



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT
AND CITY SERVICES**

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2015-2016](#))

Members:

MS S ORR (Chair)
MR S DOSZPOT (Deputy Chair)
MS T CHEYNE
MR M PARTON

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 6 MARCH 2017

Secretary to the committee:
Ms A Jongsma (Ph: 620 50435)

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	42, 109
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate	1, 54
Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.....	31

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9 am.

Appearances:

Rattenbury, Mr Shane, Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ekelund, Ms Dorte, Director-General

Bygrave, Mr Stephen, Executive Director, Sustainability and Climate Change

Mozqueira, Mr Antonio, Manager, Climate Change Policy

Malouf, Ms Ros, Senior Manager, Sustainability Programs

THE ACTING CHAIR (Mr Doszpot): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2015-16. On behalf of the committee and the chair, Suzanne Orr, I would like to thank you, Mr Rattenbury, and your officials for attending today. The chair is stuck in traffic at the moment, so I give her apologies at the moment.

Today the committee will be examining the annual report of the Environment and Planning Directorate, now known as the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, for the 2015-16 reporting period. We will begin with sections of the report relating to the sustainability and climate change portfolio. We will then move on to the report on the operation and administration of the Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act 2012, before concluding with the annual report of the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

Can I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is before you. I believe all of you should be pretty familiar with that, but could I ask for the record whether you have read the privilege statement and you are comfortable with that?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Minister, do you and your officials understand the implications of the statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I also remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded for Hansard for transcription purposes and are being webstreamed and broadcast live. Before we go to questions, minister, do you have an opening statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, thank you, chair. I will touch on a few matters that I think are particularly worth highlighting in the annual report for the Climate Change and Sustainability portfolio. I think these achievements reflect well on the government,

but more so on our community, which has supported the government policy of 100 per cent renewable energy and carbon neutrality. The community is increasingly participating in reducing our carbon footprint.

Certainly, climate change and sustainability are central issues for the ACT—of course, not just for us but for the country as a whole and, indeed, for the entire planet. As the ACT, we take our responsibility under the COP21 Paris agreement very seriously. As a small jurisdiction, we are punching above our weight and inspiring others with our innovative reverse auction process to achieve the 100 per cent renewable electricity target and to adapt to the changing climate. We have significant programs to help consumers reduce their electricity use and therefore their electricity bills and their carbon footprint. Furthermore we are attracting investment in renewable energy technologies and education to the territory.

The ACT government is certainly leading by example to show the Canberra community that zero net emissions are also genuinely achievable. As you can see from the annual report, the directorate continued its excellent work to lead the city and the nation in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Legislation was finalised in the reporting period to bring forward the deadline for 100 per cent renewable energy from 2025 to 2020 and to be carbon neutral by 2050. We have secured the electricity to achieve the 100 per cent target by 2020 with the finalisation of a second 200 megawatt wind auction and a 200 megawatt reverse auction for large-scale renewable energy.

Just last month, in February, we hit the 35 per cent renewable energy benchmark when one of the wind farms came online, the latest instalment at Hornsdale. The innovative reverse auction process requires successful companies to not only provide renewable electricity but to contribute to the ACT economy in terms of investment, employment, innovation and education around renewable energy. This will build innovation and cement the ACT as a key hub for research and investment in renewable energy technology, which will contribute to the government's commitment to diversifying our economy.

One of the more exciting developments over the year was the announcement of the next generation energy storage program, the largest supported rollout of household batteries in the world outside Germany. Next generation energy storage will provide around 36 megawatts of energy storage installed across more than 5,000 Canberra homes and businesses between now and 2020. With 100 per cent renewable electricity removing a significant amount of our emissions, we now need to start work on devising ways to reduce emissions from other big sectors such as transport. We have also continued work on preparing for and adapting to climate change, which is already happening.

The community supported our draft climate change adaptation strategy, which has now been finalised. The strategy outlines how we can prepare to reduce our risks and increase our resilience to the expected changes to temperature and rainfall patterns and subsequent drought, heat waves, increased fire risk and the potential for flash flooding. We will now move to implement this strategy, focusing on communicating the risks and impacts of climate change to the region and bettering climate change risk considerations and adaptation actions in ACT government policies, programs and

practices, and encouraging everyone to make changes to increase resilience and foster emerging opportunities that will arise under climate change scenarios.

During the year we continued our sustainability programs which provide energy, water and waste advice to residents, businesses, schools, government directorates and community events. Highlights included the more than 2,200 low income households helped through the low income programs and the 348 businesses accredited by the Actsmart business recycling program. They recycled approximately 14,000 cubic metres of mixed recyclables, nearly 20,000 cubic metres of paper and cardboard and nearly 1,600 metres of organic material.

The energy efficiency improvement scheme, which we will speak about later, was extended to December 2020 in recognition of its success and the remaining potential to implement cost-effective energy savings in ACT households and businesses. Over 391,000 energy-saving activities took place in more than 22,000 households during the reporting year.

The government continues to lead sustainability by example. Government emissions reduced by 19 per cent between 2012 and 2015 through a combination of mitigation activities by directorates and the increasing proportion of renewable energy in the electricity grid. All directorates now have resource management plans. Through the carbon neutral ACT government framework directorate carbon budgets were trialled, with a collective reduction target of 3.2 per cent of electricity. Directorate carbon budgets will formally commence this year. The carbon neutral government fund approved \$2½ million in projects across the public service.

In conclusion, with that brief overview of some of the things that are going on, I would like to say that despite the ACT government making some excellent progress in this area there is still a lot of work to do. I am happy to talk about some of those emerging issues. Certainly, one of the key things we will be doing over the next 12 months is developing a plan to get us to zero net emissions by 2050 at the latest. I look forward to working with everybody in the Assembly on that challenging task.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I will return the chair's position to the chair once I have asked my questions. Minister, first off, thank you for your summary. I refer to the energy efficiency improvement scheme on page 42 of the annual report. One of the criticisms of the scheme has been the limited range of activities that have been implemented to date. There are only five, as I understand it—energy efficient light bulbs, door seals, instantaneous gas water heaters, standby power controllers and removal of refrigerators. There has apparently been resistance to the uptake of standby power controllers. What is the reason for that?

Mr Rattenbury: I will ask Stephen to give you some information on that.

Mr Bygrave: A number of activities, as you have noted, have been taken up under the energy efficiency improvement scheme. There have been a range of technical issues with standby controllers, which the team is looking at. Generally speaking, the take-up rates have been very high across all of the different activities. It is up to ActewAGL, the tier 1 retailer, to choose the different activities from the suite of potential activities available under the scheme. We now have Energy Australia joining

as a tier 2 retailer in that program. Also, we have just started a big rollout of commercial lighting in businesses around the ACT, which is achieving substantial emission reductions across those activities. There are activities around the installation of high efficiency gas heaters, for example, and split-system air conditioners. Door seals and weather sealing do prove to be popular because they are very low cost and achieve relatively high levels of abatement.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Do you wish to make any other statement on resistance regarding the power controllers?

Ms Ekelund: The assessment of them has been that people do not generally keep them on. They might install them and have them going for a while, but then they find that they become a nuisance and they prefer to turn off individual appliances separately. So we have found, unfortunately, that they have not been as effective as we had hoped earlier on. It is really a behavioural issue that suggests that they are really not the most cost-effective thing to put in households.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Is there any educational plan that is being thought about?

Ms Ekelund: Education has been part of it; nevertheless they have not been as effective as was first considered and hence have not been pursued further.

Mr Bygrave: The Actsmart programs provide a range of education opportunities to schools, households and businesses around the use of the different appliances, including standby power controllers. Modelling shows that those controllers can achieve up to a 10 per cent abatement opportunity if there are the right behavioural signals. So we do have some work to do in terms of behavioural change.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I have a couple more supplementaries on that. The Actsmart energy saving guide lists a number of ways in which households can reduce their power bills. However, I note that it does not include such things as swimming pools and spa baths, which have a high energy demand, with pool pumps and filters. Is there any reason why they are not on the list?

Mr Bygrave: No, but we can certainly add those to the list. It is a very good observation that those appliances, particularly pool pumps, are a bit of a hidden consumer of energy. Many people get their power bills and ask, "Why is it so high?" and it is often because they have a pool pump; those do chew up a lot of electricity. We can certainly add those to the list.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any plans for limiting the size of the energy and water demands of pools and spas?

Mr Bygrave: No.

THE ACTING CHAIR: My final supplementary is: has any audit been done to determine how many households have a swimming pool in Canberra?

Ms Ekelund: Yes, there has been work done on the number of swimming pools in Canberra, but that was more about the regulatory environment surrounding pools, not

necessarily in the context of energy consumption.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. I will now hand back to the chair for her first question and for—

THE CHAIR: That is okay. I am happy to keep going down the line. We will go to Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: I have got some questions about the Actsmart recycling programs. They probably cover a range of businesses and schools and community events. My first question relates to page 47. It says that the program helps businesses avoid overservicing that is caused when bins are collected when they are not full. How does the program achieve that?

Mr Rattenbury: For those details we will go straight to Ros Malouf, who is the leader of the program.

Ms Malouf: You were talking about overservicing of bins. A lot of people do not understand how much material actually goes in their bin each week. Part of the process of the auditing under the Actsmart program is to help them identify half-full or underutilised bins. That helps them to identify, when they finish the program, that they are actually having full bins collected on a regular cycle.

MS CHEYNE: Does that apply just to bins at people's desks?

Ms Malouf: That applies to bins being serviced in photocopy rooms and loading dock areas. Desk-side tends to be more serviced by the cleaners or the staff themselves. It is more the bins going out the door.

MS CHEYNE: I see that the winner of biggest recycler at the Sustainability Awards breakfast in May 2016 was Mooseheads.

Ms Malouf: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: It seems that bars would be a natural place for businesses to take up this program. Are there any other bars or pubs in town that are doing good work like Mooseheads?

Ms Malouf: There are some hotels. East Hotel in Kingston is doing a great job with their recycling as well. They have reduced their waste to landfill by implementing recycling both in their bar area and in their rooms. Ainslie footy club is doing a great job as well. They have reduced their waste more from their bar area.

MS CHEYNE: How do businesses get involved in the program?

Ms Malouf: It is an easy sign-up. A memorandum of understanding is a sign-up to the program. We identify how they hear about us. We do video testimonials and events and we have the awards, which highlight achievements by organisations that are doing great things or want to do great things. The Actsmart website also drives people to take action.

MS CHEYNE: Cross-contamination: while it is an exciting opportunity to ask people to recycle properly, how successful is it if someone puts an apple in their paper waste bin, for example, and how often does that happen? Does that compromise the success of the program?

Ms Malouf: All the waste streams can take a certain level of contamination of about 10 per cent depending on what the stream is, whether it is recycling, paper or mixed recycling. With our program we have a requirement that, to become accredited, 75 per cent of staff have attended a staff education session and that can be either online or face to face. We also have a cleaners workshop which trains cleaners in getting it right from your desk-side into the bins that go out the door and off to be recycled. There is a nationally accredited cleaning program which we deliver through the CIT.

MS CHEYNE: If you have a limit of 10 per cent cross-contamination then how often are we over 10 per cent?

Ms Malouf: Almost never with any of our clients. We get the signage right and the education right inside to make sure it goes correctly out to where it has got to go.

MS CHEYNE: With the education, do you do refresher training? All organisations have turnover.

Ms Malouf: Yes, we do annual training. With a big organisation like the Canberra stadium, we train all their new staff in January so we are ready to go for the new year because they have a complete changeover.

MS CHEYNE: I see on page 50 that something like 55 events have participated in the program up to June 2016. Again, how are they invited to do that? Is it in a similar way to what you do with businesses?

Ms Malouf: It is similar to the business program. We also target organisations, like parents and friends through schools and also through Events ACT, to make sure they can get involved.

MS CHEYNE: And the percentage of fetes in the ACT that participate?

Ms Malouf: Yes, we do fetes, soccer carnivals, big festivals, music festivals, the Multicultural Festival and the Canberra Show.

Mr Bygrave: We just did the Canberra Show and the Multicultural Festival. At the stall we have a recycling game—it turns out it is one of the most popular activities in the show—where kids come along and are asked to put different materials into two different bins. It is an education process not just for the kids but for their parents who are also watching. It is quite a popular activity.

MS CHEYNE: Do you have figures—particularly for those most recent big events, the Canberra Show and the Multicultural Festival—on how many people participated in those?

Ms Malouf: In the event or the game on the day?

MS CHEYNE: In the game.

Ms Malouf: We had 1,100 people at the Multicultural Festival actually attend the stall.

MS CHEYNE: Over the three days?

Ms Malouf: Over the three days, and we had just over 1,000 for the Canberra Show.

MS CHEYNE: Do you keep a record of how many people get it 100 per cent right in the game?

Ms Malouf: No. We use it as an education platform. No-one ever gets it wrong because we stop them before they get there.

Mr Rattenbury: It is a judgment-free zone.

MS CHEYNE: That is right. I have participated in this game and I learnt a lot.

Mr Rattenbury: The reason the Multicultural Festival is a good example of the improvement—if you could just give us the figures for that?

Ms Malouf: Yes. It had 10 tonnes of mixed recycling go to recycling this year, which is more than double any other year in the past. What we know about the festival is that Canberrans are very good at recycling. Making sure we get the infrastructure in the back of house means it really works. We spoke with most of the 900 vendors to make sure they knew what could go in the bins. We also had 2,000 litres of grey water, washing up water, that was not tipped down a drain but was sent to be cleaned. We had 800 litres of cooking oil picked up pretty much from the traders and sent for recycling.

Mr Rattenbury: The important part of that is the proactive work that goes on with the traders as well, including the discussions beforehand, so that the plates and the like that they are using are recyclable. So you actually generate the recyclable material to go into the recycling system. It is quite a comprehensive program to work in advance of the event as well as at the event. A lot of preparation work goes into it.

MS CHEYNE: Again, cross-contamination: I think sometimes at those events community members want to do the right thing, but they are not quite sure. They do not want to contaminate recycling so they might put more in the rubbish bins, or they just hope it is recyclable and put it in?

Ms Malouf: If people do not know they tend to do the first. We do a lot of watching of people approaching the bins. Getting the right signage is very good. We found at the Multicultural Festival that people are very good. When you open it up to the public you can leave yourself open to quite big contamination rates, but it worked really well. It is about the placement of the bins, the way they are located and signage. Canberrans are just good at it. They really know what they are doing. We had no

rejected loads from the Multicultural Festival. We are yet to get the stats from the Canberra Show.

MS CHEYNE: That is impressive. How many loads would there be?

Ms Malouf: There were about six loads, whole truckloads of mixed recycling.

MS CHEYNE: No rejected loads means that—

Ms Malouf: No rejected loads.

MS CHEYNE: there was not a level of contamination that would stop it from being recycled.

Ms Malouf: That is correct.

Mr Bygrave: As the minister has indicated, education of the contractors is also key. There was a lot of prep work up-front to make sure the contractors were fully across it. Particularly at the Multicultural Festival we had a very engaged contractor, which makes a big difference.

MS CHEYNE: There has been a documentary recently about coffee cups not being able to be recycled. Is that true in the ACT? Does that have an impact on cross-contamination for a city of coffee drinkers?

Ms Malouf: It has a big impact on our program. I went to a waste conference 12 months ago, and industry still cannot work out whether or not they are recyclable. If industry cannot work it out, I am not sure that we can get the public to work it out. Coffee cups are actually recyclable in the system in the ACT. There are a few that will not get recycled, but they will take all of them and count those as contamination to get the ones that they actually can recycle. So keep putting them in your recycling bin and we will let you know if that cannot happen.

MS CHEYNE: That is helpful. Back to events and the take-up rate: we have a lot of events in the ACT. Fifty-five seems like a lot, but maybe as a percentage it might not be. Is it?

Ms Malouf: It is hard to tell how many events are actually on in the ACT. We are doing some work at the moment to work out ways we can encourage more people to take up the program. Some of our big event spaces are run by the ACT government, so there might be more of an encouragement at those events—at EPIC and on government land—to get people to recycle if they have an event there.

MS CHEYNE: How many school fetes each year are currently participating?

Ms Malouf: Out of that 55, I do not have the exact number, but probably about 30 are school fetes.

Mr Rattenbury: There are 130-odd schools: 90 government schools and another 40 non-government schools.

MS CHEYNE: As an event, fetes are very successful in the ACT—I went to one on the weekend—but they are not on the same scale, I suppose, as the Multicultural Festival in terms of the rubbish that is—

Ms Malouf: That is correct, but 100 per cent of the schools are signed up to our schools program. A lot of them are probably operating without actually being part of the public event program. They are probably effectively recycling at the fete, but it is just not being captured through the event program.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary question. Can you just clarify for me: why is it that some coffee cups can be recycled and others cannot?

Ms Malouf: Some are still polystyrene—not very many. Some have a lining that cannot be removed, quite like when you laminate paper. When you laminate paper there is not a process to take the paper out of the middle. It depends on the lining inside the cup.

MR PARTON: I want to ask a couple of basic questions about the Actsmart home energy advice program. The most basic question first up is: what does that service actually cost?

Ms Malouf: The cost of that program? We deliver that in house. We used to deliver it through a contracted service, but we brought it in house last year for a couple of reasons. One was to be able to deliver a better service, a more efficient service and a cheaper service for government. Basically, the home energy advice service delivers more than just a phone service. It is a phone and email service. It also delivers workshops that go out to the suburbs and delivers home energy workshops to the individual site. It is a \$250,000-a-year service.

MR PARTON: Sorry?

Ms Malouf: Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, including the FTE.

MR PARTON: So we had 78 workshops, 1,530 attended, emails were sent to 281 people and 34 user pay home assessments were conducted. How do those figures compare with any work that was done under the previous scenario or before the service was started, as KPIs of similar work?

Ms Malouf: The service has been quite different when we have brought it in-house. We have doubled the number of workshops that we do, and that is increasing. We are talking about this year now, but we are increasing it again this year. Calls to the ACT home assist hotline have increased by about 30 per cent. The repeat business, I suppose, is the interesting one: people send in emails, we give them some advice and they go to the hardware shop or their electrical retailer. They come back and have more questions. It is that kind of repeat: “I went and found this. What do you think about this? Will this work in my house? These are the plans that I have.” We really encourage those people to attend some of our workshops so they can get more of a face-to-face conversation.

