



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2010-2011](#))

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2011

Secretary to the committee:
Ms V Strkalj (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

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.....	1
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Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 9.32 am.

Appearances:

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

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate

Byles, Mr Gary, Director-General

Steward, Ms Fay, Executive Director, Parks and City Services

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Acting Director, Parks and Conservation, Parks and City Services

Flanery, Ms Fleur, Director, City Services, Parks and City Services

Carder, Ms Jane, Manager, Place Management, City Services, Parks and City Services

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, Libraries ACT, Parks and City Services

Elliott, Mr Gordon, Director, Finance, Directorate Services

Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT

Perram, Mr Phillip, Executive Director, Business Enterprise

Ware, Mr Chris, Senior Manager, ACT NOWaste, Business Enterprise

Trushell, Mr Michael, General Manager, Capital Linen Service, Business Enterprise

Horne, Mr Hamish, Manager, Canberra Cemeteries, Business Enterprise

THE CHAIR: Welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services on annual and financial reports 2010-11. I welcome Minister Corbell, Mr Byles and all the other officials who are with us this morning. Obviously you are all very familiar with the privilege card. Could you indicate that you understand the implications and you have been made aware of that.

Mr Corbell: Yes, thank you.

Mr Byles: Yes, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: Minister, would you like to make some opening remarks?

Mr Corbell: No, I do not intend to make an opening statement, but I and officials from my department are happy to try and answer your questions.

THE CHAIR: Before we start, I might just ask if people have questions for Cemeteries.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I do.

THE CHAIR: I did not want the officials to have to sit through the whole process and then find that they, disappointingly, have got no questions. We will have a break for morning tea, probably around 10.45 to 11. We might start with you, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Turning to volume 2, page 5, it is all about risk management. I want to go through some of the risks that you saw here. Risks 2 and 3 are fairly similar—“Rising costs of meeting the demands of a growing city and aging infrastructure” and “Loss or unacceptable deterioration of physical infrastructure within the portfolio”. I quite agree with your identification of the risks. Can you give us some more information about any quantification of the risks and also any information you may have about the timeliness? Do you think this risk is accelerating, increasing—is that the word—getting worse as time goes on? And how are you ameliorating it?

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

Mr Byles: The directorate has quite a mature risk management program in terms of making sure that we have both strategic risks and operational risks clearly identified. The risks identified there on page 5 of volume 2 are but a few of the risks that we consider to be important risks within the directorate.

Ms Le Couteur, in terms of your question about physical infrastructure within the portfolio—I take it that is the specific issue that you would like to talk about—that will remain a challenge in any organisation that has such a diverse range of responsibilities, such as TAMS. You would be aware of the significant amount of infrastructure that TAMS is responsible for, and it is important that we maintain the appropriate focus and priority in addressing infrastructure maintenance and allocate the resources to that end.

Of course, that will always be balanced with priorities within the directorate, but I am confident that our infrastructure and asset management program is appropriate at this stage and that we deal with infrastructure deterioration as a priority as it occurs.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said that you have an appropriate balance. What is the balance between, in effect, maintenance and new works?

Mr Byles: Are you asking for a specific number in terms of new works—a figure or percentage?

MS LE COUTEUR: Whatever is easiest. You talked about maintaining a balance. How do you maintain that, and what is the balance?

Mr Byles: It is a matter of identifying those infrastructure priorities that are required as new works plus getting the appropriate resourcing to maintain existing works and also prepare for the future. I can take your question on notice, if need be, in terms of the definitive figures in terms of the percentage, if need be, or costs. I can take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was just interested in your decision-making process. Every day I walk over footpaths which clearly need maintenance; I am sure we all do. We could all list lots of things in Canberra that could use a bit of maintenance. How do you balance the less exciting maintenance with the new projects?

Mr Byles: That is a matter where government will have priorities that they establish. Then we roll that out as part of our capital works and infrastructure maintenance program. It is also our ability to monitor community perceptions and engage with the community to see what is actually troubling the community. There are several methods through which that occurs, ranging from Chief Minister's talkback right through to community engagement at the local level. And, of course, we maintain a responsive capability within the directorate to deal with issues as they occur.

I would like to think, to use your example of maintenance of footpaths, that we have got a very good footpath maintenance program. Indeed, we allocate a significant amount of funding in the budget to do that as an ongoing program of works. If there is a specific issue you are talking about in terms of infrastructure maintenance, I would be happy to discuss that also.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said that government has priorities. Government clearly has priorities partly based on advice from the department. How are you advising the government about maintenance requirements? You have got three risks here, and risks 2 and 3 are basically around maintenance of physical infrastructure. On the basis of this, I have got to believe that this is very important to you.

Mr Corbell: It is important, Ms Le Couteur, simply because the directorate is the custodian of a large amount of built asset, a large amount of which was inherited at self-government. And a lot has been constructed and given to TAMS as custodians since self-government. The directorate regularly advise me on their assessment as to the adequacy of existing maintenance programs and areas where there are pressures in terms of the upgrade or maintenance of a variety of built assets, whether that is roads or land management functions. There is a range of activities. The directorate are constantly providing me with advice, particularly as we head into the budget process, on their assessments as to their priorities, areas that require more urgent attention than others and areas that are desirable but perhaps of lesser priority. These assessments are made at a directorate level and are fed into the government's thinking as it develops its budget proposals for each financial year.

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Byles, you said that these were only some of the risks identified. Would it be possible to provide the committee with a more complete list of the risks?

Mr Byles: Absolutely. No problem at all, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. We will take that as a question on notice.

Mr Byles: I might just add that the major strategic priority in the directorate remains, and has been since I have been director-general, loss of life—which is unacceptable, of course. That is the significant focus we put on safety within the directorate.

MR COE: On risk management and asset management, how confident are you that you have the complete picture of what was handed over from the federal government?

Mr Byles: It is a work in progress. What the directorate has done most recently is conduct a strategic asset management review in terms of being able to identify clearly

the nature of our assets and being able to target where we need to focus our priorities. That does not mean we do not have a good view now; it just means we want to refine that view. As the minister has said, we have a significant portfolio of assets, some \$8 billion worth. Given the range of assets and the cost of those assets, it is important that we do establish priorities. So to answer your question, Mr Coe, we are confident that the processes we have in place at the moment and those that we are developing are adequate to be able to address the issue.

MR COE: One of the reasons I ask is that this committee is currently looking into a variation regarding a development in Griffith, and one of the evaluations in the proponent's submission is that they really do not know exactly what some of the stormwater capacity is in Griffith, simply because it was done at a time when the documentation was not as good or because the documentation has since gone by the wayside from the department of interior and whatever else. That is understandable. But if you do have these unknown unknowns, how do you plausibly put together a risk management plan if you cannot assess that risk?

Mr Corbell: If you are referring to an assessment made by a development proponent, I do not know on what basis they are making that assessment and what information they have available to them, so I do not know whether that is a reasonable comparison—simply because a development proponent may or may not have the same information base as the directorate and the government have.

MR COE: We have heard in this committee before, especially from Roads ACT, in the inner north in particular, that there are some unknowns with regard to, especially, stormwater.

Mr Corbell: That is a fair comment. Obviously, estates and infrastructure that were constructed 70, 80 or even 90 years ago may not be as well documented as infrastructure that was developed more recently. That is certainly the case.

MR COE: Going on from that, in terms of what the government does control in terms of how it actually provides for that risk, how do you budget for such maintenance or the perceived to actual risk that that infrastructure could fail—if it is, indeed, 70, 80 or 90 years old?

Mr Byles: Again, it is a matter of my executives and me sitting around and making some judgements about what has to be done in terms of infrastructure rollout plus maintenance of existing infrastructure, looking at the funding available and making a judgement on that and providing advice to government. Clearly, in any organisation there is going to be the challenge to determine priorities; it is no different in TAMS. That is a judgement that we hope is made at the executive level and recommended to government for government advice. That is what the aim of the executive is in the directorate—to make those judgements and provide that advice to government.

MR COE: One of the key criteria for assessing performance against the risk and in terms of statutory reporting is through data, and we see a correction to the annual report which was tabled.

Mr Byles: In the roads area?

MR COE: That is right.

Mr Byles: Yes.

MR COE: Can I ask how that happens and what other systems are influenced by that data being incorrect in the first instance.

Mr Byles: It happened because I made a mistake. I did not get it right when I checked, and the figures were wrong. When it was discovered, we corrected it, hopefully well in advance for the report. I do not like to make those mistakes, but it was made, and we corrected it.

MR COE: Whilst it is very noble of you to accept the blame or the responsibility in its entirety, I am guessing that you yourself were not out there measuring how much road sweeping was done. In terms of the systems that are in place, how confident are you that the systems are in place to actually report accurately at each stage of the process?

Mr Byles: It is not a matter of blame, Mr Coe; it is matter of fact that I run the directorate, and anything that goes to the government for advice to the minister is my responsibility. I should have been more on top of that. Secondly, in terms of the processes, I am very confident. That was one mistake in an organisation of 2,000 people with a lot of moving parts. There may be others. I hope not. If there are others, we need to correct those. But again I am confident that our processes to monitor what we do, our accountability indicators, are quite robust.

MR COE: What I am getting at is this. These are KPIs for the report, but there may well be KPIs for other elements of your operations. If the reporting was not accurate at another stage in the process, would that affect your scheduling for the rest of that financial year or would it affect other things?

Mr Corbell: No, it does not. This was a human error in relation to how data was presented. It does not mean that the data itself is inaccurate. It does not mean that the data is not properly recorded and kept. It simply means there was an error in the way it was presented.

MR COE: So it was just an error in reporting, for the purpose of compiling this document, as opposed to an error in the actual compilation of the data?

Mr Corbell: That is right.

Mr Byles: Yes, they were just the wrong figures.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Coe. I will ask a question that comes off the back of these questions about infrastructure. Minister, on page 7 of volume 1, it states that TAMS has managed the largest infrastructure capital works since self-government. I note that on page 16 also it talks about the Belconnen skate park, the John Knight memorial park, the Weston foreshore district park and several community parks, all of which are obviously a great asset to our city and some of which—well, they are all in

my electorate and Mr Coe's electorate as well. So—

DR BOURKE: And mine, too.

THE CHAIR: And yours, too, Dr Bourke. So I am interested in how this investment has been received by the Ginninderra community and what you see flowing from those. We talk about libraries later; so I might ask my library question later, which also relates to capital works.

Mr Corbell: Certainly, these infrastructure upgrades have been very well received by the community. The opening of the new Belconnen skate park, even though it occurred on a pretty shocking late winter day in Canberra, still attracted a very good crowd, and the feedback from the local skating community, young people, has been very positive. That is because the government has engaged with that community in the design and development of the proposal. We are obviously grateful for the assistance that the federal government has provided for that asset as well. That has proven to be a very popular site now for young people.

Equally, the upgrade of the foreshores is a very important improvement to the public realm in that part of Belconnen. We are seeing intensification of residential uses in the Belconnen town centre consistent with the planning strategies for the city. It is important that we have a quality of public realm and public amenity that matches the growing population in that area.

So these investments are all about making sure that as the community and its population continues to grow in that part of the city, we have a level of amenity and facility which meets their demands and expectations. So these improvements, I think, are very important if we are to be successful in our overall objectives about encouraging more people to live and work close to the centres and close to the facilities and amenity that can be provided there.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, you have a question?

DR BOURKE: Yes, I do. Minister, following on from that line of questioning, I was wondering if you could tell us about the Inlet—the Lake Ginninderra development.

Mr Corbell: Yes, I might ask if Mr Byles or someone else can provide some information on that project.

Mr Byles: Thank you, minister. Emu Inlet, of course, is quite an exciting project. Work is still progressing on Emu Inlet. It will be a significant enhancement to the Belconnen foreshore area. Perhaps, Dr Bourke, the question would be better answered by Ms Steward, who manages that area. If it is appropriate, Ms Steward will join us at the table.

Ms Steward: Thank you, minister. On the specifics relating to Emu Inlet, I will defer to the acting director, who can answer detailed questions.

Mr Alegria: In relation to the Emu Inlet upgrade, a series of works are well underway to form the basis of, I guess, what we would call the first stage of works there. That is,

I guess, the engineering-type arrangements, particularly in relation to stormwater, and what we would call the bones of the project. We do have an ongoing program of funding to improve the lake foreshore there. I guess that is going to be something that we have got to budget for in future years.

