjusting them?

**MR COE:** Yes, adjusting delivery of the buses on those particular routes, like you did with Redex?

**Mr Elliott:** Whenever we change where a bus runs and goes, we are going to do a new timetable, which is why it is a fairly big affair. We only do them annually, as a rule.

**MR COE:** Yes, I know, but the actual delivery of the buses, the actual paint.

**THE CHAIR:** The colour, the paint?

**MR COE:** Yes.

**Mr Elliott:** Would we colour the buses?

**MR COE:** Yes.

**Mr Elliott:** We have had a conversation about that. It is a bit of a challenge for us. It is not a bad idea, but the issue is that the buses do not just run on that route. If we could find a way to dynamically colour them in some way so that if they are on a red line, they could be red or somewhere in the window be red, and if they are on a blue line they are blue, then that is okay.

One of the issues about fleet management is to try to optimise the services. What you tend not to do in regular passenger route services is dedicate specific buses to particular routes. It creates a lot of issues for our scheduling people and our fleet management who are trying to get them—

**MR COE:** But you did that for Redex, though?

**Mr Elliott:** When we implemented Redex, we built Redex on top of the core route service. It was a supplement. But what we are doing now, in this network, is actually integrating it into the network completely. But in its first instance, it was a pilot and we just built it on top of the network. That was why we were able to do it that way.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Bresnan, you have a question?

**MS BRESNAN:** Yes. It is related to the timeliness indicators. One of the accountability measures there has 83 per cent as the target. I know in Melbourne, for example, they have a target of about 95 per cent. While they did not meet it in all instances, I think in about 93 per cent of cases for their services they did reach that target.

Does ACTION meet that 83 per cent timeliness target and have there been thoughts, particularly given that we are having these new network changes, of increasing that timeliness? I should have mentioned that Melbourne have five minutes each side of the schedule. I wonder whether there has been any thought of aiming high with the new network changes and whether we are meeting that 83 per cent target.

**Mr Elliott:** Mr Roncon might be able to add to this but, from my perspective, when we build a new timetable, what we try to do—and one of the things that are a feature of Canberra is trying to get better connections—is build, if you like, fat or a bit of time into those primary connection points where people are more likely to change than not. So in terms of timeliness, to some degree it comes back to how we build those connections and whether we have given people enough time to move around. In terms of the actual indicator, that is really a matter of whether ACTION can get a bus to the timetable. I might defer on that one to Mr Roncon for a comment.

**Mr Roncon:** At the moment, the timeliness factor is calculated through the community surveys and response that we do. We do not have a measurement outside

that process at the moment. We talked earlier about the new ticketing system. I think we are really looking forward to that, and that will provide us some greater opportunity to be able to measure things such as timeliness amongst many other measurements that we will be able to produce.

**MS BRESNAN:** So at the moment, without having that data available through the ticketing system, we do not really know whether we are meeting that timeliness or how many patrons might be lost because of the timeliness of buses?

**Mr Elliott:** That is correct. To some degree, we really do not have sufficient data to measure that accurately, which has been a bit of an issue with the Auditor-General's Office over the last couple of years. One of the key things that have been implemented in the new ticketing system is the provision of an extra GPS functionality, which is in fact one of the things that are in test right now. As a bus goes past a stop, we have a record of whether the bus passed the stop on the timetable or not. In the back office you can do an analysis and see whether the bus passed the stop at the right time.

There are two aspects to that that are important, I think. One is that you want to be running a reliable bus service for passengers, as far as you possibly can do so, noting the unexpected road closure, weather event or whatever. But you would want to be running that because people will use public transport if they can expect that it will arrive on time.

But the other side of it is the planning side where, if we know that a bus is consistently not making its timetable, then we need to adjust the timetable. That might be for a number of factors that we have not considered or have missed along the way.

The data that the ticketing system will give us will allow us to (a) reliably measure, (b) try to deliver a more timely service from an ACTION delivery perspective in that regard and (c) more appropriately schedule bus services where they are supposed to be. If we have got timing issues, we will be able to much more reliably identify where those timing issues are.

**MS BRESNAN:** I have a very quick follow-up on that. When we have got the new ticketing measures, can we expect to potentially see a higher target in line with what other jurisdictions have?