MS LEE: In relation to the carbon neutral government framework, how may directorates have met their targets in their resource management plans under the framework?

Mr Bygrave: This program has been quite successful. We have already achieved some 20 per cent reductions in emissions across the ACT and are heading by 2020 for at least a 50 per cent reduction in total absolute emissions. All directorates have signed up to the program. All directorates have resource management plans in place. Now all directorates also have carbon budgets, which has been a new initiative underneath that program.

We have a carbon neutral government implementation group. Each directorate is represented across government. That meets approximately every quarter where we talk about progress, KPIs and how we are tracking. Also directorates are responsible for reporting. We have developed a common template for directorates to report in a consistent way on how they are tracking on electricity reductions, gas consumption reductions, waste reductions and also transport fuels, particularly for some of the large directorates like Health and Education which have transport fleets.

MS LEE: A collective reduction target of 3.2 per cent of electricity usage was set in 2015-16 across the ACT public service. How many directorates have met or exceeded that target?

Mr Bygrave: I would have to take that one on notice. But I can say that the carbon neutral government loan fund has been a very successful mechanism for directorates to meet their targets. Some \$12 million has been approved under that program. In the last financial year—2015-16—there were four applications, as the minister mentioned before. Some \$2.506 million was allocated across various directorates. Education Directorate has probably been the most ambitious in achieving emission reductions. I think it is a combination of having a very strong Actsmart presence in our schools and also a very engaged schools program with a very high uptake of the carbon neutral government loan fund from that directorate.

MS LEE: Finally, in terms of the greenhouse gas emissions target that we debated in the Assembly in February, how does the ACT government plan to meet these targets?

Mr Rattenbury: In terms of the 40 per cent by 2020?

MS LEE: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: That will be achieved through moving to the 100 per cent renewable electricity target. That will in large part deliver that entire abatement by 2020. Obviously some energy efficiency work is going on. We are, however, seeing an increase in our transport emissions, so that continues to be a challenge. Certainly in terms of moving to a position of zero net emissions by 2050 at the latest, that will become more challenging. In some ways the electricity emissions are the relatively easy ones to target. Other areas such as transport emissions, natural gas, which quite a few households use for heating particularly, industrial emissions and the like are going to be more challenging sectors to address.

MS LEE: In terms of the new wind farms that have come on, can you give us an update on how they are going and what you are hoping for?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly. We have just seen Hornsdale stage 1 take us up to 35 per cent of our electricity coming from renewable sources. The remainder of the wind farms have all now achieved financial close. They are under various stages of construction and we expect them all to be on stream by 2019.

MS LEE: And the Mugga Way solar farm?

Mr Rattenbury: We just had a spectacular official opening late last week, with line dancing and all. Minister Gentleman was dutifully covered in bits of flying lettuce, as is the tradition. That is now on stream generating power, contributing to the grid. That has been a very good partnership with Maoneng, the developers. They are very pleased with their success in the ACT and are keen for that to become a bit of a hub in terms of interaction with researchers and the like as the project goes forward.

MS LEE: Finally, the battery storage grant in terms of the take-up by the Canberra public, can you update us on that?

Mr Rattenbury: On Friday we marked the hundredth completed installation. We have around another hundred people who are under various stages of contract in terms of paying their deposits, getting the installations underway and the like. Effectively 200 people have taken up the offer. The potential is there for up to 5,000. There is a designated amount of money. I guess you might imagine that if, over time, the price comes down, as these things do, we may get a few more than 5,000, but the plan is to have up to 5,000 by 2020. This will deliver around 36 megawatts of storage. The place where the take-up has not been as strong—I mention this because we are keen to encourage them—is for businesses. It is not just a household scheme; it is also there for business. Obviously the scale means it will be more directed at small businesses, but certainly that is an opportunity as well. It is not exclusively for householders.

MS LEE: Correct me if I am wrong, but the report in the *Canberra Times* recently about the take-up of the battery storage referred to a \$12,000 start-up cost for households?

Mr Rattenbury: It does depend. There is a requirement to have solar panels on the roof with the battery. If somebody already has their panels and just goes for the battery, that is obviously cheaper. But if they have to have the whole system installed, that gets into the region, depending on the size of the system they go for on the roof, between about \$12,000 and \$16,000. The government discount is worth around \$2,900 a household.

MS LEE: If they have existing solar panels, how much would that be for a household?

Mr Bygrave: It could be between \$7,000 and \$10,000, but they are approximate figures. As the minister said, it really depends on the technology being installed and the scale of the project. Obviously if it is a three kilowatt versus a five kilowatt system there are differences in prices.

MS LEE: So it is safe to say it probably ranges anywhere from \$7,000 to \$16,000, I think you were saying?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, something in that region. I expect those prices to continue to come down. I reflect on my own experience of installing 2 point something kilowatts of solar in 2009 that cost me nearly \$10,000. A similar system these days is more like two and a half thousand dollars. I imagine we will see similar trends.

MR PARTON: Could I ask a supplementary? This is a broader question. Can I ask about the real measurable effect of the ACT's RETs and the carbon target? Obviously we cannot measure what effect our decisions in the ACT have on legislative decisions elsewhere; we can only determine what we do. Can we isolate this jurisdiction? What effect would our RET targets to 2020, for argument's sake, have on actual global temperatures? I know it may seem like a silly question, but if you were doing this just as a mathematics-based science, what is the bottom line? What are we achieving? Can you quantify in terms of global temperature change what effect all of our efforts would have?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Parton, I think that would be virtually impossible to do, as I am sure you imagine to be the case. But we know that to address this globally scientists have given us clear indication of the carbon budget needed. There is no single silver bullet to addressing that. Literally millions and millions of actions across the planet will be required to be taken in every jurisdiction by every household by every business.

MR PARTON: What we are talking about here is all about the big picture, is it not?

Mr Rattenbury: In some senses, yes. We are part of a global community that has to respond to this. It would be immoral for us to simply say we are such a small jurisdiction that we do not have to do anything. Certainly if everybody takes that approach, we are all in trouble. As one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in one of the wealthiest countries on earth, I think we have a special responsibility to take action. The ACT has one of the largest ecological footprints upon the planet and, again, I think we have a special duty to do our bit.

MR PARTON: But do you lie awake at night worrying that others might play the same ball game?

Mr Rattenbury: Of course. I have been to enough international negotiations in my time—I think the first time was in 2001—to know that you see various countries at various times declining to do their bit. Historically Australia has been identified as one of the worst. Outside of Saudi Arabia, Australia has been one of the biggest recalcitrants in international negotiations. I do worry, but I also know that, if you look through history, human beings are inspired by seeing what is possible. One of the strengths of what the ACT is doing is demonstrating what can be done and done very cost effectively.

MR PARTON: Off the top of your head, do you know what Australia's greenhouse gas emissions are as a percentage of world emissions?

Mr Rattenbury: Roughly 1.4 last time I looked.

Mr Bygrave: It is fair to say also that other states and territories not just in Australia but also globally are looking at the leadership of the ACT. Victoria is copying our reverse auction policy. Queensland is looking to do the same. By playing a leadership role in this space, it also inspires others, as the minister said, to take action and actually adopt some of the policy we have put in place.

We have calculated to the tonne the emission reductions from our renewable energy target; that is some 2 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum being achieved from that renewable energy target.

MR PARTON: But in terms of balancing that against the bigger global picture, it is a very small piece in that jigsaw?

Mr Bygrave: It is.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary. Minister, you mentioned in one of your answers that electricity is coming quite good as far as renewable but transport is the growing area of emissions. What are you looking at to address that?

Mr Rattenbury: Transport emissions are growing, and there are two elements to this. Once we bring on 100 per cent renewable energy, our emissions profile will change. So transport emissions will increase to between 55 and 60 per cent of our emissions. That becomes a proportionate matter. Obviously once you take the electricity emissions out, a fixed amount of transport emissions will become a larger proportion. So that is one side of it. The other side is that we are simply seeing growth in transport emissions. I do not have the figures.

Ms Ekelund: Whilst vehicle kilometres travelled per person have flatlined and, indeed, declined, there has been significant growth in light commercial vehicles. The territory has a challenge to reduce transport as a very high priority into the future, going from something like 25 per cent of our emissions, as the minister said, to about 60 per cent of emissions. Given that we have invested in decarbonising the electricity sector, certainly that is an obvious opportunity for the territory in the future to look at how we might be able to leverage off that investment to decarbonise the transport sector through electric vehicles as well.

Mr Bygrave: For example, the light rail system will be powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity effectively meaning it is a zero emissions transport solution. ACTION buses is trialling two electric buses this year. Again, when they are powered by renewable electricity, it means there are not only no tailpipe emissions but also no upstream emissions in the charging process. We have a range of incentives for electric vehicles right now, which includes differential registration. As part of our net zero emissions strategy in the next climate change strategy we will be recommending a range of options to further introduce incentives for electric vehicles.

MS LEE: If we are encouraging the take-up of electric vehicles, is there anything being done in terms of planning to ensure that new developments have capacity for

charging electric vehicles, or public car parks or offices for that matter?

Ms Ekelund: That is certainly an area we are looking at at the moment. Obviously it is easier within private homes to install charging stations. We already have, for example, in the ACT government a number of electric vehicles. At Dame Pattie Menzies House we have a couple of charging stations. We can encourage the rollout in commercial buildings. But obviously we need to look at things like the building standards in residential apartment buildings and also public parking areas. You may be aware that ActewAGL has already been investing in public charging stations. We will continue to work with ActewAGL and also the development sector in looking at what the rules might need to be into the future.

Mr Bygrave: There are a number of leading developers in the ACT, for example, Riverview with the Ginninderry development will be mandating electric vehicle charging points in all new residences as well as rooftop solar and a range of other leading technologies.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary to that. Are you looking at what you can do to help with the take-up of charging stations within existing building stocks? I am thinking not so much private houses but, say, multi-unit development strata arrangements.

Ms Ekelund: That will be part of it. We are required to review our climate change strategy and our transport for Canberra strategy commencing this year. They are exactly the sorts of things we will need to look at as part of that process. We expect that there will be a range of policy initiatives that we will propose to government and, subject to government endorsement, there may well be regulatory reform in those sorts of areas.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a question?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I have. I have a supplementary, Ms Ekelund, on the charging stations issue. Has any thought been given to a collaboration with businesses to develop charging stations?

Ms Ekelund: There has not been specific work done on that, but certainly we would be open to that.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that there was a submission and some inquiry from Calwell shopping centre, I think a year or so ago, regarding offering space for a charging station to be trialled with them. Was there any outcome from those inquiries?

Ms Ekelund: I am afraid I cannot help you there. It has not come across my desk, I am afraid.

MR DOSZPOT: Could you look into it to see whether there was any such inquiry and what happened?

Ms Ekelund: Certainly, we can take that on notice.

Mr Bygrave: Yes, there is a huge opportunity in shopping centres. As you know, people go to shopping centres for one or two hours, maybe more in some cases especially if it is a hot day and they want to get out of the heat. There is a great opportunity in particular in those areas for charging stations. ActewAGL, as Ms Ekelund has mentioned, has developed a charging infrastructure strategy. We are in preliminary discussions with them about the rollout of charging stations in the ACT. But it is early days at this point.

Mr Rattenbury: It also invites the question around what is the right tool to encourage the take-up of electric vehicles. With the increased battery range, most people tend to charge at home. Certainly it is the most common practice of the people I have spoken to who own electric vehicles. The battery range is now adequate for them to go where they need to go to Canberra in a day. So the issue of range anxiety, which is how it is described, is dissipating and people tend to charge at home.

The key things are whether it is charging stations at public places or whether there are other issues to get that uptake. At the moment vehicle availability and cost are quite a barrier. It tends to be pretty expensive to buy an electric vehicle. So I think probably at this point in time that is the bigger barrier.

That raises questions for government around whether it is equitable. We could offer a subsidy but the people who can afford those vehicles are generally people with a bit more money. They are probably not the people you necessarily want to target with a subsidy. There is the dilemma around whether it is the right thing in getting those people, the early adopters, to take it up. Do we increase the uptake and is that the right approach?

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I understand all of those qualifications you put on it. But the reason I ask about the Calwell one, in terms of strategy, is that if you are looking at the strategy for where charging stations should be, and distance certainly comes into it, Calwell is pretty well placed. I thought their strategy was quite sound.

You are also acting as a pathway to people who may be using their rechargeable cars to get to the snow. The strategy for that, I thought, would have been a pretty interesting one in terms of private enterprise wanting to assist in collaboration with the government on developing that strategy. I will leave my question there. As I asked, could you look into whether there was any discussion with the business concerned? I would be very interested to know.

Mr Rattenbury: To be clear, I certainly was not in any way negating the offer from Calwell. We will have to look into that. The blank looks along the table suggest that there is no knowledge of it. I was just elaborating on the issues that we are contemplating in this space.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I would like to talk about the ACT climate change adaptation strategy.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, of course.

THE CHAIR: A note in the annual report says it is going to be released. It has since been released. You received quite a few submissions from the public and did quite a lot of briefings. What was some of the input from the community that went into forming that strategy?

Mr Rattenbury: Just bear with us a moment.

Mr Mozqueira: The development of the adaptation strategy started from 2014. It included a series of workshops with experts to which the community was invited to participate and attend. Then there was quite a lengthy engagement process where we would have briefings across all the different community groups. Any interested party could actually prepare a submission. It was also available through a web page to provide electronic submissions.

THE CHAIR: Within the strategy there are obviously quite a lot of actions that have to be achieved by certain dates, including some within this year. My question goes to how you are starting to progress this, without having to start everything that needs to be done because we would be here for quite a while, given that this is quite a comprehensive strategy that reaches across a lot of areas, not necessarily within your own directorate either. In implementing these actions that need to be done, how are you finding that the work is progressing?

Mr Bygrave: It is, as you mentioned, a very cross-cutting issue, just like climate change more generally. We have just established an adaptation steering committee chaired by Ms Ekelund. We also have an implementation group, which I will be chairing across government portfolios, because it will involve things like addressing the urban heat island effect, urban forests, building design and regulations, flood management, water management and soil management. It is a very diverse set of activities across 27 actions across different directorates.

THE CHAIR: I go to one of the actions, because it is meant to have commenced last year. It is the monitoring and evaluation framework to measure resilience and outcomes and successful adaptation, including establishing a longitudinal community survey. Is that work underway?

Mr Bygrave: That work is underway.

THE CHAIR: Have the indicators to evaluate the resilience across community sectors been developed?

Mr Mozqueira: They are being developed in consultation with the different directorates. There are a number of factors in this. There is not only just looking at delivery of individual actions but also the result, the outcome of the actual delivery. How do you actually gauge that a community is becoming more resilient to something that is quite an academic exercise in that sense? We are relying on looking at the progress of work that is being done, for example, by the Rockefeller Institute.

We are working with the national climate change adaptation research facility, basically with the university. What we have agreed to do is to each develop a series of

indicators that would be then gauged through a longitudinal survey in the community. It is not just delivery of the actions but actually increasing the overall sense that the community is becoming more resilient to these impacts. It is not something that will be measured instantaneously but over a number of decades.

THE CHAIR: With the results coming out of this, are you going to be publishing those as the surveys are done so we can see how we are tracking?

Mr Mozqueira: Yes, there are going to be a couple of approaches to that. The first thing we are proposing to have is an electronic dashboard that will be available on our website. The community can actually log in and look at the progress on the actions. In addition to that, we will be incorporating delivery across those actions in the minister's annual report on action on climate change.

THE CHAIR: Talking about essentially bringing the community with us and using this as an education and awareness raising tool as much as anything else, one of the other actions that you have in here is actually going out to stakeholders—I would count the community within that—and looking at the impacts of climate change. What sorts of programs have you got to take this strategy and the work it is doing out to the wider community?

Ms Ekelund: Can I add a couple of dimensions to this as the chair of the steering committee on implementation? We see this, of course, as very much a whole-of-government piece of work even though our portfolio is driving it. At our steering committee we had presentations being given by the Chief Health Officer and also by the commissioner for emergency services to reinforce the work that they are doing in, for example, the health messaging on very hot days and that we are doing in collaboration with the ESA on whether existing parts of Canberra need to be bushfire declared. Likewise, we are working with TCCS on the urban forest and canopy. So there is a whole range of areas.

In respect of indicators of success, if you like, as has been mentioned, some of them will take years. For example, if we are talking about the urban canopy, many parts of existing Canberra have up to probably 70, 80 per cent urban canopy, whereas other parts would be struggling to have 10 per cent canopy. Retrofitting areas and making sure new urban areas, at maturity, have the potential to have high levels of urban canopy are the sorts of things that will be put as indicators. But to actually see the outcomes will take a very long time.

I think recognition of heat as one of the most significant natural hazards in Australia is important: the indicators are already there in terms of some of the success that we are having in messaging to people to look after each other. It is an outcome that the community is recognising heat but it needs to learn more. As the Chief Health Officer has said, we as a community are not generally used to this relentless heat for multiple days without a cooling off in between. So our community has to learn how to deal with heat waves and more of them into the future. It is sort of a multi-pronged approach and the indicators will be quite diverse, depending on what part of the adaptation agenda we are looking at.

Mr Bygrave: In terms of community consultation specifically, we have just

commenced consultations with a range of stakeholders, including NGOs and business groups as part of the net zero emissions strategy. We have an adaptation perspective as well as a mitigation perspective as part of those consultations. As part of any new future climate change strategy, we really want to integrate and more fully embed adaptation with mitigation rather than just having a separate adaptation strategy and a separate mitigation strategy. It is thinking about every strategy and policy initiative from both of those perspectives, because climate change is already upon us. We are seeing the effects of that in the community. Thinking about buildings or planting a tree from both mitigation as well as adaptation perspectives is valuable.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, my question is related to page 45 in the annual report under the heading “Wood heater replacement program”. My question is: how many households have taken up the \$1,100 subsidy for replacing a wood heater?

Mr Bygrave: I will start that and then I will pass to Ms Malouf if I have any issues. There have been some 1,114 wood heaters removed. There have been 33 rebates provided as part of the replacement program; 13 of those rebates have gone to electric heating systems; 17 to gas systems; and three rebates have been provided just for the removal of those wood heaters specifically. In terms of the number of households, that generally covers it; is that right?