THE CHAIR: Did you have a question about that?

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a different question.

THE CHAIR: Is there another question on that?

MR COE: Yes, on the foreshore. A fair bit of the money from that project has been rolled over from different years. I think the scope of that project changed a fair bit, especially in the first year or two. I was wondering, compared to what was actually originally planned for for stage 1, what the plan is for later stages. What are we actually getting now?

Mr Alegria: My understanding is that the intent of the original project has been fulfilled in terms of creating a useable public space and also improving water quality through the stormwater arrangements in that area. The second stage is more about, I guess, building on that in terms of landscaping, lighting and those kind of aesthetic matters.

Ms Steward: There are two aspects to that whole project: stormwater management and water quality within the lake itself as well as improvements to the public domain. This has been a complex project by virtue of the fact that understanding the dynamics of water quality and stormwater movement is not a pure science. There are certainly a lot of costs associated with the preferred option. We wanted to make sure that the design absolutely was fit for purpose in terms of achieving those objectives relating to stormwater management.

There were some engineering aspects, I suppose, of the design that needed to be revisited, and those are some of the reasons why there were some delays. But because of the importance of the project, it was considered absolutely essential that we got it right. It was exacerbated in terms of the delays, too, because of the heavy rainfall during that period. But we are confident that the intent of the project will be achieved as was envisaged by the government.

MR COE: Do you see any rollovers occurring from this financial year to subsequent financial years?

Ms Steward: At this stage, no. It would have to be major storm events that would effectively delay any of our capital works projects, but it certainly has not been put on my radar at this point in time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Continuing on volume 2, moving to page 9, there is an intriguing sentence here in the first paragraph:

... value of assets recognised for the first time relating to land under roads.

Is this signalling a significant change that we are now putting these assets, the value of land, under roads? Am I reading—

Mr Corbell: Mr Elliott will answer that question.

Mr Elliott: In answer to your question, it relates to when the directorate takes on new assets, usually from the Economic Development Directorate, in regard to the land release program. As new suburbs are developed, these are assets that we bring onto our books.

MS LE COUTEUR: Basically, “the first time” only refers to the first time for a particular road. It is not a change in policy.

Mr Elliott: That is right. It is the initial recognition of those new assets.

MS LE COUTEUR: What we are having here is effectively what could be regarded as a capital injection. It is not actual money; it is an accounting entry.

Mr Elliott: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is this all part of the own-source revenue; am I correct?

Mr Elliott: Yes, that is right. That is the accounting treatment.

MS LE COUTEUR: That does not make total sense to me. Your graph on page 7 compares cost of services versus own-source revenue. But from what you are telling us, own-source revenue is, to a large extent, capital. You have just been given the custodianship, ownership, from an ACT point of view, of a significant degree of capital. You also talked about asset transfers from the LDA. Why are you putting in this graph? The green, presumably, is largely expenses. Why are we putting capital in as income against it?

Mr Elliott: Just to answer that question—

MS LE COUTEUR: As a net cost of services.

Mr Elliott: Yes, to answer that question, it is an accounting treatment, but also the way that the budget papers are published. Those revenues are included as other gains. It is an accounting treatment. It is actually included in the directorate’s total revenues.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have somewhere a breakdown that actually looks at recurrent expenditure rather than capital so that we actually see a capital budget and an operating budget, because this is sort of confusing?

Mr Elliott: Yes, when we move to the profit and loss statement, we can actually show what the operating costs and revenues are. We do have a separate capital works budget from these as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

MR COE: While we are on financials, with regard to the Majura parkway, which I understand has been committed to by both the federal and the territory governments, when do we expect to see work commence? Also, from a financial point of view, in effect, who is actually going to paying the bills for that project? Is it going to be jointly managed by TAMS and a federal agency or will it be wholly done within the territory?

Mr Corbell: I will ask Mr Gill if he could come to the table, please. In terms of commencement, the project is proceeding. As you may be aware, Mr Coe, currently the territory is out to tender for detailed design of the road. That is the final design construction drawings for the road. That process is currently underway. The government would expect to proceed with the letting of tenders for construction in the second half of next year, with those to be awarded and then construction to commence towards the end of next year. But Mr Peters or Mr Gill can provide you with some further information on the exact time frames.

Mr Gill: At this point in time, the current program is for us to undertake the detailed design and documentation of the road over the next eight months. We are just about to let that contract. It has been tendered and it is being evaluated at the moment. We are working towards a program that would see the construction program going out to tender in April 2012, for a construction contract to be let by August 2012 and for the construction program to be completed by June 2016.

In relation to the administration of the funding, it is a fifty-fifty financial contribution between the federal government and the ACT government spread over five years. The funding in the current year, 2011-12, is federal funding. That will enable the detailed design and documentation to be progressed. The funding for the first two years of the construction program is funding from the territory. Then the federal government contributes a funding share and that will complete the project. But the project as a whole is being seen as one project being managed by the territory on behalf of the commonwealth with a joint responsibility in terms of steering the project.

MR COE: In terms of the financial risks, does that mean that after we have got through the first two years there is no further financial risk to the territory?

Mr Gill: The financial risk to the territory has been managed by undertaking quite extensive planning for the project, identifying and making allowances as part of the project cost estimate—allowance for, say, the time frame of the project over a five-year period, the risks associated with the project in terms of the actual quantities that will be associated with construction activity and the sort of unknown risks that can eventuate with delivery of a project. There is a reasonable contingency allowed as part of the project development. The financial risk to the territory based on the current situation is low.

MR COE: So is each stage and each expense in effect split fifty-fifty, or is the territory going to take on some aspects in their entirety and the federal government will take on some aspects in their entirety?

Mr Gill: It is a shared funding arrangement. It is a shared management responsibility. While the territory will have carriage of the actual management on a day-to-day basis,

the commonwealth will be involved through a steering or governance process. For instance, a stage is not being developed by federal funding and a stage is not being delivered by territory funding. It is being seen as one funding source that can deliver the overall project.

MR COE: So how does that tie into what you said earlier about the first couple of years—

Mr Gill: That is just the source of where the funding is coming from. But in terms of how it is being managed, there are two sources of funding—the ACT government and the federal government.

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Gill: But that is going into one bucket which is being then managed by the territory on behalf of the commonwealth.

MR COE: Sure. So in terms of \$100 million that is coming from the federal government, we are likely to see that come through the ACT books in, what—2013-14, in the first instance?

Mr Gill: In three years; over a three-year period.

MR COE: Sure.

Mr Gill: As is the case with all federal programs, it comes through the territory books and we manage it on their behalf.

MR COE: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. While you are here, I note that on page 12, minister, of volume 1, there is reference to undertaking a program for making sure that our commercial routes are up to grade with the load bearing capacity for road safety, some bridge strengthening and installation of additional bridge safety screens, which I have observed around my electorate. I was wondering if you could fill us in about how that is going.

Mr Corbell: In relation to bridge strengthening projects, it is obviously part of upgrades to meet the relevant Australian standards for freight routes, given the increase in the weight of vehicles that are operating on those freight routes. Mr Gill could probably provide you with some more information on that.

In relation to the bridge screening, bridge screening is being put in place at selected locations based on a risk assessment to help deter or prevent rock throwing activity, basically, or the throwing of projectiles from bridges that have the potential to cause serious harm to motorists and other road users.

Regrettably, we do see this behaviour in the territory. It is potentially a lethal action that people take when they behave with that sort of reckless behaviour. So regrettably we have had to put in place safety screens on a number of bridges across major roads

in the territory. That has been done on the basis of a risk assessment, recognising the potential both for pedestrian access to those bridges and for the volume and speed of traffic that passes beneath.

Currently, there are works underway, for example, on Adelaide Avenue and on the Kent Street bridge. There has been work undertaken on a number of other bridges around the territory as well. There may be a number of other projects underway that I have not mentioned, but I must ask Mr Gill if he can speak about those two issues.

Mr Gill: In relation to the question, I will answer it in parts. The bridge strengthening program is an ongoing program of strengthening bridge structures across the territory. Most of the bridges in the territory, say, 70 per cent of bridges basically, have been built prior to the 1970s, so it is an ageing infrastructure from that point of view. At the same time, the freight carrying capacity of new vehicles has increased substantially. So on certain routes there is a need to upgrade bridges on an ongoing basis.

This program is jointly funded by the federal and the ACT governments on a dollar-for-dollar contribution. So we have been able to make some good progress on that in recent years. One of our key accountability measures is the number of bridges that meet a particular standard, and if members might note, that has been hitting the target for the last few years with the additional funding.

In relation to the bridge safety program, this is a policy the ACT government adopted about four years ago now, and subsequent funding has been provided to mitigate the risk of people throwing missiles, stones, unfortunately, on to passing vehicles. The minister has touched on the fact that it does happen in the ACT. A recent example happened on Parkes Way not too long ago where what seems to be a lump of clay or concrete was thrown from one of the bridges on Parkes Way on to a vehicle passing early in the morning. Fortunately, the person was not seriously injured, but the risk is high. So it is very much a risk-based approach.

The minister touched on work on Adelaide Avenue. There is also work on Carruthers Street that has occurred. We have just let the contract for a similar bridge safety screen on Chandler Street in Belconnen near the community bus interchange where, again, unfortunately, there have been some instances of people throwing missiles at passing buses. Apart from just the sheer shock of being in a bus and being hit by a stone, we are doing what we can to minimise that risk.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur, you had a follow-on question.

MS LE COUTEUR: I had a follow-on question on the own-source funding. You were getting increased revenue from the acceptance of contaminated remediation material. Is that a profitable enterprise?

Mr Corbell: I am not sure whether it is profitable. I think it covers our costs; I think that would be the answer. Perhaps someone can assist with that. Contaminated soil is, generally speaking, soil from contaminated sites, whether they are hydrocarbon pollution, service stations, or whether they are asbestos contamination. They are the two general areas.

Mr Ware: Sorry, could you repeat the question?

MS LE COUTEUR: You have got \$3.5 million as an increase in revenue for acceptance of contaminated remediation material. My question was: is this a profitable enterprise?

Mr Ware: It is not a question of profitability; it is a question of what the polluter has to pay for the disposal of those wastes into an appropriate acceptance facility.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said it is not a question of whether it is profitable. Are you implying that, in fact, the territory is making a loss on doing this?

Mr Ware: No, certainly not, but, obviously, the fee charged for the acceptance of those materials is not the fee that we charge for the acceptance of general waste, which is presently over \$120 per tonne. These materials are typically \$66 a tonne. So it is certainly not the full cost that we could be charging, but it recognises some of the disposal and future ongoing management costs that would have to be reflected in that charge.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am still not totally clear. Are we managing to achieve cost recovery? It sounded a bit like we are not, but I am not quite clear on that.

Mr Ware: It is generally cost recovery, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe.

MR COE: Yes, on waste. We have seen a fairly serious fire at Parkwood this year, but before I go into the fire itself, the business model that was being implemented by at least one operator, if not more, out at Parkwood, and perhaps elsewhere in the ACT, was that they received financial payments for the acceptance of certain recyclables, and then the cost to that business, the actual service—the value adding that they did—was in terms of the processing of those recyclables. So there was a financial incentive to take on as much waste as possible and a financial disincentive to process that waste. To that end, we saw some businesses get into some cash flow problems and some huge stockpiles were created that went on to be a considerable fire risk that burnt for a couple of days. With that in mind, is the territory still going to be offering the same business model to future tenants at Parkwood and other recycling estates, or are we going to move to a KPI of actual recyclables rather than just receiving?

Mr Corbell: It is not the territory's job to specify a business model for a private business. These are privately operated businesses, and they have to make their own assessments about the viability of their business models. What the territory does is it issues licences or short-term leases—I think they are properly characterised as licences—to occupy this land for the purposes of conducting their businesses. The key issue from the territory's perspective is to ensure that we do not see stockpiling which either occurs in such a manner as to prevent the business from properly running a recycling activity—that is, it just becomes a de facto landfill—or that they stockpile in such a way as to present some sort of safety risk, either to employees or to others.