**Mr Elliott:** I think there is a high expectation that our measurement would be a lot more robust.

**MS BRESNAN:** And there would be some reporting about how ACTION are meeting that target?

**Mr Elliott:** Yes.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** We will move on to the next area. Thank you very much officials, Mr Elliott, Mr Roncon. We have transport regulation and planning and Roads ACT.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We are doing Roads ACT at the same time?

**THE CHAIR:** They are sort of related.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** They are. I just wondered. I want to start with my question about the ditch, basically.

**THE CHAIR:** We will do those two areas together—transport regulation and planning and Roads ACT. Have you got any transport regulation questions?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Most probably not. I would like to start with the question which I tried earlier today but I was told it was a Roads issue.

**Mr Stanhope:** A stormwater issue.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** A stormwater issue, which was dealt with by Roads. As you may be aware, through Woden there is something which used to be known as Yarralumla Creek but which has now turned into a stormwater drain. There is a big development at Woden Green. Last week, I went to a discussion about Woden Green with Charles Landry and a bunch of other people. In that, they said that they would have loved to have done something about what they call the ditch, but they were unable to because of issues with TAMS.

There were also some people there from Woden Valley Community Council who have seen all the work that they have put into designing swales and things for that area, but we were told that the problem was with TAMS. I asked this earlier but I was told that after TAMS would be Roads. So Mr Gill, please?

**Mr Gill:** Thanks for the advance notice of this question. Roads ACT is the manager of the public stormwater system. As part of that, there is about 60 kilometres of lined concrete drain throughout the territory. That is the remnants of the 70s and 80s, and at a time when it was seen as an efficient way of collecting and disposing of stormwater drainage. Under current development philosophy, it would not be built like that today. But, given the situation that is existing, in terms of changing it, I suppose—

**Mr Stanhope:** It was the NCDC, was it? Who is that character that keeps telling us how to do things?

**Mr Gill:** The 70s and 80s, Chief Minister.

**Mr Stanhope:** I will store that up.

**Mr Gill:** There are two issues. One is the technical issue in terms of what impact changes would have on the overall stormwater network, and particularly downstream effects, and then there is the actual cost of changing it. In relation to Woden Green, I will have to take that particular aspect on notice, but I suspect, as part of the development application, there would have been inclusions in their development. That would have been submitted to TAMS through our asset acceptance area. It is likely that Roads ACT would have had some input into that. We can provide the detail. But

the issues to consider would be the impact downstream and particularly what impact it might have on gross pollutant traps and also the actual cost of doing it.

Having said that, at the moment DECCEW are converting some existing concrete lines to wetlands or water quality ponds. That is the nature of it. To some extent, while Roads ACT manage the process, in terms of changing direction and the planning outcomes being sought, DECCEW are taking the lead on that, and we are contributing. Ultimately, we will be responsible for maintaining and managing the process.

**Mr Stanhope:** That was the basis of Ms Le Couteur's question, in a way: if we can do it for Sullivans Creek, why can't we do it for Yarralumla Creek? That was essentially the question.

**Mr Gill:** The answer is that it can be done but you need to understand what the implications are.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I guess that is why I am particularly interested in it, because we are about to have a fairly major development in Woden Green. Once all of those buildings are built, there will be no capability to do anything else with the ditch. The fate of that creek is going to be set for the next 100 years. As you said, we no longer turn them into stormwater drains; we do more interesting things. Given that this development will cut off any possibility of change there, and because TAMS was specifically mentioned as the reason it could not happen—

**Mr Gill:** Well, as I said—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It may well be a cost issue. I would be interested to know, given that this is not what we do anymore, why—

**Mr Gill:** We will take that on notice, but you should note that the work being done in Lyneham and Dickson at the moment is being driven by the commonwealth government, as opposed to an individual developer.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, but there was City Edge.

**Mr Gill:** There was City Edge, yes, some years ago.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And this is a lot bigger.

**Mr Gill:** We will take that on notice and see what the issues are.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a very relevant question, Ms Le Couteur, and we will give a detailed response.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you very much.