Ms Malouf: That does cover it, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: The 1,114 you referred to, what is the total number of wood heaters that you approximate would be in use?

Ms Malouf: We do not have a number on the number of wood heaters in use.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay.

Ms Malouf: We do not have a baseline for that.

Mr Bygrave: We can take that on notice and see what information we can collect, though.

MR DOSZPOT: I guess my question is related to how important it is to know what the pollutants are, in your terminology, what the effect of the uptake is and what else could be done. If you could—

Ms Ekelund: Could I add that over the time of this program having been in place, there has been progressive decline in the take-up rate for the replacement system. There has been a reduction in, I guess, those people wanting to replace them. Those people who retain wood heaters want to keep their wood heaters. But concurrently we have had, through our air quality monitoring, clear patterns of reductions in particulate pollutant loadings in our atmosphere which shows that education and the heater replacement program have been effective in improving air quality outcomes in the territory.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. My question still stands. Can you come back to me with any information on that sort of break-up. My supplementary to that is: how many

households have taken up the \$600 subsidy for a fixed flue gas system?

Ms Malouf: I will have to take that one on notice. We do not have the split of the two different systems here at the moment.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a further supplementary that you may need to take on notice. How many households have taken up the \$100 subsidy for removal of a wood heater?

Ms Malouf: There were only three who took up the removal only. Most of those—there are only three—were renovations. It is people who are moving into a home no longer wanting the wood heater. They have actually done it as a removal process only.

Mr Bygrave: As I mentioned in my earlier answer, 17 of the 33 have been on gas, but we can get more information on split, because there are different types of gas heating systems.

MS CHEYNE: I have some supplementaries on this. Based on the air quality surveys and noting that we do not have a full overview of how many households have a wood heater, do we know where at least wood heaters are concentrated? Are there suburban areas? Is it some of our older districts like Belconnen, the inner north or inner south?

Ms Malouf: Most of our removals are done in the older suburbs at the moment. But the air quality problem does not necessarily sit over that area.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, sure.

Ms Ekelund: Places like Tuggeranong often suffer from temperature inversions which keep the wood heat and particulate matter in the atmosphere. Where you have got a temperature inversion, that is where the community suffers most.

MS CHEYNE: Does that happen because of—

Ms Ekelund: It is the topography and the air settling in the valley.

MS CHEYNE: Again, without having full details of who has a wood heater, and noting that we have seen that reduction in take up, how do we raise awareness in the community about this program?

Ms Ekelund: We have an annual program, burn right tonight. We also educate people on the right sorts of fuel to use and accredit fuel merchants. But usually annually in the autumn leading into winter we will run an education campaign on radio to encourage people to think about their neighbours and make sure that they are maintaining their heaters properly and using the right timber.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: I have another supplementary for you, minister. Just referring to all of the initiatives that are currently underway, what is the total percentage of the budget dedicated to actually informing people about what is available and the education process in going from one system to another? Can you give us an indication

of how much money is spent on promoting the opportunities?

Mr Rattenbury: I think we will take the detail on notice. But let me just clarify the question: when you say “percentage of the budget”, you mean a budgeted—

MR DOSZPOT: How much money is dedicated to promoting and advertising the advantages?

Mr Rattenbury: Sure. We will give you that. Do you want that as a percentage of the ACT budget?

MR DOSZPOT: We could work it out from the figure you give us, but yes, whatever.

Mr Rattenbury: It will not be a large percentage of the ACT budget, but it is an important program.

MR DOSZPOT: I will be interested in the dollar figure, for starters.

Mr Rattenbury: We will give you a dollar figure for the program.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MS CHEYNE: I apologise; I am probably going back to something that we briefly covered before, the energy efficiency low income program, the outreach program, and moving to what it was replaced by with the low income program. How were the service providers chosen for the outreach program?

Ms Malouf: That is done with a full procurement process through ACT government procurement processes.

MS CHEYNE: With the outreach program being replaced by the low income program, it looks as though it was a smooth transition, because the number of people accessing the program over the year seems to be above target?

Ms Ekelund: Yes, that is correct. The outreach program is basically the same program. What we have done is put a few improvements into that program. “Outreach” was identified by our community partners as probably not the name for this program; they use “outreach” for a lot of other programs that they run for low income. They suggested that we change the name, and we did it at that point of changeover of contract. It delivers predominantly the same services that it did before.

MS CHEYNE: What was the impetus for moving from a number of service providers to just St Vincent de Paul?

Ms Malouf: That was an efficiency measure to try to cut down on the administration costs of that program.

MS CHEYNE: And has it?

Ms Malouf: Yes, definitely. We can deliver more to more households now. We can

meet that higher demand that we unfortunately have.

MS CHEYNE: How? How has doing that led to that?

Ms Malouf: With fewer dollars spent on administration, that can be funnelled into more household visits, more appliances, more curtains.

MS CHEYNE: So basically having a lot of service providers meant you had much more in administrative fees?

Ms Malouf: Yes, correct.

MS CHEYNE: Or charges to you that can now be funnelled elsewhere?

Ms Malouf: That is correct, yes.

MR PARTON: In reference to that, what is the cost of that entire program?

Ms Malouf: The cost of the program is about \$900,000 per year. That includes the education, the draught proofing, the appliances, the curtains that are added to that program. That program actually requires households to have someone come in and do the education, because we know the behaviour change is imperative to making it work.

MR PARTON: How are households selected to, for argument's sake, be recipients of the curtain installation or the old fridge removal? How are those households selected?

Ms Malouf: Just to be clear, the fridge removal is actually an energy efficiency improvement scheme program, but with the curtain program, all of the ones under outreach or the new low income program are identified through the service provider, which is St Vincent de Paul. They have people that come to them directly.

MR PARTON: So when the decision was made to just go with Vinnies, that was because they were handling most of these referrals anyway?

Ms Malouf: There was a whole procurement process, but there were a lot of questions on whether they could deliver to the whole of Canberra. We wanted a service provider that could deliver across the city rather than in certain areas, and not all providers could do that.

MR PARTON: When it gets down to that final decision, who actually makes the final assessment as to whether curtains are to be replaced? Who makes that call?

Ms Malouf: That is the energy efficiency improvement officers, which are hired by Vinnies staff to actually go into the household and do a full assessment.

MR PARTON: All right. On page 45 it suggests that 60 homes had new curtains installed. What do we think? Are we happy with that? Do we regard that as a successful number?

Ms Malouf: This is actually a volunteer program so it is run through St Vincent de

Paul. ACT government supply the curtains and material, and rods and mechanics behind it. The curtains are sewn by volunteers and put in by volunteers. It is a very cost-effective way to get, in living areas, about \$400 worth of curtains installed.

Mr Bygrave: And 164 curtains have been installed since the commencement of the program.

MR PARTON: Please excuse my ignorance on this, but is this program only available to people living in public housing?

Ms Malouf: No.

MR PARTON: No?

Ms Malouf: No. There is an assessment process that is run through Vinnies, but you can be an owner-occupier or private renter.

MR PARTON: Okay. Magnificent; thank you.

MS CHEYNE: I have some supplementaries on the curtain project. I assume the purpose of the curtain project is the warmth that the curtains provide.

Ms Malouf: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: What materials does the ACT government provide for the volunteers to make up?

Ms Malouf: We have a requirement that the curtains are backed curtains, insulating quality curtains that the material is used for, and that they are installed with a pelmet, making sure that they are getting the best energy efficiency that they can. Besides the energy efficiency, they also deliver a level of privacy for the home owner which they may not be able to afford.

MS CHEYNE: What are the criteria? You said anybody can apply to participate in this scheme. What criteria do they need to satisfy?

Ms Malouf: St Vincent de Paul have quite stringent criteria, income-assessed criteria, and a needs-based assessment is done.

MS CHEYNE: What role did SEE-Change have in this?

Ms Malouf: SEE-Change started this as a bit of a community trial with St Vincent de Paul and the ACT government. We have since carried that on.

MS CHEYNE: Is that where the volunteers come from?

Ms Malouf: The volunteers are sourced by St Vincent de Paul.

MS LEE: Chair, I have a supplementary, if that is okay?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS LEE: Ms Malouf, you earlier stated that going down from a number of providers to Vinnies saved on admin costs which meant that the moneys could be funnelled into more services.

Ms Malouf: Yes.

MS LEE: Have you got actual figures that you can provide to the committee?

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

MS LEE: Thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: I also have a supplementary on both of those last questions. With regard to St Vincent de Paul's involvement, can you elaborate and talk about them assessing a number of applicants. Are they doing that on a voluntary basis?

Ms Malouf: No, they are actually paid employees. The energy efficiency officers are trained and they are paid by St Vincent de Paul to identify groups. A lot of the people that we have are referred from our old suppliers, one of those other four that are not delivering the program now. Also they get referred through other welfare programs. Once they are referred, they go through a full assessment process, and that is on site at the house, at the home owner's house.

MR DOSZPOT: My question relates somewhat to Ms Lee's question regarding the administration of the program itself and the amount of energy, if you like, that St Vincent de Paul has to spend on assessing all of the applicants. Do you have a figure for a typical month? This is all over Canberra, is it?

Ms Malouf: Yes, that is correct.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there a figure for how many people have been assessed and how many people have actually been recommended for the implementation?

Ms Malouf: I would have to take that on notice because I do not have that number.

MR DOSZPOT: If you could. It would be interesting to know just how wide this can go.

Ms Malouf: Yes.

Mr Bygrave: In terms of the low income energy efficiency sustainable home advice program, there have been some 262 in-home assessments. About 1,539 people engaged with that program. But we can provide more detail on that.

MR DOSZPOT: Such as the uptake? We are talking about the assessments there, but how many have actually been in a position or qualified to be recipients of that scheme?

Ms Malouf: Yes, we can do that.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MR PARTON: Mr Rattenbury, in one of your previous answers you referred to battery-powered cars and the growing range of those cars. I meant to jump in and ask but I did not: what is a ballpark figure? What is that range growing to? You also mentioned the fact that the cost of those cars is very much a barrier to people getting into them. What is a ballpark figure to get in there?

Mr Bygrave: The Nissan Leaf has a range of 130 to 160 kilometres, depending on how you drive the vehicle. Of the new vehicles coming onto the market, the new Nissan Leaf will be the same price but it will have double the range, although I note that it is not being provided in the Australian market. The Chevy Bolt in the United States will have a range of some 300 to 350 kilometres and will cost in the US some \$US30,000. Prices are coming down substantially as battery prices come down. Battery prices are expected to drop some 60 per cent over the next four years.

Similarly—you are obviously aware of the Tesla vehicles—the Tesla model S is a very expensive vehicle, over \$100,000, but with a range of 450 to 500 kilometres. It is really addressing the minister's point around range anxiety. The model 3 will be much cheaper and obviously with a similar kind of range.

What we are seeing is battery prices dropping dramatically, electric vehicle costs, therefore, dropping dramatically, and range improvement at the same time.

MR PARTON: From a sustainability perspective, what sort of a role do you think battery-powered vehicles are going to play in our march forward in the next 10 to 20 years?

Mr Rattenbury: I am not sure about the time frame but I would expect to see a move to electric vehicles across the board. Given the earlier comments I made about transport emissions, the necessity for electrifying the transport fleet is very high. There are, of course, hydrogen-powered vehicles as well. Toyota has developed hydrogen-powered vehicles. In a sense, they are electric vehicles just with an on-board electrolyser that creates the electricity on board rather than out of a power point.

There are differing views on which way to go but it does appear at this point that battery-powered vehicles rather than hydrogen-powered vehicles are probably taking the lead at this stage. I have seen differing figures. I see the Californians are going great guns. I have seen some European figures that suggest it will be a slower uptake. I think it will depend a lot on the cost but the average age of a vehicle in Australia is around 10 years.

Ms Ekelund: If I may also, we are starting to see some European countries actually legislate to phase out the internal combustion engine from about 2025.

MR PARTON: Phase it out?

Ms Ekelund: Phase out. No new internal combustion-engine cars would be permitted to be registered in some countries post 2025. Some countries are taking very aggressive steps to decarbonise the transport sector.

MR PARTON: You mentioned earlier, Mr Bygrave, trialling a couple of ACTION buses. You talked about two buses that were—

Mr Bygrave: Being trialled by ACTION. These are buses that are being provided out of a company in Sydney. AVUS, I think, is the name of the company. That trial will occur over the next 12 months and then we will actually make a decision about how effective that has been.

MR PARTON: I guess it is more of a transport directorate question but do you know how the price point of those buses compares to regular combustion-engine buses?

Mr Bygrave: They are more expensive obviously, and I can provide more detail on notice. But it is more cost effective to transition our bus fleet to electric than it is for our passenger fleet, for example. You have, obviously, opportunities for centralised charging infrastructure when a bus returns to a depot. You have that scale. The electric buses being trialled I think will have a range of some 500 kilometres. They will be able to meet all of the route demands currently existing in the ACT.

As Ms Ekelund mentioned, Norway and the Netherlands have essentially mandated that from 2025 all new vehicles will be electric. The European Union with their new emissions standards for vehicles will essentially drive—pardon the pun—and incentivise electric vehicles because the only way to meet those emission standards will be through electric vehicles. It is the same in California. These international developments will essentially flow through to Australia over time.

MR DOSZPOT: My question relates to hybrid cars which have got both batteries in operation as well as petrol. What is your assessment of whether they have a potential for the ACT? Is there much of an uptake in hybrid cars and, if so, is it feasible for the ACT government to standardise on hybrid cars as a savings measure or a pollution-control measure?

Mr Rattenbury: Obviously there is a range of hybrid vehicles available. The ACT government has some in its fleet. You see some around as taxis. Obviously there are quite a few private people who have purchased them. The penetration figure is not high. I will have to go and check this, but I think it is in the order of two per cent. I think it is one of those things where they have played an important role but with the rate of change we are seeing in the uptake of electric vehicles and the development of technology, I suspect, we will see people moving pretty quickly to full-scale electric vehicles and hybrids will have had their day.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a little experience with hybrid cars. I own one, and the savings in petrol are quite considerable.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: From that point of view, that is something that is happening now.

What I am asking is: are the savings suggesting that the ACT government should lead the way in having a look at a transition to utilising hybrid cars? It is a timely question.

Ms Ekelund: We do have a number of hybrid cars, as the minister said, in our fleet. I mentioned also we have electric vehicles in the ACT government fleet. We encourage low-emission vehicles through stamp duty and registration fees. We have incentives for people to use lower emission vehicles. They might be some vehicles that are smaller with smaller engine capacity and smaller emissions generally. But we do certainly have, through stamp duty and registration, a framework through which we incentivise low-emission vehicles. As well as the savings in cost of fuel that you mentioned, there are added benefits for investing in low emission vehicles. Also some of them retain their value pretty well when sold.

MS LEE: Minister, you earlier said that, obviously with the range now becoming a bit more accessible, most people will charge their electric cars at home. For the people who do live in high-rise apartment buildings, especially where we live in the north, what will be the cost of that, and what will be the cost to new developers that might be putting that into their framework when they come to selling off plan?

Mr Rattenbury: I think we will probably need to take that one on notice. But the observation I can make is that it is much cheaper obviously to do it up-front while you are making the building rather than to retrofit it later. I think we could probably give you some sort of indicative figure for a standard multi-residential tower kind of thing.

MS LEE: That would be great, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Is there a difference between enabling a building to be able to hold the charging station and actually installing the infrastructure? Is it a case of it can be done quite cheaply and people ask developers to make the option available as opposed to telling them that they have to put the infrastructure in place and individuals could take it up themselves?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

Ms Ekelund: I think that is a very good question. Certainly there would be nothing to prevent a body corporate making the decision now to put the infrastructure in. I think the question that you ask is: should we be regulating to require them to be put in? That would be something that would be looking at as part of the review of Transport Canberra and the climate change strategy, whether there need to be some regulatory changes over time.

THE CHAIR: Would you be looking at new builds or would you also be looking at the existing building stock?

Ms Ekelund: I think it is fair to say we could look at either. Obviously there are generally longer lead times in retrofitting existing buildings. I am aware that you are aware that there are bodies corporate that we need to deal with as well. That makes it a little more complex.

THE CHAIR: I just want to get a feel from the committee—we have also got the

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment here—whether we want to move on to questions on that, or are you still wanting to—

MS LEE: I have one more question for the minister. It is about waste, but it does have a renewable energy aspect to it as well, so I promise I am not barking up the wrong tree. There was some funding in relation to the ACT waste feasibility study—I understand that Minister Fitzharris now has carriage of that—and just last month there was a calling for ideas that was put out by the ACT government. The document stated:

A feed-in tariff may be offered for the renewable portion of any energy generated from waste. It would likely be set a rate between the prices previously awarded in the Territory's large scale renewable energy auctions, ie \$79-\$186/MWhr.

Are you able to give us a bit more information on the process for offering that feed-in tariff and also whether you, as Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, were consulted in that process?

Mr Rattenbury: The expression of interest process has gone out. The history of the waste feasibility study is that a couple of years ago there was a proposal and ideas were being floated around building a large-scale waste processing system. Instead, we took a decision at the time and got the budget funding to have this waste feasibility study to break down each of the waste streams. I think it has been identified that there are 57 waste streams. You can separate it out into 57 different types of waste.

With the expression of interest process now, more work is being done to understand those waste streams. What I hope will come out of that is that people will come forward with innovative ideas on how to deal with all of those streams. My strong preference would be to see each of those waste streams used for the highest order possible use. That means you start with reuse, recycling, and you go through the steps. I cannot remember all the steps now. I think that the various forms of incineration are the lowest order use. I personally have a strong preference to see things much higher up the order of use.

Prior to my life in politics I was deeply concerned by a range of incineration processes. They tend to have a range of toxic by-products. I remain open-minded that somebody has invented something new but, in the absence of that, I do not think we would want to bring any sort of incineration process into the territory that would result in the release of any sort of persistent organic pollutants or the production of a significant amount of contaminated ash streams and the like.

MS LEE: Minister, in that regard, are you familiar with the FOY Group's proposal?

Mr Rattenbury: I am. Well, in the broad, yes.

MS LEE: So what is your view in your capacity as Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability?