To that end, the territory is currently revising its policy in relation to the conditions that it attaches to the issue of licences for these locations—both licences granted by NOWaste and licences granted through ACT Property Group—so as to ensure that we do not see inappropriate levels of stockpiling. That stockpiling is of concern to the territory where we see businesses that do not have a good business model basically just seeing more and more material dumped on their sites with no viable means of moving it through some sort of reuse or recycling program. What the territory anticipates doing is establishing new conditions in licences that have limits on the amount of material that can be stockpiled at any one time. This will provide an incentive to those who are looking at taking up these licences to make sure that they have a business model that is able to move materials through in a timely manner and stay within the stockpile limits.

But in terms of the actual business model, that is really a matter for the individual businesses. The payments they receive, of course, are payments from private entities, from other entities, who are wishing to dispose of particular wastes for recycling, not from the territory.

MR COE: So the licence agreement which these traders are operating under does not make any reference to their business model or to where they will receive income?

Mr Corbell: Not that I am aware of, Mr Coe. The purpose of the licence agreement is basically about the manner in which they are permitted to use the land. Those are fairly general clauses, I understand. Currently they do not establish maximum stockpile sizes. Instead, there are simply requirements, for example, for the licensee to abide by all the relevant territory legislation, including, for example, the relevant directions and requirements of emergency services in relation to fire management. But we are, as I have indicated, developing a new licence template which will govern the size of stockpiles. We expect the first of these will be issued in 2012 as existing licence terms come to a conclusion.

MR COE: I might segue to the fire which occurred recently. I put questions on this topic at estimates last year, and I explicitly said that I was concerned about fire at the site. Of course, that is exactly what has occurred. I asked whether all operators out at Parkwood are treated the same way in terms of the standards they have to keep, especially with regard to fuel issues from a fire point of view. The reason I asked this is the then Chief Minister said that they have received advice from a fire risk perspective. I put a question on notice in addition, after not being satisfied with that exchange, and what came back from Mr Stanhope, the then minister, was that ESA and ACT Property Group discussed that a thorough risk management plan of the entire Parkwood site should be conducted. That was last year. That was well before the fire actually taking place. Was a thorough risk management plan of the entire Parkwood site conducted?

Mr Corbell: I am advised that the Emergency Services Agency undertook through the ACT Fire Brigade a comprehensive assessment of fire risk for the estate and took appropriate action as and when required. Parkwood estate has been on the radar of the emergency services for a number of years now, in fact, dating back to, if I recall correctly, around 2007 or 2008 when the Fire Brigade first started to make closer

assessments of the materials being stored at the estate.

The initial concern of the Fire Brigade at that time was in relation to a very large tyre stockpile that had accumulated on the site. Obviously, members would be familiar with the risks from fire from a tyre stockpile. They can burn for an extended period of time. They can create a range of noxious fumes that need to be managed and so on. Initially, the ESA took steps to require the remediation and significant reduction in the size of that tyre stockpile, and that tyre stockpile, I understand, was subsequently completely removed from the site.

In relation to Nowaste Wood Busters, this, first of all, is a private company. It has no connection to the ACT government; it is not owned or operated in any way by the ACT government. The Fire Brigade undertook an assessment of Parkwood and identified some concerns in relation to some areas at Parkwood, but I am advised—and I think I have already provided this advice to you, Mr Coe—that the Fire Brigade was satisfied with the steps being taken to manage the size of the stockpile from a fire safety perspective at Nowaste Wood Busters.

Obviously, if a large pile of timber catches alight, it is a fire problem, but the Fire Brigade were satisfied that appropriate mitigation strategies were in place to manage any such occurrence, and that was, indeed, what occurred when the fire subsequently occurred at that site—the mitigation strategies that were in place were deemed by the Fire Brigade to be effective in dealing with the situation.

THE CHAIR: We might ask further questions about the emergency services when the minister appears before us in that capacity.

MR COE: I certainly will ask them then as well. But I hear second and thirdhand that the questions on notice and the FOI requests that I submit cause some work for the directorate. I know considerable work goes into the responses. When you get a considered response from the directorate signed by the minister which says that a thorough risk management plan of the entire Parkwood site should be conducted, I know that considerable thought has gone into it. To that end, was a thorough risk management plan actually conducted?

Mr Corbell: My understanding is a thorough risk assessment occurred through the ACT Fire Brigade.

MR COE: There is a difference between a risk assessment and a risk management plan. A risk management plan is how you are going to treat it, how you are going to respond. An assessment is what brings about the need for the plan.

Mr Corbell: The assessment concluded that certain steps should be taken in relation to the management of stockpiles, and those steps were taken by the Fire Brigade. Appropriate advice and, where necessary, direction was given to licence holders as to what steps they were required to take. My understanding is the Fire Brigade has powers under the Emergencies Act in relation to requiring any occupier of land in the territory to take certain steps to mitigate risks where they believe those risks are not being appropriately managed, and the Fire Brigade took the decision as to what steps needed to be taken in this instance.

MR COE: The fact that you are consciously avoiding saying—

Mr Corbell: I am not consciously avoiding it. I think you are just being—

MR COE: You are not saying “risk management plan”. A risk management plan was not conducted, was it?

Mr Corbell: I think you are just missing the nuance of how this process operates, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Well, was a risk management plan conducted or not?

Mr Corbell: A thorough risk assessment was undertaken.

MR COE: That is my point.

Mr Corbell: Steps were taken by the Fire Brigade as a result.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, if you want to ask any more questions about the emergency services, we are not going to ask them now; we are going to ask them—

Mr Corbell: We need to make clear that this is not an area of land that the territory has complete control over. We do not—

MR COE: So why did you say “entire site”?

Mr Corbell: And so the government—

MR COE: Why, “the entire Parkwood site should be conducted”?

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, may I remind you not to speak over the minister.

Mr Corbell: Every licence holder or every leaseholder has responsibilities under the law to manage their site in accordance with the law. Territory authorities have powers and responsibilities to require certain things to be done if they are concerned that things are not being done in accordance with a licensee’s obligations under the law. And that is what happened in this case. I can see no fault whatsoever in the steps taken by territory authorities to deal with the risks on the site. The Fire Brigade were well aware of the need to focus on the area. They did focus on the area. They made sure that licensees were reminded of their obligations. Notices were sent out by Property Group to licensees reminding them of their obligations on numerous occasions. And steps were taken by the Fire Brigade as and where appropriate to make sure that licensees were managing their sites properly.

It is not for the government to impose a plan on a whole series of individual licence holders who have their own legal responsibilities under the law. That is a matter for those licence holders and it is a matter for the territory authorities to make sure that those licence holders are abiding by their obligations. That is exactly what occurred. And the fire that occurred at Parkwood, whilst regrettable, did not occur in a manner

which had not been anticipated by the Fire Brigade, nor did it occur in a manner that presented any risk, because of the steps that had already been put in place as a result of the Fire Brigade's inspections.

MR COE: In which case why did the minister sign off the entire Parkwood site?

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, may I remind you that we are going to ask questions about this at a later stage. I have a question about NOWaste, minister. On page 31 of volume 1, it talks about the information and education provided to organisations, people and individuals in the community to increase recycling and to ensure that services are used correctly. Apart from the TAMS website, which is mentioned on page 31, what other forms of education and information are disseminated? Also, off the back of that, what kind of education and information did you disseminate over the bulky waste trial that we are doing? I know that you answered a question from me in the Assembly about the bulky waste, but if there is any more information we could have about that, I would be grateful.

Mr Corbell: Sure. I might ask Mr Ware if he can provide some information on education and information programs generally for NOWaste.

Mr Ware: The education that we undertake, as well as on our website, is generally face to face with community groups, school groups and the business community—anyone who wants to come to us, basically. We run tours of the material recovery facility at Hume and also of the landfill at Mugga Lane. I know that certain members of the panel have been through those and have found them quite interesting and informative.

We undertake a lot of face-to-face education, as I said, because we find that that is the best way to get the message across, the whole message, to members of the community. That is generally focused around how to use their recycling bins at home more effectively, what to put in and what not to put in—and that is probably the most appropriate or the most crucial point, what not to put in their recycling bin—and also what people are putting into their waste bin that should not be going in there that can be put into their recycling bin. That, of course, lowers the contamination rates of both bins and drives up the recycling rates.

Mr Corbell: In relation to the bulky waste collection service, Ms Porter, just over 1,000 pick-ups have occurred over the winter period. We are getting a very good level of feedback from the residents who are taking advantage of this service. Overwhelmingly, they are pensioners, older people, who do not have the ability to move large bulky items out of their homes and take them to the tip themselves. These materials are being collected free of charge for those residents, and the feedback has been very positive.

The information is going out both through ACT government shopfronts and through libraries. The material is available there, obviously the online information. Also, Tiny's Green Shed, who is the service provider, who has the contract on behalf of the government to do this work, is promoting it through his network. Obviously, the more people who use it, the more people will know about it and get the message out to others. We are certainly anticipating that there will be continued uptake in its use,

particularly during spring.

THE CHAIR: There will be a review of the trial, obviously. What do you anticipate might be—

Mr Corbell: At the end of this financial year, the government will make an assessment as to how effective it has been, how many households have taken advantage of it, and make some decisions about ongoing provision of this service after that.

THE CHAIR: I was also interested in, going back to the education program, the students that are coming through the facility and your targeting. Are you targeting primary school children or is it high school and college young people as well? Do you actually go and seek the students to come out or do you wait for the schools to approach you?

Mr Ware: We use a range of strategies. We tend to find that mostly primary school students come out. High school students also come out if they are studying geography, if the school is in the sustainable schools program or if they are studying sustainability. But we market ourselves to them. Often we get repeat visits from schools who know of us. So it really is a range and a mix of approaches that are used.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have some questions on waste, Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I have a few waste questions. Mr Ware, you mentioned that you are doing education for people who come to you. Are you doing anything to engage the majority of the Canberra population who are not actively coming to you?

Mr Ware: Thank you for that question; it is a very good one. Not only do we rely on people coming to us but we have started an outreach program to schools who, either through economics or through time, cannot come to us, so we go out to them. We find that in a three-hour period we can usually educate the whole school, every class in the school, depending obviously on how many classes there are. We tend to find that that is good time management for the school, although we do find that it is a better experience for the students to come to us because they get to see the landfill and the materials recovery facility in operation. We have also started going out to community fairs. Only two weeks ago we were at the Canberra Home and Leisure Show, where we contacted over 700 people face to face for varying amounts of time.

Mr Corbell: It is important to stress, too, the school visits have the added benefit of getting messages back into those children's homes. It is a very effective way, we find, to get information not just to the kids but to their parents and carers, because the kids will come home and talk about what they have learned and they will often have materials as well that they bring home. So it is a very effective way of encouraging better practices. There is nothing like being shamed into recycling something that you did not think could be recycled by your 10-year-old. Those are the sorts of steps that prove to be very effective.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have some more questions about waste and waste statistics. If you go to volume 2, page 112, we have the percentage of material recovered from the

total waste stream. The original target figure was revised down as per the footnote to the budget paper, No 473, and we talked about it in the estimates hearing. It is reported here as an unqualified 75 per cent, but that is not what it was in the budget paper, I think. What was it revised down to? Was it revised down and up again? We had a whole discussion about this at estimates, if you remember.

Mr Ware: The figure in the budget papers unfortunately was incorrect. While a graph on another page—I forget exactly which page it was in the budget papers—showed a higher figure, unfortunately the number in the table was incorrect and it should have been 75 per cent.

MS LE COUTEUR: So from your point of view the figure always should have been 75 per cent; it was just a typo in the budget figures?

Mr Ware: That is my recollection, yes.

Mr Corbell: I think that was identified in advice to the estimates committee at the time.

MS LE COUTEUR: We got seriously—

Mr Corbell: That advice was provided to the estimates committee at the time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you explain how the actual results increased by six per cent relative to the estimated outcome in the budget papers in the six weeks between the end of the estimates period and the end of the financial year? There was this big difference.

Mr Ware: Could you repeat the question?

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you explain why the actual result figure increased by six per cent relative to the revised estimated outcome in the six weeks between estimates and the end of the financial year? You have figures from budget paper No 4, page 73, and figures from this. We are seriously confused about what is happening with the statistics.