**MR COE:** I have a question about Flemington Road. Flemington Road, I understand, through the median strip, or the reservation in the middle, could be used for light rail or for a bus route. However, the intersection at Mitchell, I understand, probably would

not facilitate such a reservation. Was that a conscious decision or did that simply slip under the radar?

**Mr Gill:** It did not slip under the radar, no. The duplication of Flemington Road has a very wide median which would allow for a bus lane down the middle. It would also allow for a future light rail train, if that situation was ever to take place. The section south of Well Station Drive at the moment is currently subject to a feasibility study, looking at what future provisions are made. When you get past Sandford Street, there is provision within the road reservation to make modifications to allow for either an on-road facility in terms of a bus lane or a future train within the road reservation.

**MR COE:** As for that particular intersection, that intersection would have to be—

**Mr Gill:** Which intersection are we talking about?

**MR COE:** I cannot—

**Mr Gill:** Are we talking about where the duplication ends at Well Station Drive or are we talking about Sandford Street?

**MR COE:** Yes, it would be Well Station Drive, I believe.

**Mr Gill:** The median stops at Well Station Drive. No work has been done at this point in time but there is a feasibility study currently funded as part of the 2009-10 program that will look at what provision should be made there.

**MR COE:** That intersection would require a complete reconstruction?

**Mr Gill:** South of the existing intersection, yes. Provision has been made north of it as part of the recent works.

**MR COE:** Still in Gungahlin, Gundaroo Road is taking a huge amount of traffic at the moment. Especially with the increased density which is likely in Crace, that traffic is going to increase even more so. Are you happy with the capacity of that road and how it is flowing at the moment? What pressure and need are there for it to be duplicated and perhaps even for William Slim to be duplicated as well?

**Mr Gill:** I assume you are talking about Gundaroo Drive?

**MR COE:** Yes.

**Mr Stanhope:** From the Barton Highway down to the town centre?

**MR COE:** That is right, yes.

**Mr Gill:** The position that Roads ACT has taken in terms of both Gundaroo Drive and William Slim Drive is that, once the Gungahlin Drive extension, the duplication, has been completed and it is opened to traffic, we will review the need to upgrade both Gundaroo Drive and William Slim Drive. We are currently doing a forward design of both of those roads, this year, through our normal process of looking at the forward

design of that. We are also looking, as part of that, at the adjoining intersection, the large roundabout—Gundaroo Drive, William Slim and the Barton Highway. That is on our plans. It is part of Roads ACT's forward program, which is considered within the department and then by government.

**Mr Stanhope:** Of course, you are aware, Mr Coe, that Clarrie Hermes Drive and an extension of Horse Park Drive would also be relevant to flows on Clarrie Hermes Drive. What is the time—

**Mr Gill:** The tenders for Clarrie Hermes Drive have closed, so the contract would be out within the next month or so.

**MR COE:** The increased number of residents that may well move into Crace due to the latest technical amendment—if that goes through—what impact is that going to have on the infrastructure that Roads ACT have been involved with constructing or managing in existing parts of Crace?

**Mr Gill:** Associated with those developments there will be an increased traffic load, and there are a number of road improvements in Gungahlin that are responding to that. Clarrie Hermes is one. The extension of Well Station Drive to Horse Park Drive is another. The Flemington Road duplication is another.

**MR COE:** But the infrastructure that is already in Crace—

**Mr Stanhope:** The roads or the sewerage, do you mean?

**MR COE:** Yes, all Roads ACT infrastructure in Crace. Will any of that have to be upgraded if there are an additional 600 dwellings in Crace that were not on the plans as of a few weeks ago?

**Mr Gill:** There are two aspects there. One is the infrastructure associated with the actual residential development itself. That would be put in place as part of the development. The need to augment the trunk infrastructure, whether it is roads, stormwater or street lighting, is part of our ongoing program.

**MR COE:** Yes, but this infrastructure has only been built in the last couple of years.

**Mr Gill:** It would have been built with future development in mind, so you would expect it would have some capacity.

**MR COE:** Yes, but the future development in mind had 1,200 dwellings in Crace and now we are looking at perhaps 1,800 dwellings in Crace. That is a huge impact on the existing infrastructure, which may well only be a couple of years old.