Mr Rattenbury: In my specific capacity as the minister, I have spoken with Minister Gentleman and asked him to ensure, which he has done, that there is a greenhouse gas

analysis of the proposal. We need to get a sense of the impact it would have on the ACT's greenhouse emissions. More broadly, as I have just touched on, I am concerned about any process of pyrolysis, incineration, or whatever you want to call it. Over many years I have seen a range of claims from people about the things they can do that result in "no emissions". Minister Gentleman, I think, has taken a good decision to appoint an expert panel. We have seen a range of claims from the FOY Group. We have seen a range of concerns expressed by the community. I think having an opportunity to have this independent expert panel provide us with some analysis is very helpful for decision-makers.

MS LEE: In terms of the waste that we are talking about here, what part of that energy from waste is renewable?

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry?

MS LEE: What part of the waste that we are talking about here—the calling for ideas—would you say is going to be the renewable part?

Mr Rattenbury: I would be reluctant to speculate at this point in the sense that the very process of the EOI is to invite people to come forward. I guess the beauty of that approach is that it does invite innovation. It invites people to come with new ideas. It encourages new things to happen. At this stage it is hard to know what people are going to come forward with. But, as I say, my focus would be on making sure that we get the highest possible reuse, recycling, of materials rather than moving to the incineration phase. I am not a fan of that at all.

MS LEE: In relation to this, I think there are a couple of solar-powered waste bins around Canberra.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I think TCSS has installed a couple in the Molonglo district.

MS LEE: I know there is one in Kingston. I am not sure where else they are. How are they working? What is the cost of those and are they effective?

Mr Rattenbury: You would have to take that up with TCCS, I am afraid. They are responsible for the rollout of that infrastructure.

MS LEE: Yes. There have not been any measurements from your directorate about their effectiveness?

Mr Rattenbury: No, it is such a small-scale trial at this stage. TCCS, I believe, is taking the lead on that.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, referring to page 46, programs for businesses, the Actsmart business energy and water program is open to ACT businesses with annual electricity bills of up to \$20,000 and up to 10 FTE. My question is: a total of 143 businesses have been assessed during 2015-16. What percentage of eligible businesses does this represent?

Mr Rattenbury: The number of businesses in the ACT is essentially your question,

isn't it?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, that is our presumption, but do you have any other measurement for that?

Ms Malouf: We have some information from the Bureau of Statistics that there are roughly 20,000 small businesses in the ACT. Whether they would fit into the category for this program has not been assessed.

MR DOSZPOT: That was my question. When you are targeting a program like this, you must have some idea of what expenditure is required to get the education out there. My question stands. Can you give us an assessment, if you have such a calculation, of what percentage of the 143 businesses assessed could be eligible.

Ms Malouf: We will take that on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: That would be good. When the scheme was first developed, what number or percentage of eligible businesses was basically considered? You must have had some idea at the outset as to what sort of target you were looking at.

Ms Malouf: For the program?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Malouf: Money was diverted through the EEIS program to develop this program. It was done as a trial based on the budget available. We run it more budget based rather than total available businesses. We knew we would never hit every business in Canberra.

MR DOSZPOT: What is that budget figure?

Ms Malouf: The initial budget was \$270,000.

MR DOSZPOT: In terms of the financial parameters, the lowest amount and the highest amount of funding provided for businesses seeking assistance—can you give us some indication of that?

Ms Malouf: Sorry, can you repeat that question?

MR DOSZPOT: What is the minimum assistance and what is the maximum assistance that is available for the businesses that are eligible?

Ms Malouf: For businesses that are eligible—that is, businesses that have an electricity spend of less than \$20,000 per year and/or fewer than 10 full-time equivalent staff—there is a \$5,000 rebate available for recommendations under the assessment. Our assessor goes out and does an assessment, and you choose something off that at a 50-50 cost share with the business. It is a \$5,000 rebate that is available.

MR DOSZPOT: It is set at \$5,000. There is no entry level and perhaps more if the business can achieve bigger savings?

Ms Malouf: No, the \$5,000 rebate is a flat amount. We find that most businesses spend well in excess of that.

MR DOSZPOT: Finally, of the businesses that have applied—143 have been assessed—how many have been successful?

Ms Malouf: We count them as successful if they have had a rebate conversion of about 62 per cent. Of those businesses that have taken up a rebate, on average they save about \$2,500 off their energy bills per annum.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I have a question for the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

Mr Rattenbury: Chair, if you are comfortable, I will leave at this point. The commissioner is independent.

THE CHAIR: That is fine. Everyone has finished their questions for Minister Rattenbury?

Mr Rattenbury: I just wanted to be clear that everyone was happy with that. Thank you.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
Auty, Dr Kate, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
Smith, Ms Becky, Senior Manager

THE CHAIR: My first question goes to page 8 of the report which talks about moving to an internationally recognised environmental accounting and biophysical modelling framework. Can you run through some of the benefits from shifting to this new approach in the reporting?

Dr Auty: I am responding to the request to talk about the annual report from the point of view of three commissioners, I think. However, on the point of the question—you are referring to the environmental accounting efforts—when I arrived in the office, Commissioner Ann Lyons Wright had started some discussions around this particular way of considering the benefits of the environment and ecosystems services to the community and also to policymaking.

We had had some earlier discussions with the ANU about how that particular way of framing the questions and the answers might be useful in environmental reporting. It is clear there are some advances in other jurisdictions around this. What I have set in place is a quite extensive collaboration with the ANU, in particular, with Dr Michael Vardon and his team at the ANU who have an extensive background in environmental accounting and, in particular, the system of environmental and ecosystem accounting which is the international standard. I have a member of my staff here who is involved in that state of the environment reporting effort as well.

We will be taking the view that there are accounts that can be considered which cover a range of sectors: waste, energy, water, and, of course, the experimental ecosystem accounting that has also been undertaken across a range of domains.

From the point of view of what this might be useful to deliver for the ACT, it actually locates environmental matters in what I would describe as an economic framework. It gives us the opportunity to consider how we might be improving the environment and also running with the co-benefit that comes with the better economic outcome as well. It is an international standard; we have not advanced on a frolic of our own around this.

The people I have had involved in the expert working group that I convened when I first arrived include the ABS, who have had a long involvement with this, the Bureau of Meteorology and the people who were involved in developing some of the accounts in Victoria, notably, Mark Eigenraam, and also Carl Obst, who has been involved with the UN. There have been others we have drawn into it from, for instance, the New South Wales administration. We had the chief economist attend for the purposes of that roundtable. That roundtable has led to ongoing discussions, and the work is now well and truly underway.

We propose presenting an exposure draft of those accounts. We will be taking that to the community and to the expert working group and to others who might be interested in analysing what we have been doing. Having taken that exposure draft to the second

round of consultations, we will then consider how it is going to play out with the state of the environment report.

Some questions have been raised with the office about whether we will be jettisoning the previous indicators. That is not the case at all. These two pieces of work will run in tandem. I am happy for Becky Smith, who has been involved in the way we are developing the accounts, to talk specifically to any questions you might have.

THE CHAIR: I have a few more questions. Is the state of the environment report the only thing you are looking to applying these indicators to, or do you see other uses for them as well?

Dr Auty: At this stage we are developing this in house and we have taken the view that there is a need to work out the data and the analysis quite carefully. I am not expanding it into anything else at this time. It may well be that when we bring the exposure draft to people for consideration there may be some other suggestions. That is something we will consider in time.

THE CHAIR: With the indicators, you were saying that this is a way to put economic and environmental considerations together. What sorts of things are you looking to measure with the indicators? Once we get this report, what are we going to be reading?

Dr Auty: I will ask Becky Smith to respond to that. Can I say that this has been a starting from scratch exercise in the office. We have, as I have indicated, experts assisting us in the manner in which we are developing this. Becky has the role of doing it, and it has been a very interesting exercise to work out what the data is, how we can make sure it is ACT specific and what we can then use it for.

I would also like to say before I throw to Becky that this is, of course, an international standard, so it brings it into a certain alignment with what is happening internationally. The World Bank, of course, has been interested in this in developing countries, and Europe has for a very long time been involved in this, in particular, the Netherlands and some of the other countries that concern themselves with what might be the appropriate ways of aligning the environment and the economic measures so you get better policy outcomes.

Ms Smith: We are developing accounts basically around the same themes as the state of the environment report. We have accounts for land, waste, energy emissions, which includes air emissions and carbon, and tourism. We are doing experimental ecosystem accounts. We are looking at basically biodiversity indicators and also valuing ecosystem services, putting on a monetary value where it is possible to do that. We are also doing an environmental expenditure account, which to some extent links all the other accounts. For instance, linking an expenditure account to an ecological condition account will allow you to see value for money basically, whether environmental condition, ecological condition is rising or falling commensurate with the amount of funds being placed into any given area.

THE CHAIR: Are you looking at an ACT-level indicator, or will you be able to scale it down if we are talking about the value of particular places?

Ms Smith: That is a really good question. For the first cut, for the first draft in August, we are having to use a fairly significant portion of national data scaled down because that is where the data is. Where it is possible, we are populating the accounts with ACT data. Obviously, for instance, the expenditure account and the waste accounts are all ACT data, but some of the spatial data for the ecosystem accounts is national mapping data at this point. The aim is that eventually all the accounts will be just ACT-collected data.

Dr Auty: Could I also add, the very best example of a piece of work that has been done on this very recently involved a number of ANU academics: Heather Keith and David Lindenmayer. They were invited to put together an environmental account for the Central Highlands where there has been over time some controversy about the Leadbeater's possum. In putting that together it was very clear that there were ways in which you could value forestry, for instance, the jobs and what is provided by way of raw materials, ways in which you could value the tourism, ways in which you could value the water provisioning and ways in which you could evaluate what is happening with carbon without even considering what is the case with the Leadbeater's possum. It was apparent in that study—and we are happy to provide it to anybody here on the panel—that a range of values was associated with the Central Highlands and that forestry was probably not the most valuable outcome from utilising the environmental resources in that place. It is a very authoritative piece of work and it has been done very recently.

THE CHAIR: Any supplementary questions?

MR DOSZPOT: No, but I would like to ask a question.

THE CHAIR: Please do.

MR DOSZPOT: Welcome to the hearing, Dr Auty. Can I ask you to elaborate on the structure of your office: the total budget allocation, the number of staff and, in particular, the cost of the specialist advice that you referred to that you need to get access to.

Dr Auty: I am very pleased to have Ms Smith at the table with me for this particular exercise as well. I arrived to find a number of people in the office were on contract, and those positions have now been formalised. There are two level Bs, there is a level C, there is a level 6, there is an EA who assists me and then there is me. My exposure to the use of an EA has demonstrated to me the extraordinary value that particular position provides because—I having arrived here over the past nine months—she has been extraordinarily helpful in organising a range of conferences, discussions, meetings with the public. The EA assists me essentially but also is involved in budgetary matters. I might ask Ms Smith to talk about the budgetary matters in respect of the particular staffers.

Ms Smith: Sorry, your question—

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you for telling me the various categories, but what is the total number of staff and the budget allocation or the cost of specialist advice that you seek

from time to time? I should imagine there is a cost for that.

Dr Auty: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: I would like to get a better understanding on behalf of the committee on what sort of budget framework you are working within.

Dr Auty: It has varied over time if I could say that. It varies from project to project.

MR DOSZPOT: We are interested in the past 12 months, in particular.

Ms Smith: The office has been restructured to some extent. Previously it was the case that the major reports, mainly the state of the environment report, were outsourced to consultants, basically. So a large portion of the project funding of the office, aside from staffing and administrative costs—rent, things like that—was spent on consultants who would write the various chapters of the state of the environment report. Then the work of the office staff was to consolidate those consultants' reports.

We now operate on a very different model. We do a large portion of the work in house and we outsource only where we need really discrete pieces of expert advice which we then incorporate into our own work. It is advice we cannot get from internet research and libraries and so forth. That sometimes includes, for instance, paying people to do on-ground surveys for us, ecologists and so on.

MR DOSZPOT: You are telling me all of that, but I want the actual figures.

Ms Smith: The actual figures?

MR DOSZPOT: What is your budget allocation?

Ms Smith: Our budget allocation is \$1.753 roughly.

MR DOSZPOT: \$1.753 million?

Ms Smith: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: You referred to the fact that previously the work was carried out by consultants as required. Do you know how the budget for that type of activity compares to what you are currently budgeted for?

Ms Smith: It is roughly the same. I am sorry, but can I take some of these questions on notice—

MR DOSZPOT: Of course. I do not expect you to have all of this at your fingertips.

Ms Smith: I am otherwise going to have to start doing sums right now. But that would be great if we were able to take that on notice.

Dr Auty: And could I make this observation in response to that question: the previous state of the environment report 2011 was done on a different basis from the 2015 one.

I do not believe that you were involved in the 2011 state of the environment report, Becky. The total budget is \$1.7 million as you have heard. We get allocations from the directorate which assist us in putting together certain reports over time. Those are negotiated. It would be in the sum of \$50,000, for instance, for a particular report. We have some allocations that have been made for the lower Cotter at this time. We have also an allocation that has been made for the Gungahlin strategic environmental assessment. There is also some funding that is topping up in relation to implementation status review.

There is some top-up funding; that is probably not the way to describe it officially, but that is what is provided. That is what has always happened over time, as I understand it. The office has had a set allocation that funds the office staff. Then on top of that there have been allocations for specific pieces of work. The Lake Burley Griffin work, for instance, almost certainly got another allocation, and that has been the case in the past. There is certainly the opportunity presented for this particular state of the environment report that has just been done for the staff to skill up, for the staff to be the people who are providing that particular report, and that is what has occurred.

The other thing that needs to be taken into account as I understand it in respect of budget is that we have a four-year rolling period. We actually do not fit in necessarily very well with other funding arrangements. There are some niceties about it, but the documentation in relation to all of that particular funding can be provided, and I will undertake to do that.

MR DOSZPOT: A final question on clarification, you have given me a partial answer. The number of staff, you rattled off all the positions but what are the numbers?

Dr Auty: Only ever six, and that includes me and my EA.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, for the record, can you state which questions you want them to take on notice, just so it is clear.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, I think it was pretty clear. It is the total budget allocated to your office, whether it is for a one-year period or a four-year period.

Dr Auty: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: We need to get some idea of the budget you are operating within.

Dr Auty: Yes.

Ms Smith: And the breakdown of that budget apropos the project work?

MR DOSZPOT: As much information as you have available and that you are able to provide to the committee.

Ms Smith: That is fine.

MS CHEYNE: Can I just have a supplementary on one of the things you touched on, which is the drafting of the state of the environment report and the use of contractors. I understand the quite different make-up of your organisation now, but how many contractors did you have or did you employ for the drafting of that report?

Ms Smith: For this?

MS CHEYNE: The 2015 report.

Ms Smith: The 2015 report. There was a team of three in-house writers in staff. We actually seconded an economist from the directorate proper to write the human needs chapter, which included a lot of economic data. There were three of us that wrote in house. And, as I mentioned, we contracted, for want of a better word, bits of expertise, where we needed it, to write into the report. For instance, there was an independent consultant who did the management effectiveness assessment, because that needed to be independent even of our office. We also employed an ANU academic to facilitate and provide expert advice throughout the writing of the report. He was commissioned for three years. He was involved in the federal state of the environment report, the last two. That is the way we worked it.

Dr Auty: Also, if you are interested in the expert panels that assisted as the reports came together, they are found at page 59 of the report. You will see that there are a number of them. Interestingly, there is a gender equity issue with some of those expert panels, and we are concerning ourselves with that.

MS CHEYNE: What are the expert panels? There were subject matter experts that were contracted, but you received voluntary contributions as well?

Dr Auty: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: What was the ratio of that?

Dr Auty: If you take air, there are three in the expert panel. I think it would be fair to say that there was only one expert brought in in relation to that.

Ms Smith: A large proportion of the experts were actually from the directorate. Probably 80 or 90 per cent were ACT government staff.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you. Can I ask some substantive questions? Your role in responding to community complaints, I notice, was not necessarily clear. There can be issues identifying complaints sometimes, and the report mentions that you considered drafting a complaint form to help with that.

Dr Auty: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: Can you provide an update on that?

Dr Auty: I can. There is a complaint form, and we are referring people who phone the office or who have a complaint to go to that complaint form. The reason for that was

to try to be as explicit as we possibly could be about what the subject nature of the complaint was, about ensuring that there was utter transparency about the complaints we were receiving and about what those complaints ultimately were treated as. We were getting people who phoned who had inquiries which might not necessarily be a complaint, and to the extent that that was an inquiry, there was some question about whether it was a complaint.

I have had one person phone the office and say that she thinks that having a form is an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy for the purposes of people putting in complaints. I do not agree with that proposition. I think it needs to be formalised, and I think it is timely that it was.

MS CHEYNE: The report also notes that you will only investigate a complaint if a response from the directorate on the matter is unsatisfactory. How do you decide whether something is unsatisfactory?

Dr Auty: That is also a matter of judgement. I think that other commissioners might have taken different views about matters than I. I have had responses come back in respect of a particular complaint where I have informed myself by reading the most recent PhD materials, reading the most recent articles, taking a view that I would oversight that response and make sure that I was satisfied that the response did, in fact, reflect the recent scholarship. I will continue to do that. It is something that I think is the responsibility of the commissioner, and it is a role I will be adopting.

MS CHEYNE: Going back to the complaints form, have you found that it has made it a bit clearer both for your work and also for when the public contacts you about what they are actually trying to do or achieve?

Dr Auty: It has certainly made it clearer for the office, and that is one of the things that I think was required at this time of the office's development.

MS CHEYNE: So it may be an extra layer but it has saved a lot of work behind the scenes?

Dr Auty: It is not a complex form. It is simply asking people to make sure that we have got a formal note of it and that it is then received in that manner and taken seriously as a complaint that has a form attached to it and not something that might be parked as a telephone inquiry that might not have gone through to a complaint. It is to formalise our processes in a way that gives me confidence that we are adopting an appropriate response to people's phone calls, letters and, now, form.

MS CHEYNE: How many people do you find use the form on a monthly basis?

Dr Auty: We have had very few people use the form and I think that reflects what has happened with the commissioner's office over time. If you have a look at the number of complaints that we have received over time, there are some particular matters which are persistently ventilated and then there are other matters that come up from time to time.