Mr Perram: It may be best, minister, to come back on this, because we are dealing with advice that we had given to the estimates committee, which I am sure, as you correctly said, relates to two reports within the budget documents, one of which was corrected at that time. I think that this is the lower number here that we are talking about, 69 per cent, that should have been recorded as 75 per cent. So let us come back to you and clarify that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay; you will get back to us. I can give you my questions in writing, if that would make it easier in terms of getting back. I have another waste question; I think it is on page 121 of volume 2. You have the statistics for actual waste reduction, and your organics for last year was “N/A” and this year it is quite a large figure. So you have demonstrated in your own operation that you can increase organic recycling. What are you going to be doing to take those learnings out to the rest of the community?

Mr Ware: Your question relates to the processing of organic waste; is that correct?

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sorry, I have lost the particular piece of paper that has the number.

THE CHAIR: They might have to take that one on notice, Ms Le Couteur, if you cannot find the particular reference.

MS LE COUTEUR: If you give me a minute, I can find it. It is page 118 of volume 1. You have got your own ESD figures; as I said, it is listed as L25. Last year you had “N/A” for the organic waste recycled. This year you have got 244,608—I think it is litres. So you have managed to make a considerable improvement, which is really great. My question is: given you have demonstrated that you can make improvements, what are you doing to push that message out to the rest of Canberra?

Mr Ware: Those figures that you are referring to on page 118, and obviously 117, relate to the resource use at Macarthur House and the materials recovered.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I am absolutely aware of that.

Mr Ware: Those figures of 224,000 kilograms are as a result of the ACTSmart office and business program. I do not administer that program or have any involvement in the management of that program within Macarthur House.

MS LE COUTEUR: So what you are saying is that ACT NOWaste is doing no work to increase organic recycling. That is what my question was. I just used this as a nice, positive example that you can do it. So you are saying that you are not working on that at all?

Mr Corbell: To clarify, Ms Le Couteur, as you would appreciate, NOWaste is responsible for general waste management for the city as a whole, centralised collection, disposal or recycling at Mugga or, to a much lesser degree, west Belconnen. At the moment, as you would be aware, we do not have a government administered organic waste collection or recycling capability. That is something which is, however, being addressed in terms of the ACT government’s own operations within, for example, its office complexes through the ACTSmart program. You would be familiar with the ACTSmart program, which is operated by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, and which is, in fact, operating here as well in the Assembly. That does have an organic recycling component, and that organic waste is collected and disposed of via a private contract with private organic waste operators—worm farms, essentially. So that is where that material goes.

A decision as to whether or not NOWaste will provide an organic service and in what form is contingent on decisions the government makes as it completes its waste strategy. You would be familiar with the options outlined in the waste strategy and the issues that are being considered there.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you, minister. What is happening with public place

recycling? You had a very small trial in Civic of one bin which had some yellow signs on it. Can you tell us what is happening, firstly, in Civic and, secondly, for the rest of Canberra?

Mr Corbell: That is done by Parks and City Services.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sorry; I saw this as a waste question.

Mr Corbell: No, it is not administered by NOWaste. Obviously it is delivered by Territory and Municipal Services. As you would be aware, the government announced in the budget a decision to roll out a trial of public place recycling in Civic. I think there are 30-odd bins—37; thank you, Mr Byles—across the city, so within Civic. Those are currently in the process of being prepared to be installed based on the prototype bin which was placed in Civic for some feedback from users and others. I know you made a comment on that as well, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, it was almost unnoticeable. Are you going to be changing the design so it will be a bit more prominent? One of my staff goes past there every day and it actually took a month before she noticed it. I do not think it was that she was not paying any attention; it was very discrete.

Mr Corbell: Maybe she is just not that attentive. I understand that, as a result of feedback, the signage has been modified—

MS LE COUTEUR: Good.

Mr Corbell: in relation to these bins. The signs will be A3 in size and yellow in colour, with black lettering. So they are very much able to stand out very clearly. We expect that this initiative will divert about 12 tonnes of waste from landfill. We will collect data over a six-month period following their installation late this year to determine the levels of recyclable material collected and the levels of contamination and so on to make an assessment as to the efficacy of the project.

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked about rolling it out at other shopping precincts. What will be the criterion for that and the criteria for long-term continuation?

Mr Corbell: Decisions about any further expansion will depend on the outcomes of the trial.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned the figure of 12 tonnes being diverted—over what period?

Mr Corbell: That is an extrapolation based on the amount of sample recyclable material taken from the prototype bin during its trial. During the trial period we found that 95 per cent of the waste deposited in the prototype bin was recyclable—that is, people were good at only putting recyclables in.

MR COE: Can I ask why it is such a big deal? How hard is it to put yellow bins out?

MS LE COUTEUR: Every other city does it.

MR COE: Why do we need to have a trial to have an additional 37 recycling bins around the city when we have already probably got 70,000 or 80,000 of them in the suburbs?

Mr Corbell: The types of bins you put in the city are not the same as the types of bins you have on your kerbside, Mr Coe. They need to be built to an appropriate standard. They are a form of street furniture. They need, obviously, to be more resistant to vandalism and other undesirable activities like that. They need to be put in permanent locations and they need to be put in places where they are easily accessible for collection and reuse.

Obviously, too, the expansion of recycling will see considerable costs in terms of the vehicles and people hours needed to empty the bins and take the waste to be recycled. There is a significant cost associated with this exercise. Thirty-seven bins cost us \$165,000 to purchase and install and \$80,000 per annum to service—just for 37 bins. As you can appreciate, there is a significant cost associated with this, particularly if you have a larger scale rollout. We really have to make some assessments about the efficacy of the expenditure versus a return.

When it comes to a waste strategy, the focus should be on getting the greatest gain in terms of recyclables at the lowest cost. I guess, from the government's perspective, the trial will allow us to assess whether the investment that we put into public place recycling is worth it in terms of the amount of waste we actually divert from landfill and the cost, versus other recycling activities that we might otherwise invest in. To make—

MR COE: It is not really that hard, is it?

Mr Corbell: Well—

MR COE: Let's be honest. How hard can it be—

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe—

MR COE: given you already collect tens of thousands of bins, to collect an extra 37?

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, can you let the minister finish answering the question, please?

MR COE: He did.

Mr Corbell: Yes, I did. I will take that as a comment, Madam Chair.

MR COE: In 2003 this government put out a brochure saying that it was going to establish public place recycling. This is 2003. Eight years have passed and we have got 37 bins on a trial. Really, is it not an embarrassment that you cannot even get 37 bins up in operation in eight years?

Mr Corbell: The government has made a deliberate policy decision that it is not going to pursue public place recycling. The reason for that is that it is not the most

cost-efficient way of recycling. In terms of taxpayers' resources, there are more cost-efficient and greater yielding activities that should be pursued.

MR COE: Well, why are we doing it now then?

MS LE COUTEUR: Because it was part of the Labor-Greens agreement. That is why they are doing it.

Mr Corbell: However, other parties are stressing to us the desirability of trialling it and we are prepared to trial it. But we will use—

MR COE: There are plenty of other things in the agreement that you have ignored. Why would you do something that is blatantly not in the financial best interests of the ACT, as you have just said?

Mr Corbell: Mr Coe, unlike you, we try to take a constructive and considered approach to these matters.

MR COE: Thirty-seven bins in eight years.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Coe. Dr Bourke, you had a question.

DR BOURKE: About waste?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

DR BOURKE: Good. Could you tell me more about the engagement with small business?

Mr Corbell: Engagement with small business, Dr Bourke, occurs largely through the ACTSmart program, which is administered by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate—so not in this directorate—but we do undertake a wide range of activities in providing businesses with the skills, information and advice on the type of infrastructure they need to improve their recycling in their business, large or small.

ACTSmart is proving to be very successful. It is rolling out across a large number of businesses now, both small businesses and large businesses. That is something which we will be continuing to pursue. We are also, in ACT NOWaste, financing an industry development officer, whose job it is to engage with prospective new businesses in the resource recovery space to identify opportunities and identify obstacles that need to be addressed to allow those resource recovery businesses to pursue their activities and to create new economic opportunities here in the ACT and new ways of improving resource recovery. That is proving to be a very valuable resource as well.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Getting back to the public place recycling trial, have you looked at a number of different models in terms of the collection? There are two obvious ones that come to mind—that is, getting TAMS or, conversely, as TAMS basically is not

working as a rubbish collector in that space because it is commercial, a commercial contractor. Did you look at both of those options or, in fact, even additional options?

Mr Corbell: You are not correct, Ms Le Couteur. The government does collect waste from public places. That is our job, and we have vehicles and people employed to do that job.

MS LE COUTEUR: You did not look at any alternatives? The \$80,000 is an additional cost?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: How did you work out that it is \$80,000? Maybe you will have to take this on notice. How did you work out that it is an additional \$80,000, given you say you are using the same vehicles and staff who are going to the same places? All the recycling bins are next to non-recycling bins.

Mr Corbell: I will ask Jane Carder to assist you with that.

Ms Carder: We are responsible for collecting the litter within the city centre. We have got one truck that does the collection of just normal rubbish from the garbage bins. We need another truck to actually collect the recyclables. We have been doing recycling within Glebe Park for a number of years. That was an earlier trial. It cost about \$12,000 a year just to empty the bins within that precinct. That is because you need a separate provider and you need a specially designed truck. You cannot be driving across the pavements or into parks with the big compactor trucks that collect rubbish from your streets—your normal residential recycling. It is a specifically designed truck with a smaller capacity and lighter weight to access these areas. In doing so, it is an additional cost. We do not use the same truck. We do not have the split bins on them. We have just purchased two new garbage trucks that do the normal waste collection service. We need to go to an outside provider to deliver that other service.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that you had to purchase more trucks from an outside provider, did you look at totally going to an outside provider—outsourcing this to one of the commercial firms who are collecting recyclables within the city centre?

Ms Carder: We are looking at doing that for the recyclables. With the garbage collection trucks, we actually remove garbage from sportsgrounds. We remove it from the smaller parks. These are not normal rubbish trucks. Having a contractor driving around from one sportsground to the next is a lot of miles between garbage bins and it is not a very cost-effective way of doing it because of the size of the truck. You need to have that smaller capacity truck to enter into our parks as well. You need a special provider to do that. You cannot really just tag it on to the normal street service garbage collection.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the Civic public place is being tagged on to the sportsgrounds and lots of other places as well. Am I correct in understanding what you are saying?

Ms Carder: No. In relation to the sportsgrounds, we do not have recycling anywhere else other than in the city precinct, where we are starting that trial, and in Glebe Park. All the rest is just garbage collection services and we have to have two different trucks—one for recycling and one for garbage collection. Is that what you mean?

MS LE COUTEUR: Well, that is what I thought, but then I thought you were saying—

Mr Corbell: I think the question is: are you contracting out the recycling collection service in Civic or are you doing it in-house?

Ms Carder: We are looking at both options. We did the trial with the prototype bin. We did that in-house. It was not really worth contracting that out.

MS LE COUTEUR: No.

Ms Carder: We also want to make sure that we are collecting the amount of data on recyclables. We are just weighing up the opportunities of contracting out versus doing it in-house. If we did it in-house we would have to put the staff on overtime because they are so busy collecting the rubbish from the other runs. They would have to go and empty the truck once they have done their normal rubbish collection and then come back, get the recyclables, do a separate run and take them over to the tip face to the recyclable area. We cannot deliver in-house doing one single run because we do not have a split compactor truck. It would not be cost-effective to have a split compactor truck. You would not fit very many bins into it because they are such small trucks. They are nine-cubic-metre trucks.

MR COE: How much is this aspect of the Labor-Greens agreement going to cost all up?

Mr Corbell: I have just given you those figures—\$165,000 in capital, \$80,000 in recurrent expenditure for the trial.

MR COE: Why has it got a \$1 million trial?

Mr Corbell: That is over a period of time, is it not? Is that correct?

Ms Carder: A \$1 million trial?

Mr Corbell: I am not quite sure what you are referring to, Mr Coe.

MR COE: I believe there is mention on your website of there being a \$1 million trial. Is that correct?

Mr Corbell: I do not know.

THE CHAIR: Could we take that on notice?

Mr Corbell: Are you referring to the bulky waste collection, Mr Coe?

MR COE: Sorry, I am talking about that.

THE CHAIR: So we are not talking—

MR COE: Sorry, I was confused with that \$1 million. But if we go and extend it beyond an actual trial and we do actually go to a situation whereby we are going to procure a truck or outsource it, what is the ongoing yearly fee going to be, the yearly cost?