**Mr Stanhope:** I am sure Mr Gill can respond to that. You are asking whether or not roads already built within Crace 1 and 2—

**MR COE:** All existing infrastructure in Crace can handle—

**Mr Stanhope:** Within the suburban boundaries, yes.

**MR COE:** an additional 600 dwellings, 50 per cent more than what was intended as of just a few months ago.

**Mr Gill:** The development plan or the estate development plan within Crace would consider the capacity of the existing infrastructure. If it was required to be augmented, it would be taken as part of that process.

**MR COE:** That is the question. Does it need to be augmented? Can the existing infrastructure that has already been built handle an additional 600 dwellings?

**Mr Gill:** We can take that question on notice rather than debate it here.

**MR COE:** Please do.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I assume this is a Roads question. Northbourne Avenue, I believe you have let a tender to do a feasibility study, so you can do wonderful things to it.

**Mr Gill:** I might defer to Mr Elliott on this one.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How are we going on Northbourne Avenue?

**Mr Elliott:** As part of the transport for Canberra program we were funded to do a feasibility on Northbourne Avenue. Again, it is one of those core routes that takes an immense amount of traffic. It is quite a difficult thing to manage for all modes—walking, cycling, buses and cars. We have made an undertaking to government that we will evaluate some of the bus priority options on that route, including an assessment of the Dickson bus stations. That will be part of the study.

In particular, we are looking at how we might attend to cycling on that particular core route. We are also working, as part of that study, with Land and Property Services who have responsibility to deliver a number of infrastructure programs for Civic. So there is a natural convergence of what is coming down Northbourne Avenue which sits in TAMS at this point and also Land and Property Services, which is looking at the city development. We work in conjunction with them on what solutions there might be and to make sure they coalesce.

We are doing exactly the same sort of thing at the end of Barry Drive where there is a massive construction going on on the corner of the ANU at the moment. That is part of the Belconnen Drive busway that we are building through the ANU. LAPS really have ownership of that project, but we are talking to them about the design of that work and how we, in fact, move buses very adroitly in and out of that particular location. In terms of a time frame for the Northbourne study, I think it has gone to tender. I do not think we have got a consultant, but I would expect that to be announced before Christmas. I think that is where we are at.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay. It has definitely gone to tender. I saw the tender and it looked very interesting.

**Mr Elliott:** Sure.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What sort of time span are you looking at for doing it and for the solution? Northbourne Avenue is the entrance to Canberra. It needs to have really good walking facilities, as we get the higher population, as well as cycling and bus facilities. I am not being anti-bus, but it has to have all of those modes.

**Mr Elliott:** In many ways it is the gateway to the city and, therefore, it not only creates some challenges for us from a transport perspective but also visual amenity and how people perceive the city as they arrive down that corridor. I think it is a challenging task that we have set for ourselves. We have some funding to attend to this cycle component. I believe our colleagues in LAPS are looking for some funding to do their end of it. I believe we are going back to government as part of the design process with some funding requirements for design for next year.

In addition to that, because it is such an important corridor, we have started a conversation with the commonwealth government about joint funding for what we are calling the north-east corridor. The north-east corridor essentially runs from Gungahlin out to Queanbeyan. It is really the Redex route in another name. Because it would be a fairly large and expensive piece of infrastructure and we could not do a thing on it without agreement with the federal government and the NCA, we will have the conversation with them. They have accepted, at least in principle at this point—I believe Mr Byles will be talking to the national cities reform council on this matter this afternoon—that there is at least an argument that we can talk to them about joint funding of that corridor for the future, which is good news for the territory. However, I also read the federal Treasurer’s report about where they are budget wise.

The intent is to do some preliminary and feasibility studies and come up with some solutions. We would expect a fairly high level of community engagement because of the nature of that corridor. We would expect some debate about solutions. People will run to solutions pretty quickly as normal. We need to take those back to government and ask what it would prefer. We then need to put some design in place. We are going to try and deliver some of the cycle opportunities within 2011-12.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Obviously I am not anti delivering the cycle stuff earlier, but I am concerned that that is going to mean it will be something that is done disassociated with the rest of the plan. I would like to see some seriously bold solutions down Northbourne Avenue, because I think if it is not like that we will have to redo it very soon.