THE CHAIR: Just a quick housekeeping matter. I know we read the privilege statement out at the beginning of the day but, seeing we had a changeover, I draw your attention to the pink privilege card on the table. Could you and your officials confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement.

Dr Auty: Yes, certainly. I was here when the others were acquainted with that. Yes, certainly.

MR PARTON: In regard to complaints, is it possible to update the committee on something? I note that there was a complaint received in May 2016 related to ongoing community concerns about a foul smell in the Tuggeranong area, trying to have the issue resolved by the EPA. That complaint is pending. Are you able to update the committee as to where that is at?

Dr Auty: Yes. That complaint was pending at the moment of this report concluding. I understand that what subsequently happened was that the minister responsible for that particular area responded to the complainant, and the matter has not then been further ventilated with my office. It has been addressed, as I understand it, and it is resolved, as I understand it. I have not had it re-ventilated with me. This was an issue at that time where it was a question of whether the complaint was concluded or whether the complaint was continuing. It is, as I understand it, now concluded. I say that on the basis that I have not had it ventilated with me subsequent to the minister's intervention by responding.

MR PARTON: I am going to count that as a supplementary and go—

MS CHEYNE: I have a supplementary to that, sorry.

THE CHAIR: Are we about to break out in mayhem?

Dr Auty: I am not quite sure how many supplementaries there are, but thank you.

MS CHEYNE: Just while we are on it, just to confirm, the one about the building heights in Belconnen town centre was lodged in February 2013 but resolved in the 2016 year. What was the delay in completing that?

Dr Auty: I cannot comment on that; I am terribly sorry. It was lodged to Commissioner Bob Neil and it was resolved by Commissioner Ann Lyons Wright. It was, as I understand it, just finalised under Ann Lyons Wright's control of the office.

MR PARTON: I have a broader question: how much collaboration does your office have with other similar offices in other jurisdictions?

Dr Auty: There is an office in Victoria. That office is undertaking some environmental accounting work, and we are familiar with that. We have involvement with other offices that are not strictly speaking a commissioner. I am familiar with what is happening with Sustainability Victoria, for instance, which is the equivalent of your Actsmart. There is a Canadian office of the commissioner, and there is also a New Zealand office. I am familiar with the New Zealand office, but we do not have any ongoing interaction with them. I am certainly familiar with them.

The work that we have been doing on environmental accounting has led us into a conversation with the commonwealth environment department, and we have been invited to attend a meeting in Sydney two weeks hence about environmental accounts which will bring together most of those people from a departmental background who are involved in environmental issues. We will be, as I understand it, one of two commissioners there. I am not going, as I am on leave, but both we and the Victorian office have been invited.

The other thing that brings us all together is a discussion about state of the environment reporting. We reconvened to confer about that in Victoria when I was the commissioner there. That has now been assumed by everybody, and that will continue to involve us. It also involves other departments, though, because there are only two commissioners in Australia.

MS LEE: I have a broad question, commissioner. We hear a lot about the ACT doing great work and leading the way in terms of climate change and renewable energy targets. What is an area that the ACT can work on, either from the cross-section of complaints that you receive or from your own observations about what we can do better, a specific area?

Dr Auty: It is a very good question and a difficult question to answer. I think that wherever we are we can always, all of us, do better in our community consultation. I arrived here in May last year and have started to build what I would describe as a broader remit on community consultation in my office. I will just speak about my office.

I think that it is important that we engage with different people from what I would describe as the usual cohort that is extraordinarily interested in environmental matters. Having arrived here, we now have a conversation going with multicultural ACT. We have a conversation going with a group of young professionals that I have convened that has started a discussion about technology, big data and the environment. When I first arrived, we had 30 young people come together to talk about that. That included university graduates, university students and students out of years 11 and 12.

We have also taken it on board in the office that we need to be thinking about engaging women in the conversations that we have. I have spent time at COTA. I have also spent time at ACTCOSS and I have spent time at various other forums where I have been invited to go along and talk about the work of the office. We need not just to be saying we need to get better at community consultation; we need to be making sure we stretch our goals and stretch our targets. We are endeavouring to do that, and I think we can all do that.

Can I say something about the ACT and the leadership that the ACT is showing in a number of matters. I have come from Victoria, and it is very clear to me that the reverse auctions that you have established here have led to significant developments in Victoria. This particular jurisdiction has been the genesis of that conversation in Australia.

The other thing I would like to say is that on an international basis it is absolutely

evident that cities and subnational governments have an extraordinary role to play in addressing climate change. Paris was the first time that cities were invited to come and be part of that conversation, and they embraced it. It is unfortunate that Canberra is not a Rockefeller 100 resilient city, but you still have that conversation going. It is really clear to me that there is a range of things that cities can do, and it is about involving their constituents and their citizenry. That is what I think is something that needs to be absolutely front of mind in everything we do about the environment.

One of the other things that always happens is that people say about environmental offices such as mine that we spend a lot of time telling people what to do instead of engaging with them about the things they think are important where you can, in fact, pick up on the co-benefits. The ANU has been an absolute leader in the conversation about co-benefits between the environment and health, for instance, with Tony McMichael, who passed away in 2014. That conversation about the co-benefits that come from good environmental outcomes and good health outcomes, and twinning them, is one that needs to be driven, and we will be endeavouring to do that in my office.

MS LEE: Thank you. And speaking of community consultations and twinning of health and the environment, are you familiar with the FOY proposal?

Dr Auty: I am.

MS LEE: Has your office received any complaints, either formal or not, as the case may be, in relation to any of that process, including the lack of consultation or concerns about environmental factors or health issues?

Dr Auty: My office was copied into correspondence that went to the minister. We have not received a formal complaint.

MS LEE: Does that mean that your office will not do anything about that?

Dr Auty: We have not received a complaint. When and if we do, we would address it.

THE CHAIR: We will have to finish up there. Thank you.

Dr Auty: I understood that I was here at 12.30. Am I now excused for the day? I am very happy to be excused for the day, but I just want to confirm. I do not want to be rude to the committee.

THE CHAIR: Between 12 and 1.30 we have the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. I am not sure whether you are required to be in the room for that. Does anyone have any further questions for the commissioner?

MR PARTON: No.

THE CHAIR: Elizabeth?

MS LEE: I do not think so, but—

Dr Auty: I am being given an indication to talk to the secretary.

THE CHAIR: From the committee's point of view, that is fine, but we might just check that that is fine with the others.

Dr Auty: We will respond to that question on notice in the next week.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Just before we break, I would like to remind members that supplementary questions should be lodged with the committee support office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available, and responses to questions taken on notice should be submitted to the committee office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available.

We will resume after the break with Minister Ramsay.

Dr Auty: Sorry to interrupt, but could I also say that we undertake to provide each of the committee members with the executive summary of that work on environmental accounts from David Lindenmayer and Heather Keith at the ANU.

MR PARTON: You have done well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Can I just make a request? If you are sending correspondence to committee members, can I ask that it comes through the committee secretariat.

Dr Auty: Of course.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. We will resume with Minister Ramsay in about 15 minutes.

Sitting suspended from 11.02 to 11.18 am.

Appearances:

Ramsay, Mr Gordon, Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Jones, Mr Greg, Director, Construction, Environment and Workplace Protection, Access Canberra

Pitt, Ms Leesha, Director, Licensing and Registrations, Access Canberra

Peffer, Mr Dave, Deputy Director- General, Access Canberra

Dix, Mr Rodney, Manager, Environment Regulation and Protection

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you, Minister Ramsay, and your officials for attending today. Today the committee will be examining the annual report of the Environment Protection Authority for the 2015-16 reporting period. Can I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is before you on the table? It is the pink card. Can you and your officials confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Ramsay: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I also remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and webstreamed and broadcast live. Before we go to questions, minister, do you have an opening statement?

Mr Ramsay: No.

THE CHAIR: We will move straight to questions. Ms Cheyne, do you want to go first?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, thank you. I have some questions about noise and noise regulations. Firstly, I have a general one before I move on to some more specific questions. With respect to noise complaints and noise complaints actions taken, in the annual report on pages 286 and 287 both of those tables, at first glance—and I am happy to be corrected—seem to be talking about the same thing. They both have enforcement action at the top. The first one, I think, is actually about noise complaint type. I think the second one should be about enforcement action but underneath it seems to again refer to noise complaint type. I want to check if my understanding is correct.

Mr Jones: I am looking at the table now. I am just trying to work out what the different actions are. With the table on page 286, in terms of the numbers that are identified there, those are the new complaints, whereas the one with the actions taken, on page 287, contains the accumulated numbers of actions taken with the particular complaint. That is why the numbers are significantly higher.

MS CHEYNE: So the enforcement action is related to an enforcement action for the noise type on page 287. I assume alarms noise is not an enforcement action?

Mr Dix: We found when we were looking at the tables that with noise complaints

there is no real completion of the complaints. We cannot say, “We’ve had a complaint about a stereo system. We’ve gone out. The stereo has been turned down. The action has now stopped or we were able to stop it.” What we find is we can take enforcement action against that complaint, but next week there will be further noise complaints about the stereo. So it is an ongoing matter.

The best way to capture it is as it appears in the table on 286. That is how many new complaints we received for that financial year. The table on page 287 shows the number of actions that we took for the accumulation of all complaints, which included ongoing complaints from previous years as well as some new complaints that came in the 2015-16 reporting period.

MS CHEYNE: So with the 229 actions taken, that is all types of enforcement actions for air conditioners, fans and heater noise?

Mr Dix: When we say 249 actions, that means we may have received 200 complaints. Officers may have been out 50 times. We may have issued three or four warning letters. We may have issued one or two infringement notices. They are all actionable items. So every time the EPA is engaged, we would note that as an action item. If we receive a complaint, that is one action item. If we receive five complaints, that is five action items.

MS CHEYNE: Okay. It is just a little confusing that it is titled “enforcement action”. It could be “enforcement action per noise type”, rather than just “enforcement”.

Mr Dix: Yes.

Mr Jones: I guess it is the action taken on the noise type, as you just said. Perhaps in future years we can have “action taken by type” or something like that, just to clarify that.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, I think that would be helpful, and that is where my questions are leading. Can you talk me through the different types of enforcement actions that you have available to you?

Mr Dix: We have a policy in place. If we receive a noise complaint—say, a noise complaint about a stereo system—our first action is that we will call up the person who has lodged the complaint. We will then discuss with the person what the noise is and what action they may have taken. Part of our response is that we are looking for the person to self-manage the complaint. Have they spoken to the person? Have they engaged with them to try to rectify the issue? We are finding that a lot of people are reluctant to approach their neighbours, whether or not they have had a bad situation in the past or whether they are worried about a conflict situation.

Our next step is that we will then send what is called a complaint letter to the activity manager, the person who is making the noise. The complaint letter advises, “We received a complaint on this day about the nature of the noise.” So it could be stereo noise. It goes into a bit of detail about what is permitted under the legislation, depending on what part of the ACT they are in. There are different noise zones associated with different noise levels. It then includes an environment protection

officer's name and contact details and invites the person to contact us so that we can discuss the complaint in more detail.

We find 80 per cent of the time that that will resolve the matter. A lot of people do not realise that they have affected their neighbour. We discuss it with them. Sometimes we will go out with our noise meter and we will assist them in operating the stereo. We will get them to turn it on and we will take a noise measurement. So they then comply with the relevant noise zone standards. If nothing changes, and if a second complaint is received, we will then go out and investigate. We will attend the premises. We will attend the premises of the actual person who is affected by the noise. We will take a noise measurement from their premises.

MS CHEYNE: At the time the noise is occurring?

Mr Dix: At the time the noise is occurring. Under the Environment Protection Act you have to have an affected person at an affected place. So the only way we can demonstrate that is through a noise measurement at their premises.

MS CHEYNE: What happens if that noise is occurring at midnight?

Mr Dix: We are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So we will attend at midnight, 2 o'clock in the morning and during the day as well.

MS CHEYNE: You will only attend if a complaint letter has been sent in the first place?

Mr Dix: If a complaint letter has been sent, yes. This is following the process. So we have educated the person. If we validate that complaint, and the noise is above the noise standard, we will come back, and we will put a case decision to management, to make sure we have all the evidence there to demonstrate an actual breach of the legislation. The next step for us is to then warn the individual. Once it is approved we will send an official warning letter out to the occupant, which more or less advises, "On this day at this particular time an officer attended a complaint. They measured the noise. The noise was measured at this level, which may be this much above the noise standard. On this occasion the authority is not going to take any further action. However, this is an official warning. If there are any further breaches, regulatory action may be considered." Again we find that resolves a lot of the issues as well. People start to take a bit of notice.

If the complaint continues again, we have to go out a second time and take a second noise measurement at the premises of the person affected by the noise. If we validate the complaint on that occasion, we will come back again and present a case decision to management for recommendation, which would be an infringement notice. For an individual, that is a \$200 fine, and that resolves nearly all of them.

MS CHEYNE: And what is it for a business?

Mr Dix: It is five times, so it would be \$1,000; an infringement notice; or in court, I think it is 10 penalty units.

MS CHEYNE: Hypothetically, if a person in the community is woken or cannot sleep due to the noise coming from a nearby business or establishment, what is their first port of call if this is the first time it has happened? Should they be calling the police in the first instance or do they lodge a complaint with you the following day?

Mr Dix: The police will go and attend party noise or one-off instances of noise. They will attend and they will stop the noise occurring. If it is an ongoing matter, like from a business air-conditioning system or from a licensed venue where it is amplified music noise, it is best to contact Access Canberra to lodge a complaint and then we will follow it up during business hours. We are primarily looking at resolving ongoing noise complaints. If we get a complaint about a one-off party, we say that the appropriate agency is the AFP. They can go and attend the party at that particular time they are affected and put in controls to stop the noise occurring.

MS CHEYNE: From the point of view of a resident, though, if an establishment is making noise that is amplified, and at the time they are struggling to get to sleep or their kids are struggling to get to sleep, there is no real recourse for them for the next few hours until—

Mr Dix: No, they can contact the police and the police will prioritise it. They may attend or they might not. It depends what their priorities are at the time.

MS CHEYNE: For you, if it was an ongoing issue—

Mr Dix: Ongoing issue, yes.

MS CHEYNE: they really cannot contact you until the next day or unless there is a complaint letter.

Mr Dix: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: In which case you are on call for them?

Mr Dix: Yes, we are. They do not necessarily have to have lodged the complaint. We may have had three or four people prior, who have lodged a complaint. What we are looking at is whether the business, or the activity where the noise is coming from, has been educated, not necessarily through where the complaint has originated from, just that they have been educated about their responsibilities under the legislation.

MS CHEYNE: How does someone know when it is within their rights that they can contact you while you are on call and that you will come out? What conditions need to be satisfied for that to occur?

Mr Dix: We are set up with Access Canberra—the switchboard. They have a schedule of questions they ask the person. Part of that is, “Have you complained about this previously?” The person may advise, “No, I have not,” but the person within the Access Canberra call centre may think, “I’ve had a complaint about this previously. I will forward that on.” They will then call the on-call officer, whoever is on call. We take home laptops which have the database with all the complaints in there. So we can look at the history before we attend the matter. We will know whether or not a letter

has been sent out, whether or not we are up to a warning letter, whether or not we are up to an infringement notice stage.

MS CHEYNE: What is the reasonable expectation for a resident during the evening? What is the reasonable decibel limit in a residential street?

Mr Dix: Within residential areas the noise level from 7 am to 10 pm is 45 decibels. After 10 pm it goes down to 35 decibels. It is not very loud at all.

MS CHEYNE: What about in an area that has a lot of commercial or business districts like a town centre?

Mr Dix: It depends on what area it is under the Territory Plan. We have residential areas. We then have what is called a local area, a local shopping area, which is 50 during the day and 35 at night. We then have a group centre, which is 55-45. We then have a town centre, which is 60-50. We then have the industrial areas, Fyshwick and Hume, which are 65-55.

The only ones that are not covered by that are a lot of the mixed use areas—Kingston foreshore and other mixed use areas. They have their own designation, which is called a zone F. They take on the highest noise level for the noise zone which is adjoining their zone. In the instance of the Kingston foreshore the highest noise level that is adjoining that is national capital land, which adopts the group centre level, which is the 55-45 level.

MS CHEYNE: We have some taverns, particularly in Belconnen, that have been around for a long time: Fraser, Page and Ginninderra, as well as some new establishments like what has been proposed for Cook, and also the Bolt Bar in Aranda. What are the limits for noise in those areas that are not necessarily the size of a group centre?

Mr Dix: They are the local centres?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, they are.

Mr Dix: During the day they are allowed 50 decibels but after 10 o'clock at night they have to go down to 35 decibels. The Environment Protection Act refers to noise from a person using only his or her body, so patrons talking is not covered by the Environment Protection Act.

MR DOSZPOT: I have received a tweet from a constituent who also tweeted the Chief Minister. I do not know how I got involved in this but the tweet states:

Another night of excessive noise associated with the tram construction. Getting to be beyond a joke.

This was on Northbourne Avenue. Obviously you would be classifying that as a residential area?

Mr Dix: With regard to the tram construction, there is a provision under the

environment protection regulation which exempted noise from the construction of light rail or a train. There are no noise provisions which apply for the construction of a major road or the light rail.

MR DOSZPOT: You have got people living on either side of Northbourne Avenue. There is a video showing substantial work going on at 2.30 am. What is the recourse to those people?

Mr Dix: They have a noise management plan in place which is put through as part of the DA approval. There is still a general environmental duty which applies to all businesses or all people within the ACT. They have to take all reasonable practical steps to minimise the harm.

If the people are ringing up complaining about the noise coming from construction we could, being the EPA, or they could approach Canberra Metro and say, “What reasonable steps are you taking to minimise the harm?” For night works I know they have to go through a very systematic approval process to approve all their night works so that they are not unduly impacting on residents.

MR DOSZPOT: In this instance, can the constituent go to you and complain about the excessive noise, as I understand she is complaining about, and lights in use as well? You are saying that it has been exempted. What can you do if noise issues have been exempted for light rail?

Mr Peffer: Canberra Metro has in place quite a tight alignment between their construction operations and our contact centre such that if people do find they have concerns with the construction—be it noise, be it impact on amenity or be it impact on their own property—they are able to talk to the folks in our contact centre and get a direct line to quite senior people as part of that construction team. For matters like that, absolutely, we are happy to take the call and that constituent would be able to talk to senior members in that construction team, ideally to have that resolved.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. I will inform the constituent of that.