Mr Corbell: That cost has not yet been determined. It would depend on the scope of any expanded program, for example, how many bins, how many locations and so on. But none of that is under consideration at this point in time. The government is simply focusing on the delivery of the trial in Civic.

MS LE COUTEUR: At page 20 of volume 1, you talk about the trolleys. I keep losing which paragraph it is. You say that following the implementation of the Litter (Shopping Trolley) Amendment Act, you have commenced work in supermarkets. How many supermarkets actually comply with the labelling, and what are you doing to try to improve work in terms of getting rid of abandoned trolleys? I continually get emails from people about abandoned trolleys. I am afraid the feedback I am getting is that it takes a long time to get anything done. I am not aware of any supermarkets which actually comply with all the regulations.

Mr Corbell: Since 1 March this year, there have been 170 reports from members of the public to city rangers about abandoned shopping trolleys. All these reports have been investigated. The trolleys have either been impounded or the retailer has attended and collected the trolley. In addition to reports from the public, city rangers have instigated a further 265 reports to retailers to collect abandoned trolleys from public places. Nine trolleys have been impounded because they were located in a dangerous position, potentially causing a safety hazard, and city rangers have also commenced tagging trolleys located outside shopping precincts. All tagged trolleys have been removed by the retailers within the required time.

Audits of retailers are currently underway to confirm compliance with signage requirements under the legislation and where there are instances of non-compliance, warnings are currently being issued. Retailers will be notified one final time prior to penalties being issued prior to the Christmas trading period.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. A question on waste, of course, is: when will the final waste strategy come out? That is the obvious question.

Mr Corbell: The government have outlined the time frame on that in the Assembly, and we will comply with that time frame.

MR COE: Can you take on notice a question on how many offences there have been for each category of offence for the shopping trolleys and how many warnings have been issued as well?

Mr Corbell: Yes, we can take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: I want to continue on waste. I guess the other obvious question, which will be dealt with, I hope, in the waste strategy is: our waste generation seems to be growing at about five per cent per annum on average over the last 10 years, which is outstripping even our rate of population growth. What measures is the government putting in place to turn this alarming statistic around?

Mr Corbell: Waste generation is a very difficult issue to tackle, because it is a direct consequence of rates of consumption in the community. And consumption is overwhelmingly driven by levels of disposable income. Obviously the territory has a higher than average income. Therefore, we have higher than average levels of disposable income. Therefore, we consume more. In terms of the waste that is generated, it is an unfortunate consequence of living in a relatively more affluent community.

The government's waste strategy focuses on steps to encourage people to consider their choices around consumption—first of all, encouraging people to make assessments about whether or not they really do need to buy certain things or whether they would prefer to spend their money on services rather than goods, for example. Certainly we see economically there is a trend towards people choosing to use more of their disposable income on services rather than on goods. And that is desirable, both from the sustainability of the economic system and from the aspect of managing waste generation rates.

The government also participates in a range of national measures to try to encourage and improve the amount of waste that is generated from consumption—that is, to reduce it—and those steps are things such as participating in the national packaging covenant, which is a national scheme between governments and industry to reduce the amount of packaging that is produced as part of goods sold. So measures to reduce both the recyclability and also the amount of packaging that is provided with certain goods and products are important things that we can participate in, and we do participate in.

This is not so much on the consumption side of things but we are encouraging other national measures, such as a national e-waste recycling scheme, the new product stewardship arrangements which will take effect within the next six months, which will provide Canberrans with new options to recycle elaborately transformed manufactures, such as TVs, computers, computer peripherals and so on, where they will be able to recycle those free of charge through a product stewardship scheme.

So we do participate in a range of national forums and national initiatives to try to address issues around consumption. But these are difficult and challenging issues that relate fundamentally to people's choices around what they consume and what they purchase.

MS LE COUTEUR: And how they deal with it. I point out that Japan—

Mr Corbell: Obviously, dealing with it is the other side of the equation, but your question was about waste generation, as opposed to—

MS LE COUTEUR: I just point out that Japan is a wealthy society with an awful lot

less rubbish than we have. It is very different.

Mr Corbell: I am not familiar with the per capita levels of waste in Japan, so I really cannot comment.

THE CHAIR: It is now 11 o'clock, so we will go to morning tea and come back at 11.15.

Meeting adjourned from 11 to 11.19 am.

THE CHAIR: We might now go on to some general transport questions—not ACTION obviously, because that is being done on another day—and then we could go on to libraries, the linen service and those kinds of things. Ms Le Couteur, do you have any transport questions?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, thank you. I have what is the obvious question from a Greens point of view: why doesn't the new transport plan for Canberra declare targets which are compatible with the planned 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction target? In other words, why aren't we aiming for at least a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from our transport sector? And, if we are not, where are we going to get it from?

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Ms Le Couteur. First of all, transport for Canberra is not a policy document prepared by Territory and Municipal Services; it is prepared by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, and I have responsibility for that policy as Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. I just make that proviso because if you want to go into more detail about the plan I suggest you ask the questions of the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate—

MS LE COUTEUR: I would point out that it is in your annual report—just to confuse us, I guess.

Mr Corbell: As you would appreciate, the administrative arrangements are such that, prior to the election of the new Chief Minister, that function did sit within Territory and Municipal Services; it no longer does. It was transferred about three-quarters of the way through the financial year to the new directorate. But in any event, to answer your questions, just because the greenhouse gas reduction target is a certain percentage does not mean that you apply that percentage to every sector. What you need to do is make a more detailed assessment of how you achieve your greenhouse gas reductions and what gains are possible within different sectors in terms of the emissions generation.

So it is not a simple case of saying, "A 40 per cent reduction is what we need, so it is a 40 per cent reduction in buildings, a 40 per cent reduction in transport, a 40 per cent reduction in waste and so on." That is not the way it works. It is based on an assessment of what is the most efficient and most effective way to achieve the reductions in different sectors; for example, you can achieve greater outcomes in some sectors over others.

MS LE COUTEUR: I guess we will continue this with ESD.

THE CHAIR: Yes, we can talk about it more thoroughly in another session. Mr Coe, do you have a question about transport?

MR COE: Yes, I have some questions on transport. I imagine they are for Mr Gill. I have a technical one with regard to the water-based environmentally-friendly road resealing products: volume 1 on page 28 talks about the introduction of the use of a “water-based, environmentally-friendly road resealing product”. I am wondering whether you could talk through the virtues of such a product.

Mr Corbell: I will have to defer to Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: Traditionally, the resealing products have relied heavily on the use of bitumen and also they used quite a lot of energy to heat bitumen to the right temperature so that it could be applied. More recently, in conjunction with a company called Downer EDI, which is a company that basically is involved in resurfacing products, Roads ACT have adopted the use of a water-based product that can be used to replace a component of the bitumen product. It uses less bitumen, it uses less energy to heat the product and, from an occupational health and safety point of view, it is safer for the people using it to handle. The ACT is the only jurisdiction across Australia that has moved to 100 per cent adoption of this particular product and we are seen as one of the leaders in this field. We have had people from our road maintenance area go to Melbourne to give talks on this program. It is seen as quite innovative.

MR COE: So is it pretty much a perfect substitute insofar as the time for rollout and the cost?

Mr Gill: In terms of the cost comparison it is pretty neutral. The benefits that we see are that it uses less energy and, particularly from a workplace health and safety point of view, it provides some opportunities to improve the situation for staff. That is where the attraction is from our point of view.

MR COE: And then the durability and everything is all up to standard?

Mr Gill: In technical terms it is pretty similar to the previous product; it is just an improvement and using a slightly different approach.

MR COE: It would not be an estimates/annual reports hearing without me asking about the GDE, so how much has been spent so far in total on this project?

Mr Gill: The project, by the time it is completed, will spend \$82 million. At this point in time it will have spent about \$70 million.

MR COE: And the cost of both stages, from go to whoa, from announcement in 2001 to where we are today and then when it is completed, including landscaping and the works?

Mr Gill: Stage 1 cost \$116 million; stage 2, by the time it is completed, including landscaping, will cost \$82 million.

MR COE: I remember you saying that after stage 1 there was a perception that the landscaping did not reflect a \$116 million project or thereabouts, or something to that effect. How is the landscaping going to differ at the completion of stage 2?

Mr Gill: Some of the feedback has been—and, on reflection, I think it is a quite reasonable comment from the general community, but also from people like Alastair Swain, the Government Architect, who has basically cast his eye on it—that the landscaping along the corridor basically was not befitting a major road. We took that on board as part of the stage 2 works and, while the roadworks are not completed at this point in time, during November we will go out to tender for a landscaping contract which will look at the full road from Barton Highway down to Glenloch interchange, to seek to improve the landscape appearance along that route.

The other aspect is that we will maintain that for a two-year period. It is not unusual for projects to have a period of time before they are handed to the maintenance authority—in this case, Parks and City Services. In this particular case, rather than the normal 13-week period for landscaping to be handed back over, we are basically taking two years. So we have worked in conjunction with staff from Parks and City Services to identify the appropriate landscape treatment along the route.

We have also sought advice from the Government Architect about how we might enhance the appearance of the route, particularly in the Glenloch interchange where about \$3 million will have been spent to improve the look of the interchange. That is all covered by the \$82 million.

MR COE: So \$3 million has not been spent but will be spent?

Mr Gill: Has been—is in the process of being spent.

MR COE: Okay. And will any of the money that is designated for landscaping include public art?

Mr Gill: No. All public art that has been provided is provided.

MR COE: My office gets quite a few calls and emails about the speed limit and why you have got a road that looks fairly similar to the parkway in design but there is a 20-kilometre-an-hour difference in the maximum speed—why is it still 80? Are you considering going to 90 or to 100?

THE CHAIR: Parts of the parkway are 90, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Only the end, near Glenloch.

Mr Gill: When setting the speed at 80, there were three considerations. One was that during public consultations in 2002-03—and you may recall they were quite vigorous; at least that is my recollection of them—

MS LE COUTEUR: I think that would be a fair comment.

MR COE: After the trauma counselling.

Mr Gill: there was a commitment given by Roads ACT, in response to concerns raised by residents of Kaleen and Aranda about the proximity of the road to their residences, that the speed limit would be set at 80 kilometres an hour to mitigate traffic noise. That was the commitment given in 2002-03. As to the actual standard of the road, there is a section of the road in the Glenloch interchange where the standard of the road would not see a speed limit higher than 90 kilometres an hour. Then there is the consistency of the speed limit along the full route. We have taken on board and will provide advice to the minister to review the speed limit. We will see the current usage of the road and the actual travel speed on the road. We will have a discussion with residents, in Aranda in particular, who have been keen to look at that aspect of it, and we will provide appropriate advice.

MR COE: Why are there 60-kilometre-an-hour signs on entry and exit to the GDE when other entry and exit ramps on other major roads do not have designated speed limits?

Mr Gill: It is not unusual to have an exit limit.

MR COE: If you are on Ginninderra Drive you are on 80, then you go on to the entry ramp to the GDE and it goes down to 60 and then when you are at the top of the entry ramp you are at 80 again. That does not happen anywhere else that I can think of.

Mr Gill: Basically, you are turning off one road on to a ramp. Clearly there is a need for some caution as you are entering a higher speed road or at least a higher speed environment. It is a fairly common practice—

MR COE: We do not have that going on to Hopetoun Circuit or on to Kent Street from Adelaide Avenue.

Mr Gill: If you are coming off Tuggeranong Parkway going on to Hindmarsh Drive you will notice speed limits, and when you are coming off Hindmarsh Drive on to Tuggeranong Parkway you will notice speed limits.

MR COE: Have you considered variable speed limits for the GDE, or the parkway, or Adelaide Avenue, or other roads?

Mr Gill: Not at this stage. It is something that is part of, say, the Majura parkway project and use of that type of technology. But there is no example across the territory at this point in time where we have a variable speed limit. We do not have the technology to support that at this point in time.

MR COE: Sure. Finally, with regard to major road projects, is there going to be an on-road or off-road bike path on to Clarrie Hermes Drive, in effect, going round the back of Nicholls?

Mr Gill: There will be an on-road path. I cannot tell you off the top of my head whether there is an off-road facility as well. But as part of the standard delivery of road projects there is an on-road facility.