**Mr Elliott:** I think that is right, and I think that is why we have said, “Well, let’s do a feasibility study about the transport modes on Northbourne, not about cycle lanes or something else.” We have just been given some funds in the current year to attend to cycle lanes. It may be able to be integrated in that time; it may not. The primary objective is to undertake the feasibility study, come up with some options, have a debate in the community and with the federal government about what that might mean, and then look forward to how we finish the design and funding of it and in what period of time we do that. Any construction down that corridor will cause angst for a period of time, given what currently travels down it. My colleague Mr Gill will be challenged by that, no doubt.

**Mr Stanhope:** We are looking for a solution that endures, Ms Le Couteur, to answer your concern about a piecemeal approach. We have reached the stage now that we need to deal in an integrated way with all the issues that Northbourne Avenue faces, and it will be a massive task not just in terms of community acceptance of some of the consequences of major change on Northbourne Avenue on the streetscape and the trees, most particularly the trees, but certainly the NCA. The commonwealth, at the end of the day, will have almost a determining role in what options we may be able to pursue.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The NCA has planning controls I understand.

**Mr Stanhope:** Absolutely. They have the right of veto in relation to the decisions that we might wish to make. But I agree with your sentiment, and it is our intention to seek to deal with all of the issues that we confront in Northbourne Avenue.

**THE CHAIR:** In regards to cycling and pedestrian traffic, page 30 talks about a major review, including public consultation, that has taken place in this period. That has obviously informed a lot of the walking and cycling improvements that have been made during this period.

**Mr Stanhope:** I ride a little bit, and as I ride around I cannot believe how much money we have put into cycling infrastructure. I am anticipating a backlash soon in terms of other areas that are not receiving the same level of funding.

**THE CHAIR:** Page 32 talks about bike-and-ride facilities. Was part of the feedback that you got from the community that people are looking for more park-and-ride facilities to be established.

**Mr Elliott:** Mr Gill can pick up on some of this from a cycling and infrastructure perspective, because he is leading and modelling and driving a lot of the changes around cycling, in particular, and has a very strong interest in it. From a broader perspective of the modes of transport, the government has made a commitment to meeting certain targets around more sustainable modes of transport, and that includes walking and cycling and public transport.

From our perspective, the nature of the city drives us to look at joined-up solutions, if you like. Bike-and-ride and bike facilities that are located on core public transport routes—in the new Belconnen infrastructure, for example—allow us to try and entice people from their standard mode of transport, which would be cars, into some joined-up means. We have invested a fair bit in the infrastructure and design around cycling, and I will defer to Mr Gill to talk a little bit about the priorities for cycling in the city at this point in time.

**THE CHAIR:** Just before you go on—Mr Gill might be able to answer this question—there would be secure areas where people would be able to leave their bicycles during the days?

**Mr Elliott:** Yes. The commonwealth funded the first two, and I think the ACT is funding the next four, so we have got six facilities under construction. In some cases

they are bike lockers, but we are preferring bike cages at this point in time. You will see one of these cages in the new Belconnen infrastructure if you go down and have a look on Saturday, because it will be open then.

**Mr Gill:** As Mr Elliott said, bike-and-ride facilities have been provided, and there is a cage in the case of Flemington Road near Well Station Drive. At the new Belconnen station, particularly the central station, there is a bike cage being provided with a capacity in the order of 20 bicycles. Ultimately, it will be linked to the smart card system, so people will be able to access the bike cage using their ticket that can also use the bus. Over time that will be expanded.

In terms of your original question about priorities for cycling and walking, a review has been undertaken for the last 18 months. That was presented to the Chief Minister a few months ago. It identified a series of priorities across the territory. The Chief Minister has indicated that we should establish a working group made up of various government agencies but also various user groups to look at the top 10 priorities. Included within those top 10 priorities are two priorities per district, so Canberra has been broken up into various districts so that we do not focus all our attention on the city or Gungahlin or wherever. It is across the board, acknowledging the importance of trying to promote the awareness across Canberra of both walking and cycling.

We have also included with those top 10 locations the completion of work in the Kingston foreshore to complete that loop around the lake and also to have a walking and cycling network through the Kingston foreshore development.