MS CHEYNE: Is there a time period? If someone has made multiple calls to you, it is logged as a noise complaint and you know that there is an ongoing issue with that area, does the clock reset if there is not an issue, say, for six months or seven months, or is it cumulative? I am talking about next steps for infringement and going on from there. If it is one complaint received two years ago, then another complaint received six months ago and another complaint received a month ago, is that sufficient to still get an infringement notice or is there some leeway for businesses there that are trying to do the right thing most of the time?

Mr Dix: We do reset the clock after 12 months. What we do is look and see when the last engagement was between us and the activity or the business. If it is more than 12 months, we will start the clock again and go through the education process, recognising there may have been a change to whoever was the activity manager or they may have done something different within their business. After each 12 months, if there has been no interaction we will reset the clock.

MS CHEYNE: I am sorry if you have addressed this before, but what is a past infringement notice? Is there anything after that or is the limit \$1,000?

Mr Dix: It is more internal guidance. If it is a resident who is making the noise, say, a stereo noise, we would likely issue one or two infringement notices. If we find the behaviour has not changed at all, we will probably go straight to court instead of issuing an infringement notice, because there is a higher penalty associated with going through the court as opposed to the \$200 fine.

MS CHEYNE: And for a business?

Mr Dix: For a business, what we may look at is a similar process again. But if it is just for stereo noise or if it is for an air-conditioning system, we are primarily focused on trying to resolve the matter. That is where we review each case on a case-by-case basis. We have educated them, we have warned the person, we are up to the point where we need to take the next step. Issuing an infringement notice is not going to fix or rectify the issue of an air-conditioning system which has been located in an incorrect area which is one or two metres from the boundary or which is one metre from the person's bedroom.

We have issued what is called an environment protection order. The order is a direction which gives them a period of time in which they have to engage or seek an acoustic consultant's advice and possibly relocate that unit so that the matter is resolved and we do not end up with ongoing complaints about it.

MS LEE: In terms of the process for enforcement that you talked about, does it always follow a certain order? Who determines when an on-the-spot fine, prosecution and environmental protection orders are issued? How does that process work?

Mr Jones: We have internal guidelines so that we have a consistent approach to complaints. When it gets to a stage where more serious enforcement action needs to be taken Access Canberra has a regulatory advisory committee which has been established to review these cases so that there is consistency. It checks, I guess, that all the background steps in terms of engage and educate have been followed and just makes sure that the action being taken or proposed is proportionate to what the complaint is. Occasionally the regulatory advisory committee may suggest further engagement or some other mechanism to try to resolve it. Otherwise, it will, I guess, endorse or amend the proposed action, which is infringement or potentially notice of prosecution.

MS LEE: So it is more of a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstance?

Mr Jones: Yes. Each circumstance is different. Usually the physical layout can be quite different. Quite often, for example, if it is an air-conditioning unit our inspectors would look at the property and see where there is an alternative location or whether there is some sound reflective material, a box effectively, which could be put over it without affecting the operation of the unit. And that depends on those particular areas.

If it is a large block of land then usually there is the possibility of relocating it but on some of the newer blocks, where buildings are fairly tight, there is limited scope. So

we do make sure that it is on a case-by-case basis but on a consistent framework to seek enforcement and ultimately, obviously, to get the matter resolved.

MS LEE: And for on-the-spot fines, would whoever the officer is that is attending the scene, for example, of a noise complaint, make that decision or make that call?

Mr Jones: I guess working through the engage and educate approach, especially in the early periods where the inspector would attend, it is normally to inform and provide advice rather than to take immediate action. And it is really an assessment of the situation, the physical layout, so that they can come back to the office and, I guess, the process with that particular case can be assessed so that we can resolve it.

Again, the primary purpose is to try to get it resolved rather than to take the action. The action is, I guess, only if you have to get the matter resolved or to focus their attention on the fact that their activities are affecting neighbours. Primarily it is about making suggestions on how to engage with your neighbours or what can be done in terms of changing the angle of speakers, doing what you can with your air-conditioning unit, to actually resolve it.

MS LEE: In terms of the noise complaints, I notice that there was an increase from 1,357 to 1,510. Were they all based more on a reflection of increased noise in the neighbourhood areas of the ongoing kind that your directorate looks at, or were they more of an increase in sort of raucous parties that the AFP have been required to attend?

Mr Jones: It is pretty well across the board. In terms of the break-up of complaints, amplified music is the primary. That is the highest number. It is followed—and less than half the number—by building work noise, for example buildings starting early in the morning. There is also obviously air conditioning and things like that as sort of No 3. But they are the main ones. And the increase is mostly across the board but with amplified music and air-conditioning units particularly.

MS LEE: Finally, in terms of when it does get to a point unfortunately of prosecution and it goes to that extent, are the enforcement actions taken on a cost-recovery basis? There is obviously cost involved.

Mr Jones: Obviously going to court is a very time-consuming and potentially costly task for both sides, especially if you need to bring in noise experts to give evidence and things like that. It can be very costly.

MS LEE: I suppose I am asking: do you take it as more of a punishment role or a deterrent sort of role, or is it a combination?

Mr Jones: Like all regulatory schemes, strong enforcement action is taken as a last resort. It is there as a deterrent. Ultimately we certainly inform people who are not willing or are not able to comply with the legislation or certainly indicate to them that that is a possibility. Again, it is a last resort and it definitely has a deterrent action. I do not think anyone would particularly like to go to court, because they know what the costs are, and it can be quite time consuming in terms of resolving it. It is the last area of a regulatory action to get the matter resolved. Again, primarily the aim is to

get the matter resolved rather than punishment.

MR PARTON: In that area of complaints, under noise complaints and actions taken, you have got here gym equipment noise and the complaints rising from one to 10. What on earth are they about?

MS CHEYNE: It is weights, surely.

MS LEE: The weights, they get dropped as soon as they are done.

Mr Dix: What we are finding, particularly with the mixed-use areas, is that these Anytime Fitness gyms and all the other fitness organisations are moving to mixed-use areas. They open at 5 o'clock in the morning. You have the people doing weights, dropping the weights. They might be doing an exercise with music. Unfortunately, it is spreading through the building, affecting the residents who are living within that complex. That is why we are seeing a general increase.

With the number of complaints, as Greg was talking about, the actions may increase but what it only takes sometimes is recognising that, if you only have two or three complainants who make 10 complaints each, what happens is that the person they are complaining about is playing a game. They will turn the music on for 10 minutes, enough to annoy the person. By the time we get out there, they have turned it back off. Next day they will complain. It is just playing a game. You can end up with one, two or three people starting to blow out some of the numbers, where it is an ongoing matter.

MS CHEYNE: I have a supplementary following Ms Lee's line of questioning about going to court or prosecution as a last resort. How many times did that occur in 2015-16?

Mr Dix: With the noise complaints, we usually send the infringement notices out. If we send an infringement notice out, we will follow it all the way through. What we are finding is that people recognise that an infringement notice is not issued unless we have a criminal case beyond a reasonable doubt; we have the evidence there to support it; and we ring the person up and say, "The infringement notice hasn't been paid. You really have to pay it; otherwise we will be taking you to court." Generally we find they will either dispute it or they will pay it. We have been to court only two or three times in a long time because generally the matter is resolved.

THE CHAIR: We will give Mr Doszpot a chance to ask his question because he has been waiting. We will go to Mr Parton after that.

MR DOSZPOT: Good morning, minister. Welcome to the hearing. Can you tell us how many people by classification are employed within the EPA?

Mr Jones: We will have to take that on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: That is fine. If you could take it on notice, it would be very much appreciated. Also, on page 283 the report refers to environmental authorisations. It refers to a total of 312 current authorisations including 23 for firewood, 133 for

commercial use—ag and vet chemicals—10 for transport and controlled waste and 65 for petroleum storage. Can you detail what these authorisations cover?

Ms Pitt: I am sorry; would you mind repeating the question?

MR DOSZPOT: I will repeat the question. The report refers to a total of 312 current authorisations, including 23 for firewood, 133 for commercial use, 10 for transport of controlled waste and 65 for petroleum storage. I am asking for a detailing of what the authorisations cover.

Ms Pitt: Environmental authorisations are a form of licence under the Environment Protection Act. The authorisations are given to businesses and operators to conduct certain activities that are considered to have some environmental risk. Those authorisations seek to mitigate those risks in terms of how they conduct those activities. The conditions are related to how they manage those environmental risks.

For example, the commercial use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals is primarily for people who come to your home and business and conduct pest control activities. We want to make sure that they are using those chemicals in a safe way that protects people from harm. That is why we are regulating that activity. Other forms of agricultural and veterinary chemical use may be for use on golf courses and other areas that require spraying. We want to make sure that, again, they are used in a safe way.

For firewood, it is primarily an authorisation to sell firewood in the ACT using a particular quality of firewood. So it is consumer protection control. The petroleum storage is primarily around making sure that petrol stations and the like are storing petrol in a safe way so that consumers, again, are protected from the harm around petroleum exploding or being at risk of being contaminated.

In respect of transport of controlled waste, there is a large range of waste licensing under the Environment Protection Act. This is making sure that waste is safely transported from site to site so that, again, we are mitigating the risk around waste spillage or other waste control measures that may endanger the public.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you for that. The supplementary to that is: in a couple of the categories—for example, pest control; you mentioned that you are looking at the storage of pesticides—how would you do that? Do you have inspectors who inspect these various organisations on a regular basis?

Ms Pitt: In order to obtain an environmental authorisation for that particular activity people are required to have gone through a particular training course—the name escapes me—to make sure they understand that quality control is required in using chemicals. There is a regular review of all environmental authorisations and for those that do not have an unlimited time period, they are reviewed at least once every five years.

Just to clarify, we do a regular review of the environmental authorisations to make sure they are up to date. Part of that activity is making sure that we take into account complaints against those businesses or where we have become aware of how they are

conducting their activities. While it is primarily driven by environmental-related complaints, Access Canberra, being a broad regulatory organisation, will also consider complaints about fair trading matters and other things where we are reviewing those activities.

MR DOSZPOT: I go back to my question: have you got inspectors who actually go out and visit the locations where these actions take place?

Ms Pitt: Yes.

Mr Jones: Yes, we do. Whenever an environmental authorisation comes up for review—this is particularly important with service stations—inspectors will go out and go through a fairly expansive checklist of everything that needs to be done in terms of making sure that they have all their hazard controls in place so that if there is spillage it does not go down stormwater and things like that. So, yes, inspections are done as part of those reviews and renewals.

MR DOSZPOT: This is my final supplementary on this. Going back to the pest control example I was asking about before, you mentioned the environmental control of substances that they use. What about the training of staff who also handle these substances? In fact, in respect of the staff who go out to private homes and businesses to conduct pest control, what sort of check is made on their qualifications to do so?

Ms Pitt: In the case of pest control, the environmental authorisation is not just for the business conducting the activity but also for all the persons who are conducting that particular activity. You can have a business that is effectively licensed but then each person who is conducting that activity of pest control will also need to hold a licence and have the particular qualification in place.

MR DOSZPOT: Is it their own responsibility or is it the responsibility of the business they are employed by?

Ms Pitt: That comes back to how the Work Health and Safety Act operates.

Mr Jones: It is the responsibility of the business owner as a PCBU to make sure that all their staff are properly, I guess, trained, skilled and protected under the work health and safety legislation so that they do have those skills, that they have appropriate evacuation and hazard plans and all the rest of it. It is the owner of that business who has to make sure their staff and those people on that site are safe.

MS LEE: Thank you for the indulgence; thank you, chair. Minister, I have two questions in relation to the lakes. I notice that the Molonglo Reach waterski area has remained closed to the public. Has there been an assessment done in relation to whether it is feasible to reopen that or has there been any feedback from the community about that?

Mr Dix: In regard to the Molonglo Reach area, back in about 2010 there was major flooding which occurred within the ACT. There was a lot of sand and debris which was moved down the Molonglo Reach area. After the flood there was an assessment done by officers within environment protection as well as TAMS, as it was then

known.

What we found was there were sandbars created all through the Molonglo Reach area. We had a bathometric test done as well. What we found was the waters were really unnavigable for recreational waterskiing. In order to reopen the area for recreational activities, you have to dredge the river to remove a lot of the sandbars which have occurred within the area.

All we have down there now is an area that is called the main basin, which is the large area you can see from the Scrivener Bridge. That is open for closed waterskiing, so the ACT waterski association. It is subject to very strict conditions which identify one vessel on the water at a time, what driver is permitted there and what activities they can undertake there.

MS LEE: In terms of the Molonglo, after the assessment in 2010, is there any further sort of consideration by the ACT government about what we might do with that?

Mr Jones: I think that is either a planning or an NCA matter. That is not an environmental condition itself in terms of, I guess, hazards or waste. It is more of a safety provision in terms of the depth of the river and the safety of the operators.

MS LEE: Thank you. In terms of Lake Ginninderra, I notice that there were two permits issued. Again, in terms of Lake Ginninderra, is there any consideration being given up to opening up that lake more for some recreational or marine activities?

Mr Dix: Back in 2000 I know that there was a plan of management done for the ACT lakes and waterways. That plan of management details what the intended uses are for those water bodies. Molonglo Reach allowed power boats and waterskiing to occur there. Under the plan of management, Lake Ginninderra allows it only subject to a permit. I know currently that the plan of management is being reviewed. They may change with community expectations, but I cannot answer further than that.

Mr Jones: It is largely a policy matter for use of Lake Ginninderra. I understand EPSD is doing some work on that in a coordinated manner.

THE CHAIR: In the interests of time, I think we are due to finish at 12 and have the Minister for Environment and Heritage come in. We might leave it there unless, Mr Parton, you had a question?

MR PARTON: No.

THE CHAIR: Just before we break, I remind members that supplementary questions should be lodged with the committee support office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. Responses to questions taken on notice should be submitted to the committee office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. We will change now to the Minister for Environment and Heritage.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Gentleman Mr Mick, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Rake, Mr Gary, Deputy Director-General

Lane, Ms Annie, Executive Director, Environment

Spencer, Mr Gary, Acting Director, Financial and Operational Support

Kendall, Mr Matthew, Executive Manager, Catchment and Water Policy

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Director, ACT Parks and Conservation Services

Carmichael, Mr Tony, Executive Director, Strategic Planning

Moore, Ms Fiona, Manager, ACT Heritage

THE CHAIR: Minister, on behalf of the committee I would like to thank you and you officials for attending today. Today the committee will be examining the annual report of the Environment and Planning Directorate, now known as the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. We will begin with the sections of the report related to the environment portfolio. We will then move to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and after lunch we will be looking at the sections of the annual report of the Environment and Planning Directorate as they relate to heritage matters, the ACT Heritage Council. We will conclude with land management as it relates to parks and conservation and public land management plans.

I draw your attention, minister and officials, to the privilege statement before you on the table, the pink card that the minister is waving for us. Could you and your officials confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, we do; thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and webstreamed and broadcast live.

Before we go to questions, minister, do you have an opening statement you would like to give?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, thank you, just a short statement this year. It is my pleasure to be able to introduce the work done over the last financial year on behalf of our environment and also to acknowledge the minister for the environment at the time, Simon Corbell. The environment division had a very busy year across the conservation, research, natural environment, protection policy and water resource sections. The list of the projects is long, but I am pleased to say that apart from their individual value, many of the projects dovetailed with other projects within the division, and with the directorate and wider government as well.

A headline project was ACT healthy waterways, which is well on the way to meeting its 2019 deadline. Following the initial work and community consultation on the selected sites, we have in the past few weeks notified the first development applications to allow construction to commence and we have launched the

H2OK campaign to ask the community to let only rain go down the stormwater drain.

I would also like to highlight the environment division's work with our New South Wales regional neighbours. Given that the environment does not recognise borders, good outcomes require cross-border cooperation. The ACT and region water catchment strategy and the draft ACT natural resource management investment plan for 2013-23 are just two examples of that important work.

We are lucky in Canberra to have such an environmentally aware and engaged community. This is evidenced through the Landcare and Parkcare groups that we have. The Canberra Nature Park received more than 350,000 visits last year. The reintroduction of native species such as the bettongs, quolls and bush stone curlews at Mulligans Flat woodland sanctuary has captured Canberra's imagination. Mulligans Flat is part of our woodland and grassland communities, some of the best remaining examples in the country. Our ecologists have continued their excellent work to monitor and conserve these and other ecological communities and species integral to the territory's environment.

By increasing our knowledge and information about the environment, we can have evidence-based planning and decision-making to inform management and conservation decisions and actions for the future. For example, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna released the first biodiversity research and monitoring program which sets out our biodiversity research and monitoring priorities so that we can better support effective management and conservation of the ACT's flora, fauna and ecosystems.

At this point I would like to note that the directorate welcomed the parks and conservation service into the environment fold at the beginning of this financial year. I look forward to including PCS in next year's annual reporting and showing how they work in natural resource management and conservation research, how it informs us and how it is informed by the service.

Also I would like to acknowledge the important work of the environment protection policy team, which continued to implement the 2015 amendments to the environmental act as part of their brief to reduce adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

Chair, I will leave it at that for my opening statement. I and my staff are happy to answer questions for the committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I would like to start by asking some questions around grasslands and grassland management. I note from the annual report that you oversee the grassland enhancement program. What sort of work have you been doing over the past year for the grasslands of Canberra?

Mr Gentleman: There is quite a bit of work that has occurred over the last year, particularly in relation to looking at grasslands that have endangered species in them. We have set aside some great offsets, if you like, to ensure that those areas are included into the future. I might ask Annie Lane to give you some more detail on that.

Ms Lane: Understanding our grasslands is really key to managing them well. One of the things we are doing there, as the minister alluded to, is monitoring threatened species that occur there. There are some that are highly threatened and nationally listed, for example, the grassland earless dragon. These species require certain characteristics in their habitat in terms of the structure to provide food and shelter. We are looking at what that structure is made up of and we are using things like fire and grazing to manipulate the biomass and to provide a diversity of structure for those particular animals or a heterogeneous environment. That work is coming along really well.