MR COE: Right. I believe that originally the plans did suggest that there was going to be an off-road bike path, and I know there are some people in northern Belconnen and also in the village of Hall that are very keen to see that eventuate. Are you saying that that is not going to happen?

Mr Gill: Clarrie Hermes is actually a road that is not being delivered by TAMS as a directorate; it is being delivered by the Economic Development Directorate, but we can take that on board and get some advice in relation to that. I do not know the specifics.

Mr Corbell: We will take that question on notice, Mr Coe, and provide some further advice to you.

MR COE: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a question that flows on from any of that?

DR BOURKE: No.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: I will move to a new subject, if that is okay. I could talk about transport, but I am aware we have only got an hour to go.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is about community gardens, and it follows on from an answer to a question on notice from estimates, which said that \$40,000 was set aside for coordination of community gardens within TAMS, specifically in Parks and City Services. Could you tell us what it is happening with that? Is there a community gardens coordinator, and how are you progressing?

Ms Steward: We are about to engage another person who is going to be initially working part time within the city services team, and they will be looking at working with ESD, who are looking at a number of things. They are looking at the new release areas and how community gardens might be designed and incorporated into new release areas. They will also be working with the existing community garden groups and assisting them however we can in terms of their projects. So that is underway.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will they be facilitating new gardens in existing areas? I have quite a lot of inquiries from various groups who want to set up new gardens in existing areas. They have identified what would appear to be very reasonable sites, they have got community support, but they have not managed to actually get all the bureaucracy on side.

Ms Steward: They will be able to do so. They can direct their questions straight through to TAMS through the city services. There will be somebody who will be able to field their calls. They will be able to assess what assistance the territory can provide. They will also be there looking at those proposals within the perspectives of what

ESD is developing by way of the best or the most appropriate locations for new community gardens so that they best serve the majority of the residents in those areas.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will this person also be a conduit into possible funding within the ACT government? I note sport and rec and Housing ACT are both organisations that have, at times in the past, funded community gardens with capital expenditure.

Ms Steward: Not that person specifically. We already explore every opportunity through the other agencies for access to grants to do all sorts of things in our public places—in our parks, in particular—that are going to enhance healthy lifestyles. So where there is an opportunity for additional funds for any community gardens, we may well look at being the vehicle to seek access to those funds. It will not be that person, but it will be part of the normal program of discussion with other agencies.

MS LE COUTEUR: Did you look at that person, in fact, not being employed by the government but being from the NGO sector, given that it appears you are employing a new person for it?

Ms Steward: We have not gone down that route yet. We have decided in the first instance to look at what is the demand for community gardens, where is the location and what sort of governance would sit appropriately over those. They often tend to be driven by the communities, or one community, as opposed to having an individual coordinating it. That can be something that can be looked at further down the track when we have got a better idea of the quantum and the need across the city.

DR BOURKE: I wanted to get some details about new parks on old school sites at Holt and Cook.

Ms Steward: Specifically? Is this part of the play space upgrade program, if I can clarify?

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, are you talking about community gardens at those two sites?

DR BOURKE: No, I was not talking about community gardens at all.

THE CHAIR: I think you have confused the witnesses.

DR BOURKE: I was talking about the old school sites at Holt and Cook which we have turned over to community hubs.

Ms Steward: The upgrade programs. Stephen Alegria can answer that question.

Mr Alegria: Sorry, could you please repeat your question?

DR BOURKE: I was asking about the Cook and Holt old school sites, which have become community hubs, and the grounds which are now parks.

Mr Alegria: I do not have a lot of information about that. Is there something specific that—

DR BOURKE: I just want to know what the plans are. Do you want to come back on that one?

Mr Alegria: Yes.

DR BOURKE: Okay.

MR COE: On the playground safety program, I understand that the program has been decreased by about \$100,000. Is that correct?

MS LE COUTEUR: While you are at it, you have got a playground water project.

Ms Steward: We do have a playground safety program. Basically with all of our playgrounds we have an inspection program. The service level has not changed for that inspection program—that is once each week. They are all assessed in terms of any wear and tear, any risk. That is done by certified inspectors. Anything that is reported is acted upon. I would say that our commitment to maintaining our playgrounds is unchanged.

MR COE: Specifically about the playground safety program, the original value was \$1.22 million.

THE CHAIR: Can you give a page reference?

MR COE: Sorry, page 142.

THE CHAIR: In volume 1?

MR COE: Volume 1, yes. The fourth program down.

Mr Corbell: Mr Coe, perhaps while the officials look at that, it is worth making the point that six playgrounds were upgraded in 2010-11. They were in Chapman, Curtin, Gowrie, Greenway, Macarthur and Kaleen. Equally, six playgrounds are identified for upgrades in the coming financial year. We are maintaining our effort in terms of the number of playgrounds being covered. Playgrounds anticipated for upgrade in this financial year are at Yarralumla, Oaks Estate, Gilmore, two in Kambah and one in Gordon.

The government is also upgrading a range of other playground equipment, including the installation of a new flying fox in the expanded district park facilities on the western foreshores of Lake Ginninderra. That flying fox will replace the aged flying fox from Umbagog district park in Latham. That is a very valuable improvement in amenity for kids in that location.

In addition, shade sails are being installed in three existing playgrounds this calendar year, including at John Knight memorial park, Chifley Place in Chifley and Whitney Place in Weston.

MR COE: I will come back to the flying foxes, but is there any word on why there is

that revised value of around \$100,000 less?

Ms Steward: It has just been explained to me by Jane Carder, and I will ask Jane to explain it. It was based on the reprioritisation of where the most important and urgent work needed to occur within the last financial year.

Ms Carder: We do an annual audit where we inspect all of our playgrounds. As a result of that audit, we identified a number of urgent maintenance requirements in playgrounds across Canberra. It is things like replacing chains on the swings, which are urgent requirements, because they no longer meet the Australian standards. We reallocated some of that \$100,000—in other words, we still delivered the playground upgrade program while also reallocating some of the money to do some more urgent maintenance works. So we met a whole range of needs.

MR COE: Sure. But did it stay within the capital program?

Ms Carder: Yes.

MR COE: Whereabouts did it go? Do you know where the additional \$100,000 has been spent?

Ms Carder: I am not exactly sure of the finances side of it.

Mr Corbell: We will take that on notice, Mr Coe, and try and identify that for you.

MR COE: If you could, that would be good. I understand there was a decision taken a few years back to remove the flying foxes from the ACT because of risk. Are we seeing a slight change in direction there?

Ms Steward: No. There were two areas where the flying foxes were problematic, partly to do with the degree of vandalism and the constant need for repair. There were some issues with two specific flying foxes, albeit that when they were installed they conformed to the Australian standards they were still problematic. For safety reasons it was decided not to continue with those.

However, new flying foxes are being installed elsewhere—on the western foreshores of Lake Ginninderra—and they are going to replace the flying fox at Umbagog. We have found that where more people congregate in areas that are most popular, there is likely to be a more responsible use of the play equipment there. That appeared to us to be a place where it was most likely to be used wisely and through, I suppose, informal surveillance, you are less likely to get people causing damage.

MR COE: Sure.

Mr Byles: Further to what Fay has said, I personally visited the Umbagog flying fox. In fact, I did a bit of an onsite survey a couple of years ago with a couple of teenagers traversing the site on their bikes, and I asked them if they wanted to use that flying fox, to which they promptly replied no. Of course, you will know that it is out in a position where it did not encourage great usage.

Having said that, in the last week or so I have met with the various designers and contractors about the proposed flying fox at the western foreshores, which will be a terrific venue, I would expect—60 metres and a decent gradient. One of the challenges we had with the kids' flying fox at John Knight park was the gradient. It did not offer the gradient to provide excitement for younger children, say, in the 10-year-old age group. It was okay for the small ones, but it was not a challenge for those who sought some sort of thrill.

MR COE: Did it meet your expectations?

Mr Byles: Well, people have different expectations, Mr Coe. Having said that, the proposed new build at western foreshore—60 metres—will complement that play space very well, and I expect it will be a great addition to the territory's parks and entertainment.

MR COE: Can I segue to another topic: from flying foxes and cables to wire rope barriers on the side of roads. The Motorcycle Riders Association has raised safety concerns with me about the installation of these barriers. In particular, we have seen a considerable rollout on the Gungahlin Drive extension and also on the Barton Highway. What work was done prior to installation of those to ensure that all user groups were happy with them, and are you reviewing the rollout in future locations?

Mr Corbell: Mr Gill and Mr Peters can provide some further information, but can I just say that I am familiar with the representations from motorcyclists groups on these barriers. I am advised that the barriers meet the relevant Australian standards and they are a very effective measure in terms of preventing traffic from crossing from one side of the roadway to the other, and, therefore, causing more serious accidents.

I am aware that there are concerns from motorcyclists about those barriers. At this point in time, the government is adopting an approach of looking at the experience of Victoria, who are trialling some modifications to these wire barriers that may be suitable for use here in the ACT. That trial is underway, so we will await the results of that trial in Victoria and then make an assessment about whether or not those modifications should be made to the wire barriers here in the ACT. We are conscious of that, and we are paying close attention to developments in other jurisdictions.

In terms of what consultation occurred prior to their installation, I will ask Mr Gill if he can assist with that.

Mr Gill: Wire rope barriers are not necessarily that new. They have been installed in Australia over the last 10 years and have been installed in each jurisdiction across Australia and, indeed, across the world. They are covered by an Australian standard. In comparison with alternative barriers such as, say, the steel beam barrier, which is the guardrail-type barrier that most people are familiar with, in terms of safety performance, when there has been a review of, say, crashes over a number of years in various jurisdictions, basically they are seen to have a similar safety performance. So there is no demonstrated risk, in comparison, between the types of measures. The reason why—

MR COE: Is that for motorcyclists or for all motorists?

Mr Gill: That is for all motorists, including motorcyclists. That is what the independent research basically has suggested. Having said that, I am aware of the concerns of the motorcycle association, and that concern is expressed by other motorcyclists associations across the country. So each jurisdiction across the country has been approached by its equivalent advocacy group in this regard.

The reason why wire rope barriers have found favour across various jurisdictions is because they are easier to install, they are a comparative price and they are also easier to maintain. You can maintain sections of it. If a section of wire rope is taken out, you can repair it in sections, whereas if a section of guardrail is pulled out, it is more difficult to maintain.

There is also a view that wire rope provides a better aesthetic outlook. An example of where wire rope has been used extensively is on the Federal Highway around Lake George. Previously, that was guarded by steel beam. When that was upgraded some years ago, one of the reasons for promotion of the wire rope was that it looked better from an aesthetic point of view. That is always a bit subjective, but that is one of the arguments.

Our approach and our advice to the minister in this regard is that I am aware of some research and trials that are taking place in Victoria where there is some protection being applied to the posts associated with the wire ropes. The concern of the motorcyclists is not necessarily with the wire strands themselves; it is with the posts that basically hold up the wire strands and contact by the lower part of the body with those posts. I understand that the trial in Victoria is looking at putting in place some measures to soften or protect those posts. You might take the view of a set of rugby posts where, at the bottom of them, you have soft protection to prevent people from getting hurt. So that type of approach is being trialled in Victoria. If that is seen to be effective, we would look at embracing it in the ACT.

MR COE: Would you consider putting a hold on the installation of further WRBs until that trial is complete?

Mr Gill: There is no convincing reason for us to put a hold on it at this point in time. That is the advice we have put forward. And that is the approach of other jurisdictions. They have not stopped the installation of wire rope barriers. They have looked at whether there is any scope to actually provide some improvements.

MR COE: Earlier, right at the start of this session when we were talking about risk management, Mr Byles said that the number one area of risk management or risk minimisation was in regard to loss of life. If there is evidence to suggest that WRBs pose a greater risk to motorcyclists, who are already disproportionately represented in the road toll, surely that same approach should be taken with regard to the rollout of such devices?

Mr Gill: Nothing that I have said could have led you to that conclusion. I said all the independent research basically says that there is no difference. Indeed, in a number of cases the wire rope barriers perform better from a safety point of view, from an overall vehicle point of view, including for motorcyclists. We do not have objective

evidence that basically suggests wire ropes will result in loss of life from the point of view of motorcyclists.

MR COE: What is the difference in cost between a steel guard or—

Mr Gill: As I said, in terms of capital cost, it is neutral. In terms of ongoing maintenance, the wire ropes are easier to maintain. They are also easier to install, and there is that overarching view that, from an aesthetic point of view, they blend better into the environment.