There are 11 projects that the working group will consider in more detail, confirm their priority, confirm a project cost, and then report back to the Chief Minister and Minister for Transport at the end of June. They will form the basis for the future programs.

**THE CHAIR:** That sounds very positive. Thank you.

**MR COE:** Mr Gill, I wonder whether you can please give an update on the Gungahlin Drive Extension bridge, especially how the procurement is going and what process is going to be used in selecting the contractors?

**Mr Gill:** I assume you are talking about the Barton Highway bridge?

**MR COE:** That is right.

**Mr Gill:** Yes, because there are several bridges on the GDE.

**MR COE:** The topical one.

**Mr Gill:** On the positive side, that project is up and running again. The completion date is the end of March. The contractor is progressing the works. The design of the false work has been progressed, and in the next few weeks the actual false work will be installed.

**MR COE:** You said it would be finished in March?

**Mr Gill:** End of March 2011.

**Mr Stanhope:** In the context you asked about tendering, it needs to be understood that the existing contract is being honoured, so there will be no new tendering.

**MR COE:** Okay.

**Mr Gill:** So the existing contract is being progressed. There have been some changes in personnel and subcontractor arrangements, but we are progressing the works on that basis—and at no additional cost to the territory, which is an important consideration.

**MR COE:** So, just to clarify, the same companies that were engaged to build the bridge that collapsed will continue to be engaged?

**Mr Gill:** The same head contractor—

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, the contract was not terminated. There certainly was an issue in the delivery of the scheduled works.

**MR COE:** I noticed that too, yes.

**Mr Stanhope:** But the contract remains in place. The services will now be delivered by March. Mr Gill may be able to explain additional steps that he has taken through the contract management process as a result of that experience, but the base contract remains in place.

**Mr Gill:** I will not go into great detail in terms of the investigation that WorkSafe is conducting, because that is not finalised yet. But, from Roads ACT's point of view, we have put in some additional requirements with the contractor to increase our level of assurance that the work will be completed satisfactorily. The first of those points is that we are basically having an independent review of the design of the temporary false work that will hold up the bridge while the concreting is taking place. Secondly, we will have an independent review of the inspection of the actual false work once it is in place, before the construction. And each of those points has to be signed off by the Director of Roads ACT before it can be progressed. Those are additional requirements that were not in place previously.

**MR COE:** So has the ACT government come to an agreement with the contractor with regard to who is going to foot the bill for the work already undertaken?

**Mr Gill:** As I said, the work will be progressed without any additional cost to the territory.

**Mr Stanhope:** The contractor accepts his responsibility for all costs that he has currently incurred. He has a contract, a legal product, and at no stage have we offered or has he suggested that he is not responsible for all the costs of delivering on that contract.

**Mr Gill:** The contractor and his insurance arrangements will cover any additional costs that might have been incurred.

**MR COE:** Right. Do you have any concerns about continuing the engagement with regard to safety on the construction?

**Mr Gill:** With the new arrangements we put in place—and we have obviously had a series of learnings from the collapse—we have a high level of confidence that the revised arrangements will result in a successful completion of the bridge.

**MR COE:** What actual changes? What does that mean in real terms in terms of—

**Mr Gill:** In real terms, we have placed in two significant hold points that will increase our level of assurance that the work will be done satisfactorily.

**MR COE:** And what are those two hold points?

**Mr Gill:** As I said, we have an independent review of the design of the false work and an actual inspection, an independent inspection, of the false work as constructed, before any construction work takes place.

**MR COE:** Sorry; I thought you were referring to hold points after construction and throughout.

**Mr Stanhope:** Through the process.

**Mr Gill:** It goes through the process, and when I say “independent” it is independent outside Canberra, from a very credible source.

**MR COE:** Did that go to tender?

**Mr Gill:** We have a panel arrangement with a series of consultants, and we have gone through that.

**MR COE:** Right. So has that contract been published yet or not?

**Mr Gill:** Yes. Roads ACT has a panel contract arrangement.

**MR COE:** Yes, that is right. I know that, but that contract—

**Mr Gill:** It is in place and it is ready to go.

**Mr Stanhope:** We could provide you with the details of the panel.

**MR COE:** So can you say who it is? Can you say who the contractor is?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**Mr Gill:** The company is AECOM. It is a national company that basically has the right level of expertise that we require in this instance.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, if you have got any questions of Canberra Connect, we need to go to that quickly.