The other really important aspect of managing grasslands is managing the basic species, particularly plant species. That is a big challenge and an ongoing challenge. The offsets have given us an opportunity to ramp up that work, so we are having some wins there. We are also using things like fire to manage weeds.

THE CHAIR: When you speak about the offsets, what sort of offsets have you put in place to get those outcomes for the grasslands?

Ms Lane: The offsets are areas that are set aside for conservation development, as you know well. East Jerrabomberra, for example, is a prime example of grassland offsets. Often the offsets are not in prime condition, so our challenge is to enhance the condition, and the offset resourcing helps us to do that.

THE CHAIR: With the grasslands management, some of the grasslands in my electorate are quite bound by urban areas. We find that a lot of people are going into them and using them for recreational purposes and so forth, which could potentially have a detrimental effect on the ecology factors. Are you looking at how you can better balance that for ones that have been reserved and put aside? I am thinking in particular—I might have the name wrong because it does not appear on many maps—of what I believe is the north Mitchell grasslands in Franklin. It is bounded by complete urban areas on all four sides, and it gets used quite a lot for dog walking and those sorts of things. How can we balance that need that the community have there? Obviously they recognise this as a great resource for amenity purposes, but we want to preserve the ecological benefits that that grassland has.

Ms Lane: Firstly, we really encourage the community to understand our grasslands better. They are probably not as well used as our woodland areas, for example, which probably have more infrastructure in place. It is the same kind of challenge, balancing recreational activity with the conservation objectives. The key is to have some very clearly defined walking trails, for example, and to maintain those in a good condition. To raise awareness, having good signage around the protected areas, is also really important.

An area that we are paying some attention to now is looking at the recreational use of our grasslands. We certainly do not want to close them up. That is not what protected areas are for. We want the community to really appreciate them, to get out there and get the health benefits of using our reserves. We need to think about what kinds of recreational activities are most appropriate for those areas, but that is well set out in our management plans. Some areas, for example—not necessarily grasslands—lend themselves more to mountain bike riding. There are others where we can have horse

riding. We do not envisage that for our grassland areas, but certainly we would encourage people to get out there on foot.

THE CHAIR: I am good with that. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, chair. Minister, good afternoon. My first question refers to page 20 to 22 of the annual report regarding the kangaroo cull. Given the cost of and impact on previous culls from lengthy court delays, is there a reason why the current approach was not considered an option earlier?

Mr Gentleman: I think it comes from knowledge that you learn as you go. It is important that the work that has occurred previously with the management of these native species is learnt from and the results out of that management process go forward into how we manage them into the future. I might just ask Annie to elaborate, though, in regard to why we have not come across this earlier.

Ms Lane: The new Nature Conservation Act, which came into play in 2015, enabled the minister to declare a native species as a controlled native species. We did not really have that legal option available to us before, but it is there now; this is a response to that framework being in place.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. I have a supplementary question to that. There are comments in the media that animal activists are suggesting that they will continue their on-ground activities. Has this been factored into the preparations for this year's cull to ensure that contractors are not put at risk?

Ms Lane: Yes, certainly. The welfare of people and also the animals is always a paramount consideration. Protests have occurred in all previous years, and no doubt they will continue. That is really something that is planned for in terms of scenarios, and we go to great lengths to ensure that the protesters, as well as the contractors themselves, are not put at risk.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. Has any consideration been given to better utilisation of the carcasses resulting from the cull? Would animal shelters and other animal rescue organisations be able to benefit from the meat?

Ms Lane: We use some of the carcasses for baiting purposes. Something like 20 to 25 per cent of the carcasses are used for making baits. In terms of using them for other means, the numbers are not very high, and it would require some infrastructure to be put in place. The primary reason for the cull is around conservation; it is not really to use the carcasses or the meat for any other purpose.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. I have a supplementary a bit further on that. The plan, on page 25, states that during 25 years that kangaroos have been commercially harvested and monitored in eastern Australia, populations have undergone huge fluctuations and shown a corresponding capacity for recovery. On that basis, why has commercialisation harvesting not been considered an option?

Mr Gentleman: As Ms Lane expressed earlier, the purpose of this is to manage our natural environment; it is not a commercial practice. Our key policy is to manage the

natural environment.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand your assessment of it, but we would like to know a bit more as to whether any cost-benefit analysis has been made on the potential for commercial harvesting and how that could help with the situation that is ongoing.

Mr Gentleman: I have not seen it in my time, but I might ask Annie if she knows anything.

Ms Lane: I have not seen it in my time either, minister, but the numbers are very small; we need to bear that in mind. I think the thinking is that it would not be a viable enterprise, given that the numbers are small and we are only culling for conservation reasons. The numbers will fluctuate. We would expect over time that the numbers to be culled will go down, particularly as we are implementing some fertility control as well. It is really a business proposition, and it is not a viable position to harvest commercially.

MR PARTON: Is the intended purpose of the cull to maintain existing populations or to reduce them?

Ms Lane: The number one purpose is to manage the kangaroos at a level where it is the best outcome for their own welfare and their habitat and also for the welfare of other plants and animals. Kangaroos are a really important part of our ecosystem. They are an iconic species. They are the major grazer in our ecosystem, at least the major native grazer. So it is really important that they are there and their populations remain sustainable. I guess the answer to your question is that they are both really important. It is finding that balance where their populations are healthy and sustainable. And the same goes for other plants and animals in their habitat.

MR PARTON: It may be a difficult question to answer, but what is regarded as the optimum maintenance size of the kangaroo population?

Ms Lane: There are different stocking densities, I suppose, if I can put it that way. It is about one kangaroo per hectare in grasslands. Then it reduces down when you get into open woodlands and woodlands. It goes down to about 0.8 and then a little bit lower than that for closed woodlands. About one per hectare for grasslands is the estimate.

MS CHEYNE: My questions are about citizen science and the Canberra nature map. The concept broadly and the Canberra nature map especially, along with some of the other things we are doing in the community, are great resources. It is great to see the community getting involved in conservation. What has been the community response to these initiatives and what has been done to encourage community uptake?

Ms Lane: The response to the Canberra nature map has been amazing. I think it has taken everyone by surprise. We have over a million records now and around 1,000 people involved in providing information. There are over 500 images in there. It has really added to and enriched our information base for the location of plants and animals. We have discovered populations of rare plants, for example, that we did not know existed, which is fantastic. People are very enthusiastic about it.

One of the great things is that it is very easy to use. It is just a matter of going out and snapping a picture of a plant or an animal—it may even be a weed—and posting it. It will be verified by an expert. We have a team of about 50 people behind the scenes who identify the species, if you like. It is also great for location information. When anyone with a GPS-enabled phone or camera takes the photo their location is also recorded. It has been a great revelation.

The platform, the architecture, of it is being picked up by other applications as well. It has a wide-ranging uptake. The national koala inventory, for example, is now starting to use this particular platform. It has all been developed for very little money, really, because it has all been done by volunteers. The government has supported further development. For example, there was an environment grant this year for the herpetological society to develop the particular module of the Canberra nature map. It is going from strength to strength and it really covers just about all elements of our ecosystem.

MS CHEYNE: Can I just talk about some of the volunteering aspects. I expect some people take the Canberra nature map very seriously and others access it from time to time. Are people who have made quite extraordinary contributions recognised in any way?

Ms Lane: They certainly are. For example, the Canberra Ornithologists Group—the COG—have contributed all of their data records to the Canberra nature map, which is over a million records. That is quite incredible. They are a very valuable partner. I think it is a vote of trust, actually, that they have contributed all of their records and some 25 years worth of data, which is highly valuable. It enables us to understand what the trends are of particular species. In fact, their information last year led to the scarlet robin being declared as vulnerable because they were able to show that the numbers are going down. At the same time, we have a lot of other volunteers out there who are recording the presence of scarlet robins. So we are going to get a much better idea of how they behave and where they occur at different times of the year.

Another example of the value of volunteers was very simply monitoring orchids so that we could understand the impacts of fire on orchids. We had some 20 volunteers out there on Black Mountain recording all of the orchids that they saw. From that we were able to understand what the best kind of fire regime for these species to flourish is, that is, in terms of time between fire and intensity of fire.

MS CHEYNE: Is there any award system for these volunteers? I imagine that for those people who are really involved in this, gaining access to an area that they might not otherwise be able to access would be a reward and they would be able to contribute more. Is there something like a discovery of the year award or other reward available to volunteers?

Ms Lane: We have our annual Landcare awards. That is a very important calendar event every year. That is the perfect place for volunteers to be recognised. We gave out a range of awards last year and they were all for volunteer groups.

MS CHEYNE: And individuals as well?

Ms Lane: Individuals as well as groups. Sometimes they will be a partnership of both. That is the main avenue that we have to recognise the contributions of volunteers and individuals.

MS CHEYNE: You said before, and I think in here as well, that there are over 30 experts who help with identifying what people are finding.

Ms Lane: That is right.

MS CHEYNE: Are those experts volunteers as well?

Ms Lane: They are, yes. We have over 50 at the moment. They are all volunteers. Some of them might be in paid work, for example, but this is what they do aside from their day job.

MS CHEYNE: How are they identified and how do you know that they are experts?

Ms Lane: I think it is local knowledge or they are well known.

MS CHEYNE: It becomes obvious?

Ms Lane: They are well published. They are actually advisers in their own right, in any case.

MS CHEYNE: How do they become an expert and how do you give them the title?

Mr Gentleman: Years of study, I think, is the answer to that.

MS CHEYNE: In relation to the Canberra nature map, how do you say, “Yes, you are one of our experts. We will show you things and we need your help”?

Ms Lane: I think it is largely by reputation, which they build over time. As the minister said, it is long years of study, long years of interest, passion.

MS CHEYNE: Do you approach them or do they approach you and say, “I want to offer my services to you?”

Ms Lane: I think it is a bit of both. In relation to the Canberra nature map, one of the convenors is located in our directorate. There is a wide network out in the scientific community, but it is not that large—put it that way—even across Australia, so people are quite well known.

MS CHEYNE: Is there any survey of your volunteers and your experts to get a sense of the value that they are getting or the value exchange that they are getting from being involved in this?

Mr Gentleman: There are actions that come out of the work of the volunteers. When we looked at the draft plan of management for the Namadgi National Park many years ago, which of course became the plan for Namadgi, during that process there was a lot

of discussion with the National Parks Association and volunteers. Earlier on you mentioned orchids. That is very important for the ACT region. There was some discussion about how we treat the float roads in Namadgi National Park. These are roads where you can float in big graders to confront bushfires.

It was decided by government at the time that, from the work that these volunteers had done, we would try some different approaches with regard to firefighting in the national park. Quite a bit of money was being spent on the maintenance of float roads. They are very important, of course, but we heard it was integral to draft people in to fight the fire at its very early stages rather than spend money on widening the float roads. That would save the endangered orchid species that actually live on the edge of the float road. Quite a bit was learned during that process and then embedded into policy later on. It was a good recognition, I think, of what they do.

MS CHEYNE: I guess what I am interested in more specifically is this: do your volunteers have ideas on how to improve the Canberra nature map, how to reach others or how to get even more volunteers involved? Do you go directly to them to seek their ideas for improvement?

Mr Rake: Across the directorate we are still in the early stages of modernising our use of technology, social media and GPS and location-enabled devices. I think there is a lot more that we can do in that space; not to trivialise it, but to look at some of the gamification trends around the world and what other apps and knowledge management services are using. On TripAdvisor, people who provide lots of reviews get status upgrades and that is identified on their public profile. That is the sort of thing that we could do to recognise people who are making large contributions to the Canberra nature map. Similarly, those service providers and app creators go back to their users from time to time to seek feedback. We are still in the early stages. You could expect that for our next review we would go back and seek advice on additional features or bugs or recognition methods.

The trends that we can observe elsewhere in the online world and in the business world suggest that people do not necessarily need a printed certificate to hang on the wall anymore, that helping build their credibility in their professional and social circles is potentially more valuable and builds loyalty in the relationship between us. That means we are more likely to get greater share of information. They will put greater care into making sure the information is accurate. They will think about the value of the information and be more likely to bring forward unique and valuable data records rather than replicating information that we might already hold. So we can actually take the value of the relationship quite a few levels higher. We are looking at it in the cultural and environmental heritage space and heritage in general. We are starting to think about how to use that in the planning space. I think our environmental team is probably at the forefront at the moment in the two-way exchange of information.

MS CHEYNE: I have one final question regarding the risks involved in citizen science. I imagine there is a risk of potential injury—people chasing after the scarlet robin and falling over or something. There are many different birds and they have one bird expert—just hypothetically—spending hours each evening identifying birds. How do you manage that? Is it your role to manage that or is it up to the individual

and their own risk assessment?

Ms Lane: When we are working with groups of volunteers it is certainly our role to look after their welfare. With our Waterwatch group, for example, we go through a risk assessment process. They go through an induction. We have people in the field who have first aid, for example. All of those things are covered off. Similarly, when we are working with our ParkCare groups, the same applies. They need to know how to use equipment, for example. They need to wear protective clothing and things like that. Similar standards apply to our volunteer groups as apply to our staff.

MS LEE: I have a supplementary. In terms of citizen science, there is clearly an educational benefit in that program. What does the ACT government do to encourage children, through schools or other children's groups—scouts, for example—to take an initiative in that regard?

Ms Lane: There are a number of initiatives happening. We have Junior Landcare, for example, which is very popular. Kids are getting out there planting trees, weeding et cetera. We also work in schools on a number of different levels, including with youth and younger people. We work closely with Mulligans Flat, the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, going into schools. They are learning about eastern bettongs, for example.

Greening Australia is one of our closest partners and we work with Greening Australia in schools as well. We also work with at-risk youth through our Aboriginal NRM program. We are targeting those kids, whether they be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, and getting them connected to country, getting them connected to the environment through collecting seeds, growing plants and planting them out in the environment. It is a range of different scales. We recognise it is really critical to work with school children, because that is where it starts. They can go home and tell mum and dad about it as well.

Mr Gentleman: A really good example would be some of the public events that we put on for the territory or take a role in as a supporter. The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust's recent wetlands open day was a good example of that. We had thousands of people out at the wetlands and a lot of young people. There were particular stalls there which provided really detailed information about how wetlands and particular species operate. Young people could be involved in the experimental part of it, testing some of the water and looking at some of the invertebrates in the stream as well. It was a good opportunity for them to learn about it and take that message back home, as Annie said.

MR PARTON: I want to get back to kangaroos, if I could. I note that the ACT government does not cull to address vehicle-kangaroo collisions—it is considered a road safety matter—and that fencing is used instead. I note also after years of driving the parkway at 3.30 in the morning, as soon as I finished, the fences came up, and I love them. But I want to know: has any assessment been done on the effectiveness of fencing as a deterrent along major roads? What evidence is there that collisions have reduced, if any?

Mr Gentleman: That is probably more a matter for Roads ACT in that sense, but

certainly anecdotally we know that collisions have reduced.

MR PARTON: That does not surprise.

Mr Gentleman: That is right; it is pretty straightforward I suppose. I had the roads portfolio at the time, so I can say that that particular fencing was well designed, and the federal government supported quite a bit of that in the funding sense. I think good results for those areas that have been fenced.

I know from previous jobs I have done that it does not always stop the kangaroos. Even with that size fencing, they can still get across if they really want to, but it does deter them and make them go to a different route.

MR PARTON: Has any financial assessment been made on the costs of installing better security fencing along major roads adjacent to bush trails—Limestone Avenue, Fairbairn Avenue, Mugga Lane, that sort of thing? Are we going to move in that direction?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly we need to ensure that the community is getting value for money. But, as I said, it is not my portfolio in the sense of roads. I will take that on notice and chase that up with Minister Fitzharris.

MS LEE: A supplementary on horse paddocks, there is competition from kangaroos, and a couple of the horse paddocks in the ACT have had to significantly reduce their capacity. One of them, I think, has even closed. What is the ACT government doing about ensuring that the horse paddocks are actually doing what they are designed to do, which is have horses? What is in place now?

Mr Gentleman: It varies quite a bit depending on annual rainfall and the amount of food available in the paddocks, too. Most people from my experience feed their horses as well and do not just rely on the ground cover. Mr Iglesias might be able to give us some more information on that.

Mr Iglesias: We have 16 horse paddocks scattered throughout the ACT and they are strategically located to provide service to all our different regions. It is true that one horse paddock had to give way to the solar farm, but we have been able to look for alternative land across the road at Gilmore and also at Hume. All the horses that were accommodated in that Mugga Lane paddock have found new homes in these areas.

We are also continuing to look at another site in Hume. We might be able to expand a little bit the capacity we have for our horse paddock patrons. We have a really good relationship with the contractor whom we employ to run the horse paddocks on our behalf. We are in constant engagement to ascertain where the demand is and where the sensitivity is so that we can respond with our planning.

MS LEE: Are horse agistment areas excluded from culling operations?

Mr Iglesias: During the culling period we will work very closely with the contractor in relation to culling. Thus far I think it is true to say that we have not culled in horse paddocks, “we” being the ACT government. But at every instance we will cooperate

with the contractor. If the contractor determines there is a need to reduce the number of kangaroos, then we will liaise with the contractor. It makes sense for us to cooperate with them to get the best return for the territory.

MS LEE: That is done on a case-by-case basis?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, that is right.

MS LEE: While we are on kangaroos, the hand rearing of kangaroos, how does the directorate manage the no doubt well-intentioned, but probably not the best outcome for the concerned residents, adoption of joeys? What does the ACT government do about that?

Mr Iglesias: It is important to know that the ACT actually has some of the highest recorded densities of eastern grey kangaroos. It literally is one of the most common native animals, but particularly so in the southeast of Australia. In the ACT we have an arrangement with Wildcare for a certain number of orphaned joeys to be taken across the border and rescued by that organisation. But that is the only arrangement we have in place.

MS LEE: Can I ask a substantive?

THE CHAIR: Yes, sure.

MS LEE: Moving on from kangaroos to the lakes and the catchments, there has been a recent report by the NCA in relation to the huge amount of carp being a big issue for Australian waterways, but the NCA was at a bit of a loss to explain what could be done about it. Is the ACT government in the same situation? What is the forward plan for what we can do about the carp?