MR COE: Will you please take on notice the question about the cost of maintaining the WRBs in the ACT?

Mr Gill: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We might move on to another area now, because we only have a little while left, and we have several areas that we have not dealt with. Are there any questions about libraries?

MS LE COUTEUR: What about urban trees, Madam Chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes, we will take some questions on urban trees.

MS LE COUTEUR: You deal with urban trees on pages 13, 14 and 15 of volume 1. You say you are implementing the recommendations made by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment on the urban tree renewal program. Can you give us some more detail about how you are implementing that, particularly in light of the fact that I believe the government has not yet done its final response to the commissioner's recommendations?

Ms Steward: The commissioner's report was very valuable because it gave the lead in terms of how we can best manage the city's urban tree assets. We have incorporated a number of approaches that were recommended in order to prolong the life of trees. Fundamentally, our principal objective is to try to maintain trees in a healthy state so that we can prolong the life of trees. That means we are looking at, and have now developed, an ongoing program of tree maintenance activities. That means we have a far better understanding of the tree, the tree health and the extent to which trees, through an auditing program, need to be removed.

There are a number of recommendations, similarly, about streetscape, and the decisions and criteria that need to be relied upon in making decisions about whether or not to replace trees with like species or not or whether to replace them at all. She suggested a number of standards or a number of criteria that we should apply, and we are using those now.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that you are putting more emphasis on tree management, on page 113 of volume 2 you have customer satisfaction with the maintenance and pruning of street trees. Your target was 80 per cent but you only achieved 73 per cent.

Ms Steward: I will refer to the Director of City Services.

Ms Flanery: Trees are a living thing. You may recall that in September last year we had significant storms. We had storms again in February. So surveys are based on people's perception. We maintain trees to a certain standard, but, still, when they are damaged by storm, that stays very fresh in people's minds. I think that the overall result is particularly good, but we are at the mercy, I guess, of the weather.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would have thought, though, that with the storms, we had a year of considerable rain. That would have been a minor thing compared to the drought that we had for all the years before—

Ms Flanery: I think the drought is—

MS LE COUTEUR: which led to considerable tree death.

Ms Flanery: Drought is insidious, and it is slow moving. Often, change does not happen that quickly. There is decline over a number of years. One of the reasons that people were also in some ways unhappy or less happy with the look of the trees was because of the massive amount of growth. Some trees are growing very quickly and obstructing line of sight. So it took us a little while to catch up on some of those areas. An important point to raise is that approximately a year ago, City Services had 15 per cent of its trees on a programmed maintenance schedule. Now we have 65 per cent. So in terms of being able to deliver and schedule our work, we have really made significant improvements there.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that your final intended percentage? I am trying to remember back to the commissioner's report. I think it was higher than 65 per cent, but you would know for sure what it was.

Ms Flanery: It was 65 per cent, and we have achieved that. But we are actually trying to get more programmed maintenance done. The reverse side of that is that if you have someone that calls in to Canberra Connect—and we had over 8,000 people last year—and they want their tree assessed or pruned, the higher your programming, the less reactive you can be. So there will always be a percentage of reactive work that we need to do and that we should do. So we think that 65 per cent is about the right balance.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the balance now between maintenance and new plantings?

Ms Flanery: I am not quite sure I can answer that directly. Could you clarify the question a little bit?

MS LE COUTEUR: One of the things the commissioner talked about—and I think Ms Steward touched on this as well—was the need to put more emphasis on preserving our existing trees. That is what I was meaning by “maintenance”—the balance between work and expenditure on preserving our existing trees and the planting and initial establishment of new trees.

Ms Flanery: Can we come back to you on that? I have figures here but I would need

to do some quick calculations to work out the percentages. We can provide that to you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, that would be fine.

THE CHAIR: You can take that one on notice. We need to move on to another area now, because we have only half an hour left.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will ask some more on notice.

THE CHAIR: Yes, you can put the rest on notice. Do you have any questions regarding libraries?

MR COE: Yes. I understand that one of the targets for Libraries ACT is to address issues of poor literacy across the ACT. I was just wondering what the battle plan is for Libraries ACT to do that, how you work in conjunction with the department of education to actually achieve that and what your KPIs are.

Ms Little: Thank you for that question. It allows me to showcase next year as national year of reading. The game plan, if you would like to call it that, is for us to participate in the national program, the national year of reading 2012. There are a series of national projects that are being funded by the commonwealth government and then there are a range of projects and activities that will be done at the local level. In other jurisdictions, of course there will be statewide projects and then there will be local council projects. In our jurisdiction, of course they will be rolled into one.

We have established what we are calling the facilitators group, and that facilitators group is anybody that we can identify who has a role in literacy or learning across the ACT. We have had our first workshop of that group and out of that group we have established a committee which represents CIT, the Education and Training Directorate, ACTCOSS, the universities in the ACT and a range of other people who have got an interest in literacy. Together, we will develop the program for next year's year of literacy, year of reading, and work together on helping to address those issues of poor literacy in Canberra.

MR COE: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Going to page 108 of volume 2, we have got an increase in the costs of library visits of 40 per cent. Is there a reason for this?

Ms Little: Yes, there is. There are two reasons. First of all, you will notice in the indicators that our visits per capita have gone down from what we expected. We realise that that is probably around the fact that we have got a four-week loan period now instead of three weeks. We allow people to borrow more material so that they can take the family's books often and not have to come back too frequently. We are also finding that an increasingly large number of our loans are from people who are sitting on their computers and directly requesting what it is they want. So we are finding that people are not as much coming in now, to do the browsing that they used to do, but they are very targeted in the way that they use us. So you would have also seen that our loans have gone up by 10 per cent, which is a really good result. We are lending more out, but we have fewer visits. So that is one reason.

The other reason is that a decision was taken with the people in our finance team that we would include the cost of library materials in that cost per visit per capita calculation.

MS LE COUTEUR: Library materials? You mean the collection?

Ms Little: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the capital?

Ms Little: Yes. In the past it was simply the operating costs. It was staffing, rent, those kinds of things. We have now added in the cost of the collections purchased that particular year. So that is why it has increased as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: If someone comes in and does not borrow something, they are still getting measured as a library visit?

Ms Little: Absolutely, yes. The library, as you would be aware, is a place where people will often come just to visit. They may come and read a newspaper. They may come and meet friends. That is particularly happening at Gungahlin where the visitation has gone up by 60 per cent. So we do count that through a door counter.

MS LE COUTEUR: I understand you are still having issues with the return chutes, that people are not absolutely 100 per cent pleased with those. Can you talk about what you are doing about those?

Ms Little: Certainly. I would have to say that the amount of complaints has significantly reduced. So that is a good thing. But what we have done is responded to the community by putting in shelves next to those chutes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good.

Ms Little: One of the complaints was that when people had a big pile of books, in the past they used to pull up the chute and throw them all in and probably ruin half of them as they did it. But now they have to do them one at a time. So we give them a shelf. At Woden we have installed an internal returns kiosk. If you want to, you can walk inside the library and return the materials through a kiosk, the same way as you can issue them out.

We are also working with the suppliers to see whether we can speed up the processing of the materials. You would note that in Gungahlin we actually put two chutes in, one external and one internal, to try to help with that as well. So we are listening and we are trying to resolve some of the issues, but the reality is that we get some less than desirable things through our chutes and we have to be mindful of life and property.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you changed things so that you do not need your library card anymore?

Ms Little: Yes, we have.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good. You just need a book.

Ms Little: Yes, that was something about which, to be fair to our supplier, we went straight back to them and said, “This isn’t working,” and they reprogrammed the chute so that we do not need it.

MR COE: It was a bumper year for membership for the library service. How does one get struck off the membership? If someone moves interstate—

MS LE COUTEUR: Or someone dies.

MR COE: Or, as Ms Le Coureur says, someone dies, what happens?

Ms Little: There are several ways. First of all, if you owe us lots of money, we do not let you borrow. In fact, if you owe us more than \$25 in fines or fees, you are not able to borrow and you have to negotiate back into our good books, pardon the pun. And the other thing is that we do a purge every two years of our database. So every year we run a program that says anyone who has not borrowed from us or used their card for booking a computer for two years is moved off into a sort of a file. We do not take people off the database completely at that point, because sometimes people will pop up again. But we do move them from active to inactive borrowers. So the number that you are looking at is, in fact, active borrowers.

MR COE: So 208,000 active borrowers?

Ms Little: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I am interested to hear a little more about how the Gungahlin library is going, being the biggest and the newest library that is now in the suite of libraries. You mentioned some good results.

Ms Little: Yes. The Gungahlin library is over 50 per cent up on loans and over 60 per cent up on visits. So, on a Saturday, we can have between 1,200 and 1,300 or 1,400 people through the door. There is a great deal of growth in the participation at giggle and wiggle and story time. We have a little pram rage that happens up there sometimes, because we have got so many prams and mums and dads and things.

The first day we opened, which, as you would know, was a soft launch as part of the community day for the college, we had 5,500 people through the doors, and then at the official opening, where Minister Corbell came and did not really cut the ribbon but unveiled the plaque for us, that was a day when we also had the *ABC Drive* program broadcast from the library, we had 3,300 people through in three hours.

MR COE: Do you have a data sharing agreement with other areas of TAMS or with other agencies with regard to information about library users?

Ms Little: Information about individual library users, of course, would be private and personal and we would not divulge that. In terms of us talking to other directorates about how we might help them and facilitate their community engagement, we do do

that, and that is starting to increase. So we have, obviously, facilities. We have now right on 60 per cent of the community that are registered members of the library. So we do talk to other parts of government about how they might leverage off that.

MR COE: Do you ever get requests from the police with a warrant or a subpoena for data?

Ms Little: Occasionally. It is not very frequent. And, obviously, we comply if that comes in.

MR COE: But no information about users travels to other areas of the directorate or elsewhere?

Ms Little: No. Our database is entirely separate from the rest of government.

MR COE: So in terms of updating an address, for instance, if I was to update my address at Canberra Connect—

Ms Little: That information, I think—and I would need to check with the Canberra Connect people—is sent to us. It is not broadcast but it is sent to us, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am pretty sure it does.

Ms Little: Yes, it does.

THE CHAIR: Any more library questions? Do you have any questions of the linen service, Mr Coe?

MR COE: I do, actually.

THE CHAIR: We might go to the linen service now. Thank you very much, Ms Little. We aim to give you lots of exercise, up and down on your chairs. We do not want anyone to get deep vein thrombosis from sitting in one place too long. Thank you very much. Mr Coe.

MR COE: I have raised before in this forum or other fora the merits of the ACT continuing in an area of business which is well serviced by the private sector. Previously Mr Stanhope said that he had questioned that as well. I am just wondering whether there is any further thought or any further advice you can give on the strategic direction of the linen service.

Mr Corbell: Decisions about the ownership of government business enterprises would be taken at a whole-of-government level. The government has not had any discussions about that matter, certainly for a considerable period of time.

MR COE: So this year, did the linen service make a profit?

Mr Trushell: This year the linen service did not make a profit; we made a small loss. There were a number of reasons for that, not least of all the loss of a major commercial customer and the effect of the global financial crisis on the

accommodation and hospitality and the food and beverage sectors in the ACT where prices softened significantly within the market.

MR COE: Where the ACT government has a linen service that needs to be undertaken—at the hospital or elsewhere—they have to put that out to tender, and Capital Linen Service would tender for those jobs. Are you finding that you are winning ACT government contracts more often than not?

Mr Trushell: The non-Canberra Hospital ACT government business is actually very small. Generally, it is not done on a tender basis. They will seek quotes, and we win some of that business; some of it we do not. Generally, the value of the work is fairly small. They will do what homework they need to do, and they will either take us on or they will not.

One thing that is important to understand is that the market is quite segmented, so when we talk about the private sector doing a lot of this work, in fact, particularly in the area of health, there is not an active private sector market. In fact, Capital Linen Service is the only laundry in the ACT—even, in fact, outside Sydney—that can handle the amount of work, for example, that Canberra Hospital does. Other areas, like the accommodation sector, have very active markets which are highly competitive. There are certain areas of the market, for instance, in the areas of uniform and industrial-type laundry that we are not involved with. The market is quite segmented. Some areas have significant competition; in other areas, effectively, Capital Linen Service's presence creates that competition.