**Mr Stanhope:** Surely members want to know about the incredible level of satisfaction that Canberra Connect actually receives from all of its client base.

**THE CHAIR:** I would hope so. Could we have Canberra Connect now, please? Thank you, Mr Gill. Ms Le Couteur ?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I understand Canberra Connect is responsible for the shopfronts. My question is about the Gungahlin shopfront. I understand that the feasibility study should be completed very soon. Can you give us an update on this and when is Gungahlin actually going to have a shopfront?

**Mr Colussi:** As to the first part of your question regarding the feasibility study, yes, that is being undertaken at the moment. That is due to be completed in January. I understand that is on target to be delivered.

With regard to the outcome of that feasibility study, obviously we are not sure what that is at this point in time. We have given a pretty broad scope to the consultants. We have basically said, “This is what Canberra Connect delivers at the moment. This is how we deliver to the Gungahlin community. Can you please review that, specifically having a look at shopfront services for Gungahlin?” We are waiting for the outcome of that feasibility study. In the interim, we have put in a one-line budget bid for the next financial year in the event that the feasibility study comes back and says that that is a viable option for Gungahlin.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Given that we have not got much time, I will go to another question. During budget estimates, I believe there was a discussion on a proposal in the budget to control the demand on calls to Canberra Connect in order to meet the target of 80 per cent of calls in less than 20 seconds. Can you update us on what measures you have taken and how you are meeting the 80 per cent target?

**Mr Colussi:** Essentially the program around that is really improving our turnover and recruitment rates, particularly around contractors. We have put in place a couple of strategies with recruitment companies to get people on board a little quicker. The quicker we can do that, the more people we have in seats, the better we are able to answer the calls that are coming in.

Similarly, we have worked through a number of initiatives with other agencies on a fee-for-service basis. The work that is coming into us is funded through other agencies and we can bring on staff to cater for their needs and the call volumes that are coming in to 132281.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Why are you primarily employing contractors? I had assumed this was an ongoing core business activity.

**Mr Colussi:** It is not primarily contractors. It is primarily permanent officers. The split is about 70 per cent permanent to 30 per cent contractors, and that 30 per cent

really is taking up a lot of work that is coming in from other agencies and that is subject to their discretionary spend with Canberra Connect.

**THE CHAIR:** I note, Chief Minister, the report at page 26 states that, in October 2009, Canberra Connect shopfront service won an ACT Chief Minister's inclusion award for customer service. Is that what you are referring to?

**Mr Stanhope:** I was just referring to the outstanding service that Canberra Connect provides—a timely service and a valuable service—and the level of satisfaction that there is within the community for that service. Canberra Connect is well known for its timeliness and its helpfulness and has a stunning approval rating amongst the people of Canberra as a service that can be relied on.

I think it is relevant that all members understand that and understand the fantastic work that so many public servants do in different environments. There are so many of our organisations and so many of our public servants that bear the brunt of criticism that does not reflect the enormous service, their effort and, indeed, the stunning approval ratings which they receive from the people of Canberra. I think members of this place need to take every opportunity to understand just how valued by the Canberra people services such as Canberra Connect are.

**THE CHAIR:** I notice there has been an upgrading of the online facility. How are the public accepting that? Is that being utilised to a great extent?

**Mr Colussi:** Not very much so, particularly with the initiatives we have brought online for self-service around the fix my street initiative, which you are probably aware of.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Colussi:** And the whole-of-government feedback online as a general concept is very well adopted by the Canberra community. It does not replace other mechanisms like the phone channel or the face-to-face channel, but certainly it is steadily growing. We have a lot of people registering for that system and using that as a method for putting feedback into government.

**THE CHAIR:** We need to finish now. Thank you very much, Mr Colussi.

**Mr Colussi:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** And thank you very much, Mr Byles, for bringing your officials here today. Chief Minister, thank you for your appearance before us today with your officials.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a pleasure. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I now adjourn this hearing. Thank you very much.

**The committee adjourned at 12.30 pm.**