MR COE: At last year's estimates or annual report hearings, I think we made a recommendation to the government that Capital Linen Service report their financials along with other enterprise services. Is that something that you have considered—reporting of financials as stand-alone documents?

Mr Byles: I do not recall that particular comment, Mr Coe, but I am happy to—

MR COE: I believe we did, but I will check that. Minister, from a principle point of view, do you think it is appropriate that you have an ACT government-owned entity competing against the private sector for tenders?

Mr Corbell: I do not have difficulty with that, so long as it is done in a competitively neutral manner, and there are mechanisms in place to ensure competitive neutrality. There is the capacity for the ICRC in its regulator function to ensure that government business enterprises are operating in a competitively neutral fashion. I have no advice before me to suggest that Capital Linen Service or, indeed, other government business enterprises that compete against the private sector are not operating in a competitively neutral fashion. There are principles and requirements that government business enterprises have to meet to ensure that there is competitive neutrality.

I would say that, in my view, Capital Linen Service is an important employer in the territory and, in particular, it is an important employer of low income earners, often people who are unable to secure jobs in other areas because of difficulties, say, with language or levels of training and so on. So it is a very important employer that meets a social need as well as an economic need in the community. That is something that

should be recognised.

MR COE: I apologise if it is in the report, but what is the FTE for Capital Linen Service?

Mr Corbell: I am not sure what the FTE is, but it employs approximately 100 people.

Mr Perram: That is correct, it is about 100 people—83 FTE and then a moving staff based upon the requirements as the tonnage goes up or down. Basically 100 tonnes per week of laundry goes through. So if it is down to 90, clearly you would have fewer itinerant staff coming through.

MR COE: Does the linen service receive any grants or any support for being an employer of people with a disability?

Mr Trushell: No, we do not. The nature of our work is that people with disabilities fit in very well with our organisation in certain roles. A lot of the work that we do is repetitious. It is very structured and very well supervised. So a lot of that sort of employment is very good employment for people with certain types of disabilities and, therefore, they fill an important business need. It is not done purely as a community service; it is actually an effective way of doing business.

Mr Corbell: Just on the issue of competitive neutrality, Mr Coe, I am advised there was an ICRC investigation in 2006, I think following a complaint about—

Mr Trushell: It was actually as a result of the then minister making a recommendation to the ICRC that there be a review.

Mr Corbell: The ICRC undertook that review. They found there were no issues with competitive neutrality.

MR COE: Do you see any merit in having the ICRC conduct a similar investigation again?

Mr Corbell: No, I do not.

Mr Perram: We were talking to Mike Buckley from the ICRC as recently as last week, and he was very comfortable with the current status.

THE CHAIR: I just wanted to note on page 32 the high level of customer satisfaction, with complaints down significantly. That is just making a comment. It is very pleasing to see the delivery of 99 per cent order completion at the Canberra Hospital. That is great.

MR COE: Can you please take on notice the question of how much of your revenue comes from ACT government clients?

Mr Trushell: I can actually give you that. Essentially, it is 45 per cent from Canberra Hospital and about four to five per cent from other ACT government entities. That is across ACT Health, Emergency Services—

MR COE: So it is roughly fifty-fifty public-private sector.

Mr Trushell: Roughly fifty-fifty, that is correct.

MR COE: Are there any federal government contracts?

Mr Trushell: Yes, we do. We do the Australian Federal Police. At various stages we have done places like Parliament House and the National Museum. We have got a contract with the National Gallery, at the moment. A lot of the times those are not actually directly with the institutions themselves; they are with their own catering contractors or something like that.

Mr Corbell: It is worth making the point, too, that Capital Linen Service provides a very important and very specialised service around surgical theatre linen, uniforms and so on, materials that are needed in specially prepared surgical packs. It is a vital service from that perspective, and I think it is the only linen provider that can do that work within the ACT.

Mr Trushell: If it was not done by us, it would be being done in Sydney, and it would create a lot of issues around guarantee of supply to be trying to produce that level of linen in Sydney and truck it down the highway.

MR COE: The facility is in Mitchell, is that right? Is that where it is done?

Mr Trushell: Yes, that is correct.

MR COE: Is that regarded as critical infrastructure for strategic purposes?

Mr Corbell: Yes. There was certainly an issue arising following the fire at Mitchell earlier this year. One of the critical pieces of service provision that was impacted was the laundry and, in particular, the supply of surgical linen. Contingency had to be made in case surgery was not able to be maintained at the hospital because of a failure in being able to get surgical linen from the laundry to the hospital in a timely manner. Fortunately, that was rectified and steps were able to be taken to ensure that supply was able to be maintained.

MR COE: Was that contingency with a private operator here or with a public or private operator in Sydney?

Mr Corbell: Basically the surgical linen supply was identified as one of the highest priorities in terms of achieving access back into the site to secure supply, and so basically it was pretty much one of the first cabs off the rank in terms of getting access to the sterile linen supply. That was secured with the assistance of the Fire Brigade and the police.

MR COE: Sure, but although it was not actually required, was the contingency a private operator in the ACT?

Mr Corbell: I would have to take advice from Health on that matter. Health would be

the agency responsible.

Mr Trushell: We have arrangements with both public and private sector providers in New South Wales, the major one being the linen service within the New South Wales health department. They have about seven laundries across New South Wales, and we have an understanding with them that we can access those laundries. On that weekend we transported linen up to Sydney. We sent a couple of semitrailers up. Some of those went to Spotless in Sydney, to their Rosebery plant. New South Wales Health sent down some surgical packs as well for us, which we stored out at EPIC. We did not actually need those in the end.

MR COE: Was that covered by insurance by the Insurance Authority or by a private insurer?

Mr Trushell: We have made application to ACTIA around the business interruption component of our insurance policy with them.

THE CHAIR: We will turn to cemeteries now. Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: I refer to page 7 of your annual report. You talk about perpetual care trust funds. Your second point is:

The funds required for the Authority to comply with the legislation cannot simply be addressed by increasing prices ...

Can you talk to us about what your approach is? In particular, is this one of the reasons you are looking to build a crematorium in Tuggeranong?

Mr Horne: This is a quite complex issue. In fact, the lack of funds, if you like, in the perpetual care fund regime relates principally to the inherited liability—that is, the level of maintenance that was not provided for when the cemetery became self-funding and the perpetual care funds were set up. The perpetual care fund regime, in fact, has been reviewed by the Directorate of TAMS. I would need to pass you over to them to provide information on where we are up to with that. But I can answer the question in terms of the crematorium. The crematorium is not about addressing the perpetual care fund regime. What it means is that there will never be an issue with the liability going forward, especially for any new development such as the southern cemetery. What it does is create an environment of a very balanced business model.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you are not suggesting it will be profitable—the crematorium?

Mr Horne: It is not so much the crematorium itself that creates the profit. It is the ability to, if you like, attract more business in memorialisation of cremated remains. That means that any cemetery that has a crematorium on its premises has access to a large part of that market, is able to have a much more robust business model and offer a greater range of services in relation to memorialisation.

MS LE COUTEUR: I move now to volume 1 of the TAMS report. It might be somewhere in your report, but I did not see it. On page 59 there is recommendation 6,

a recommendation that this wonderful committee made last year about looking at the different environmental impacts of different end-of-life options. Can you tell us what you have found? You said here that you did it, but you have not actually said what outcomes there were. I am referring to recommendation 6 on page 59.

Mr Horne: Essentially, what this relates to is particularly the new southern cemetery. We are regarding this as an opportunity to make available natural burial as an option for the ACT community.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am very glad that you are doing that, but did you actually end up with any conclusions as a result of your literature review?

Mr Corbell: I think, with respect, Ms Le Couteur, that the recommendation asked that the government examine the literature—

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Corbell: which is what the Public Cemeteries Authority has advised in its response it has done. But the fact remains that different people will want a variety of different burial methods or cremation available to them. As a cemeteries authority and as a government, we should ensure that we provide an appropriate range of services to people to manage and dispose of loved one's remains, whether that is through cremation or whether that is through burial—either traditional burial or natural burial. They are all legitimate choices.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given your intention to offer natural burial as one of the options in the southern cemetery, are you going to be doing any promotional or educational work about it so that people who have not previously been aware that it was even an option know what you are talking about?

Mr Horne: Absolutely.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could you elaborate more?

Mr Horne: When we get to the point where we are actually starting construction or in the planning phase of the cemetery, we will obviously weigh up the need for whatever education programs we will need to roll out at that time. At this stage, we have not actually put together a plan for that.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is all from me on cemeteries.

THE CHAIR: You have only one minute for any remaining questions.

MS LE COUTEUR: Not on cemeteries but I could do other questions.

THE CHAIR: You might need to take other questions on notice given that the hearing finishes at 12.30, and it is now 12.29.

MR COE: Can I quickly ask a question about the RSPCA? It may be that the minister can answer this one. We have heard, minister, that there is an extra \$150,000 that the

ACT government paid to the RSPCA. Did the money actually get to the RSPCA? If so, on what date and in what form? Was it in kind or was it cash?

Mr Corbell: I am pleased to say that the government has entered into a new two-year service level agreement with the RSPCA. That commenced on 30 September this year. The total value of that agreement is \$735,000 per annum, of which \$570,000 is a cash contribution. That is a 26 per cent increase in our cash contribution or approximately a \$150,000 increase for the period.

We are also providing in-kind support, which is valued at approximately \$165,000. This includes additional support for inspectorate services in relation to animal cruelty investigations and the provision of additional pens for animals for the RSPCA to temporarily house stray dogs assessed as being suitable for sale by the RSPCA. This will accommodate, we anticipate, an additional 600 animals per year. That will be provided through the government's Domestic Animal Services facility on Mugga Lane.

Also, there is the provision of some long-term boarding support for dogs owned by people unable to take primary care of their animals due to illness, domestic violence or other reasons, such as having to serve time in prison or in a mental health facility, for example.

MR COE: So your letter in the *Canberra Times* just a few days ago where you said that last financial year the government paid an additional \$150,000 to the RSPCA over and above the funding agreement—

Mr Corbell: We did.

MR COE: And that was cash?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR COE: An extra \$150,000. How much was the total amount of cash given to the RSPCA last financial year?

Ms Steward: The original budget allocation was \$420,000. At the request of the RSPCA for additional funds, an additional amount of \$150,000 was approved by the government, and this was paid. I cannot give you the exact date, but it was certainly paid in the last financial year. That was cash.

MR COE: You are saying that \$570,000 cash was given to the RSPCA in 2010-11?

Ms Steward: The 2010-11 financial year, yes.

MR COE: If the RSPCA is doubting seeing that money, what could be the problem? Is it communication or is it with the transfer?

Mr Corbell: You would have to ask the RSPCA.

MR COE: Yes. Just confirming, when was the \$150,000 additional payment paid?

THE CHAIR: I think the minister said he would have to take that on notice.

Mr Corbell: As Ms Steward advised, it was paid last financial year. I am happy to provide an exact date on notice.

MR COE: Sure.

Mr Corbell: I think that the purpose of my letter, Mr Coe, was to respond to the assertions that had been made by Mr Linke from the RSPCA that the RSPCA received little or no government support. Those were the words he used in his letter to the editor a couple of days prior to mine. I felt that it was important to correct the record on that matter. It is not the case that the RSPCA receives little or no government support. The RSPCA receives a considerable level of ACT taxpayers' support to the tune of both cash and in kind of just under three-quarters of a million dollars per annum. In terms of the cash contribution, the government has increased its support to the RSPCA in cash by 26 per cent.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I note in closing that there are some very pleasing figures with regard to DAS on page 20 of the report, with the re-homing of 92.6 per cent of the dogs that come through that facility. I believe it is one of the most successful dog shelters in Australia. Congratulations to DAS on that.

Mr Corbell: They do excellent work at Domestic Animal Services. I know that there are many people who are very grateful for the work that they do.

THE CHAIR: So congratulations to them. I would ask that other questions be taken on notice. We will get those to you within five days. We will write to you, minister, and advise you about getting those answers back to us. I believe we need to check what committees are doing as far as the timing of those answers to the committee.

Mr Corbell: Thanks very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your attendance today, minister, Mr Byles and the officials.

The committee adjourned at 12.34 pm.