Mr Gentleman: It is a very important question. Ms Lane and I attended the agricultural ministers conference in New Zealand last year where this was discussed. There is a commonwealth government proposal to remove carp from the waterways. It is looking at, I think, about two years time from now for the beginning of that process. There is a virus that can be introduced that targets just European carp. We are working through that process now with ministers across Australia.

The real concern for me in the preparatory work is to ensure that once this occurs we have the capacity to remove the biomass at the end of the treatment, if you like. We will be looking at how we can strategically deal with particular parts of the waterways so that we can remove that biomass at the end. But the federal government has been very helpful in this matter.

MS LEE: What impact does the presence of the huge amount of carp have on the water quality of our lakes?

Mr Gentleman: The feeding process of carps is that they go for marine agriculture, if you like. In our normal waterways and the lakes, their feeding removes the component that actually keeps the lake floor together. It has a dramatic effect on our waterways.

Mr Rake: If I could add on the coordination of how we would manage biomass, the ACT has a seat at the COAG table which means we are involved in the national planning for the release of this virus.

MS LEE: Is this the—

Mr Rake: Carp herpes virus, yes. In noting the comments the NCA made, it would appear that, despite the commonwealth holding management of Lake Burley Griffin, it is not discussing with the land manager how it would work. That is something we would take up on behalf of the NCA to make sure we have a coordinated approach across the ACT. The water flow does not recognise jurisdictional boundary between the commonwealth and the ACT. We certainly would not want lack of action in Lake Burley Griffin to result in that biomass essentially going over the wall at Scrivener Dam and becoming our problem to try to manage in the Molonglo and then subsequently a New South Wales problem as the Molonglo merges with the Murrumbidgee and travels down towards Burrinjuck. We need a very coordinated approach, and we see that with all of the states and territories. We will advocate on the NCA's behalf to make sure the commonwealth's own management of the lake is in the same framework.

Ms Lane: I think it is fair to say that there is quite a long way to go in this discussion around, first of all, whether or not the virus will be released. They need to have a number of things in place and additional research undertaken before that decision can be made. For example, what is the rate of spread of the virus from its release spot, if you like, and what might be the impact of removing all of this biomass on the system? We also need to have governance aspects in place and the operational clean up needs to be well thought through. That will be happening at a national as well as a state and territory level.

Our scientists are involved in those discussions at a national level. We will also be involved in contributing to the coordination around the clean-up. We will be establishing a task force within the ACT that will involve all of those people—land managers and directorates—who have some involvement. That is happening very soon. We will be starting with those discussions at a task force level.

MS LEE: Generally in terms of the lake water quality, the *Canberra Times* is on a campaign of love our lakes, and that has been in the public arena. Can you, minister, give us an update on the general lake quality at the moment?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, I can. There are a number of lakes we are quite concerned about in regard to quality. We are starting a process of using the federal grant to be able to clean up the lakes. As I mentioned in my opening statement, there is a lot of work to progress by way of educating the Canberra community on how they can look after their lakes, for example, only stormwater down the drain. That process has begun through the educational campaign. The physical work is starting now with development applications going into place.

In regard to the quality of particular lakes, we can now say that parts of Lake Ginninderra have been closed for primary contact, that is, swimming, because of concerns there. Lake Tuggeranong is closed as well. It has been closed for quite a

number of days due to the algae collection there.

MS LEE: We have referred previously to citizen science. To ensure that people have buy-in, they need to understand the lake and have responsibility as well. What other initiatives is the ACT government planning to ensure that we have more accessibility for Canberra residents to get involved with getting to know their lake better?

Mr Gentleman: You are right; the Canberra community is very involved. I can highlight Lake Tuggeranong, for example, with our Waterwatch groups down there and the amount of work that they have been doing. They also have a local clean-up. They will go through and physically collect items from round the lake as well as in the lake at the same time. There are great opportunities there. We have contributed some \$2.4 million over the 2014-15 and 2015-19 years as well. That was committed in last year's budget.

We have also provided \$8.5 million to the ACT healthy waterways project. We fund them and they go out and do that hard work, which is really important, and they are very passionate. Tomorrow night we have Tuggeranong Community Council, as Mark would be aware, and we will have a Waterwatch report at that community council telling us of the work they have been doing around the area.

Mr Rake: We also, as land manager, coordinate with other parts of government that have related interests in the lake or adjacent areas. Two clear examples would be interaction with Clean Up Australia Day and helping community organisations that want to take a particular focus to their work cleaning up part of a lake or water body that they use most.

The second one is, of course, through sport and recreation, or active Canberra, and the program of annual funding and infrastructure grants that go to sport and recreation groups that use any of our water bodies. Those range from competitive sports clubs, like rowing clubs or sailing clubs, through to community organisations like sea scouts.

MS LEE: In terms of, for example, the West Basin boardwalk that is being developed now—I understand that that is done through another directorate—but how much involvement does your directorate have insofar as the impacts that would have on the lake as the development goes and also for the future?

Mr Rake: We do not have a strong involvement in that one for two reasons: the first is that the research around what that reconfiguration of the lake edge would do to water quality was done about a decade ago. I will come back to that. The primary reason is that Lake Burley Griffin is managed by the commonwealth through the NCA. But, sitting in the seat of the NCA at the time, I know the reshaping of the lake is partly designed to remedy the fact that the water is very shallow and does not get great circulation close to the current edge of West Basin. It was anticipated that the reshaping will give us greater water depth, better circulation, particularly during—

MS LEE: So the development is to actually benefit the waterway?

Mr Rake: It should actually help that overall water quality.

THE CHAIR: Along the same line of water catchments, with the parks you have just announced, I notice Mackellar, which is in my electorate, is going to have some work done on the catchment area. Can you run through what you are looking at doing for Mackellar specifically for that particular catchment?

Mr Kendall: The ACT healthy waterways project has 25 priority sites spread across six catchments, and a number of those are in the west Belconnen catchment. Certainly there are a range of assets proposed—ponds, wetlands, rain gardens and channel naturalisation—and a number of those sites are in the west Belconnen area.

THE CHAIR: Mackellar has been designated as one of the focus areas. What are you specifically looking at doing around that area?

Mr Kendall: The development approvals for the first 11 sites have been released recently, and they included the site adjacent to Mackellar. The specific details include two small ponds and wetlands to intercept the stormwater which would otherwise flow from Mackellar straight into the Ginninderra creek and then downstream. In effect, it is to capture that stormwater and treat it to remove and reduce the nutrients in that water.

THE CHAIR: This is going to have a positive effect to the quality of the lake, is that what you are saying?

Mr Kendall: That specific site would improve the water quality to Ginninderra Creek and downstream into the Murrumbidgee River.

Mr Rake: It is all below the lake, that particular one.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, going to page 213, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna section, and under tree protection, the conservator is responsible for making decisions on applications to undertake defined tree-damaging activities on trees on leased urban land that meet the criteria for protection. My question is: does the conservator role include decisions on applications made by ACT residents on trees they consider dangerous to their property?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly. I have found from experience that a number of residents will write to the conservator in regard to trees on their property, to see in particular whether they can either trim or remove those trees where they consider they might be dangerous. The conservator will make a decision in that particular instance. In the past, when we have seen some trees that have been deemed to be dangerous, we have been able to reuse those.

Most recently, in the area of Barrer Hill, around the national arboretum, we have been able to take trees that the conservator sees could be a threat in the urban area, remove those trees because of that threat and then reinstall them as a natural habitat in the Barrer Hill area. That means we can provide opportunities for species particularly destined for Canberra to come and live in that area. It is a good result having regard to the use of the tree. But many residents, of course, do not get that decision; the conservator would write to the resident and say that, in their view, that tree should be upheld and not removed.

MR DOSZPOT: What liaison or input does urban services have in assessing the merit of a resident's complaint?

Mr Gentleman: They would pass that on to the conservator. In regard to decision-making, do you mean?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Mr Gentleman: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: From a personal point of view, I have represented a lot of constituents who have gone directly to urban services. The answer we get back is that urban services has made a decision. Are you saying that urban services would defer that decision to the conservator?

Mr Gentleman: In the area that urban services is doing it in; but, for example, in Northbourne Avenue, that decision was put in place as the light rail project was moving forward.

Ms Lane: The tree protection unit within city services certainly have a major role to play in this regard. They make assessments of particular trees. They also refer these to the tree advisory panel, which is an independent panel. They would also provide their advice. Usually, the conservator sees these decisions and then I make a decision based on the evidence that is presented to me.

I particularly see applications for removal of trees that are resubmitted for a second time. They are called reconsiderations. That is where I get very involved. I make those decisions based on the criteria that are clearly laid out in the Tree Protection Act, depending on whether they are dangerous or they are having a significant impact on property, for example, and what the alternatives might be for management of those trees. It could be some heavy pruning, for example. That is for regulated trees. Where they are registered trees, it is a more significant matter to consider because they have been registered for a good reason. They may be remnant trees. They are very important in the landscape. They may be wonderful examples of their species. So that is a more serious consideration.

MR DOSZPOT: Who makes the final decision? Is it urban services, you, or do you act as the conservator?

Ms Lane: The conservator makes the final decision.

MR DOSZPOT: I note you said reconsideration requests have been made; I think five were made and five were accepted, or five decisions were changed following reconsideration. But that was out of a total declined number of 377. That is a pretty small number of reconsiderations.

Ms Lane: That is right.

MR DOSZPOT: There are a number of constituents who have come to me—and I

am sure my colleagues in other electorates are in similar positions—where they deem the tree to be dangerous. Large limbs may fall off and hurt children on their property or, in certain cases, people have been concerned about the need to do some extreme trimming of trees to take away the dangerous aspect. Who can a constituent—or who can I, for that matter, if a constituent comes to me—appeal to regarding a decision that has been made against either the removal of the tree or the pruning of the tree?

Ms Lane: Applicants can always make an appeal to the ACAT.

MR DOSZPOT: That is at their cost, of course.

Ms Lane: That is right. The decisions are made very clearly against the criteria of the Tree Protection Act. If the conservator were to behave in a way that is not consistent with that act, obviously that would not be an ideal situation. So that is how the decisions are made.

For those where the decision has been changed, that is often because the tree no longer meets the conditions for which it was listed, for example. But there are alternatives. As you mentioned, if limbs are deemed to be dangerous, they can be removed, for example. The risk assessment around trees—falling limbs, for example, on people—shows that it is a really minuscule probability that this will occur. I am not saying if it does occur that it is not a serious situation, but there is more chance of injuring yourself falling out of bed than from having a limb fall. This is documented; I am not being amusing. That is the case.

As a society and as a city, we are very conscious of having a very healthy urban canopy. It is very important for ameliorating the impacts of the heat caused by a changing climate and also the biodiversity, the beautiful birds and other animals that use our urban canopy. So these decisions around whether or not to remove a tree are not taken lightly.

MR DOSZPOT: Based on your last couple of sentences, what justification can the conservator give for the removal of 800 trees on Northbourne Avenue which would have an impact on several of the things you just mentioned: environment, birds, the canopy provided by 800 trees along a very significant part of Canberra? How was that decision arrived at by the conservator?

Ms Lane: That was not a decision by the conservator at all.

MR DOSZPOT: Who was that by?

Mr Gentleman: A decision by government, Mr Doszpot. In going forward with the light rail plan for the first stage, government looked at what needed to be done—

MR DOSZPOT: I will just stop you for a second. I would like to hear your answer but I want to qualify the fact that, as I heard it, I asked some questions regarding who makes the decisions about the removal of trees and so forth, and the answer I was given was that it is either the conservator or urban services in certain cases. So how does the government justify overruling the decision of the conservator, if indeed there was such a decision asked for?

Mr Gentleman: As I was saying, the conservator does not make decisions on unleased land; it makes decisions on land around the territory. In this particular instance, for Northbourne Avenue, we looked at the opportunity to create a better public transport system for the whole of the territory. Those trees on Northbourne Avenue have been replaced on several occasions. So the trees that are being removed at the moment are not the original trees that were planted; they have been replaced on a number of occasions.

MR DOSZPOT: How many trees have been replaced?

Mr Gentleman: I think there are about four.

MR DOSZPOT: Four out of 800?

Mr Gentleman: No, all of those trees, or the majority of those trees, will be replaced with other trees. I am saying that over the stretch of time from when they were first planted, there have been different species of trees planted on Northbourne Avenue. Some trees have lasted for a certain amount of time and then they have been replaced. The current ones are river gums, not particularly well designed for that area. They need a lot of water. As we have seen, as they have started to come down now, the root balls are much smaller than anticipated and the trees have been struggling.

They will be replaced, of course. With most of our urban planning and renewal, we replace trees. A really good example is the work that we talked about a little bit earlier in regard to the lake, around West Basin, where some of those trees are being removed to put in the boardwalk. We are installing 370 trees. So that is a dramatic increase in the number of trees replaced in that area.

MR DOSZPOT: With the replacement trees on Northbourne Avenue, what size and age are those trees, and what cover do they offer when they are planted?

Mr Rake: The trees that are going in will be eucalyptus mannifera, in the majority. They will be planted at around four metres high. We have already started trialling planting of trees from the exact group of trees that are being pre-grown now in a nursery, ready to come in to this project. We are now doing trials in situ in the Canberra environment, in a site very similar to the median of the light rail corridor, in readiness to check whether there are any other details that we need to be aware of, testing both the main trees and the understorey plantings. So they will go in at about four metres high. Manniferas are endemic to this region. We know that they grow well in a dry, hot climate, so they are likely to maintain their health through changing weather and changing climatic conditions.

With respect to the trees that have been removed from Northbourne Avenue, they were planted in the early 1980s by the then National Capital Development Commission, and they were planned in full contemplation that they would likely be removed for a public transport corridor. I will not pretend it was light rail specific, but a public transport corridor down the middle was planned. That was documented in a report by the then head of landscape at the NCDC, Richard Clough. The trees were planted knowing that one or both rows on each side would be taken out in time.

The trees that are going in will be about four metres. I have seen the sample ones that are in place, and they are a good start. They are already 1½ half humans high, so they are of scale already.

MR DOSZPOT: There is obviously a difference between the number of trees that would have to be replaced just over the central corridor on Northbourne Avenue as opposed to the 800 that are terminated, basically. You mentioned the type of trees and the fact that they are four metres and so forth. What is the cost associated so far with those trees having been grown to that level? What is the cost of the total replacement plan for the trees that will be used as replacement trees on Northbourne Avenue?

Mr Rake: We would have to take that on notice. It would be a question more properly answered by—

MR DOSZPOT: If you could take it on notice—

Mr Rake: Transport Canberra and City Services. They are running the light rail project and the landscape is part of that project scope.

Mr Gentleman: I am happy to take that question to them, forward it to that directorate and come back to you.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you; I appreciate your taking it on notice. We have a Conservator of Flora and Fauna; I am somewhat intrigued by the part that the Conservator of Flora and Fauna plays in—

Mr Gentleman: In the design?

MR DOSZPOT: On, first of all, the fact that 800 trees are basically disposable without there being any major impact on Canberra. Secondly, what advice is the Conservator of Flora and Fauna giving on the type of tree and the way that is being managed? If you could either take it on notice—

Mr Gentleman: No, I will ask the conservator to let you know now.

Ms Lane: I will just underline that the conservator does not make decisions on unleased public land. That is clearly defined—

MR DOSZPOT: Does that make those trees less important?

Ms Lane: Not in my mind, no, it does not. But I do not have jurisdiction there.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there anything that you as the conservator can do to voice your concern about the fact that there is the division between leased and unleased land? We all understand that, but it is still quite important to the look and feel of Canberra. Obviously, that is unleased land, and the government then has far more ability to administer the way those trees are handled. I feel that there is a little bit of a grey area there that perhaps should be looked at more by your office.

Ms Lane: Okay, I will take that. Importantly, the trees will be replaced by trees that are well suited to this area. In fact there will be more trees planted than removed; I believe a couple of hundred more. So that is good news. The trees that are currently there have not been particularly well suited. The recent storms in January actually revealed this to a certain extent when a number of them were damaged and had to be removed. It showed that their root system was constrained, they had root ball, very small root balls, and some rotting as well. It is perhaps not the best species that could have been there.

The ecologists and scientists who work in my team provide advice on appropriate species to be planted there, including not just trees but also the understorey. They consider a range of factors, with suitability being the most important thing, as well as what will look nice, what will be flowering through different seasons, for example, and what will be good for biodiversity.

Mr Gentleman: It is important to remember, too, that the National Capital Authority has a view, and it will be either authorising these sorts of plantings or ensuring that the right species are going in as well.

MR PARTON: Was any assessment made as to alternative uses for the trees removed in preparation for the tram line? Have all the trees been chipped? Where is the woodchip going to be used?

Mr Gentleman: There is a lot of input, actually, on what could occur with the trees, particularly from the community. Artists in the ACT and different groups would like to do some work with particular trees from Northbourne Avenue. Have you got some information?

Mr Rake: I have got some information. Some of them will be mulched and used in landscape areas both on ACT land and in the National Botanic Gardens. Some will be used in nature installations. We might put a habitat log into a nature reserve or for re-snagging in rivers. But the timber itself from those trees is not particularly suited to more traditional forms of timber work, either construction or major art, because it cracks quite badly as it dries. It does not hold its form. Where there are environmental uses, we are using those.

MS LEE: I have one supp to that.

THE CHAIR: I would make the point: a lot of these questions are going to other jurisdictions and could perhaps be asked in other hearings. Can we keep it to the environmental aspect.

MS LEE: Forgive my ignorance; I do not know how trams work and I am certainly not an expert on tree species. The trees that are going to be replaced along Northbourne obviously have to interact with the tram. My understanding is that it has overhead wiring. With the tree species that are going to be the new ones, has that sort of risk factor been discussed and how does that work? It all comes up when I am in the community.

Mr Rake: Yes, it is all very carefully assessed, everything from the likely final height

of the trees in relation to the catenaries, how the tree would respond to pruning. The catenaries will have the same sorts of clearance zones that we have around overhead power lines. If the tree grew too close, it would be pruned. These are trees that respond quite well to that. The placement of the trees in the corridor is such that we will get good trees growing to a good size with good form without interfering with the catenaries.

MS CHEYNE: I have a supplementary about the tree advisory panel, which is in the annual report. I was just wondering how these members are appointed. Do you go out to the community or are there tree experts hanging around? Where do they come from?

Mr Gentleman: They are appointed by cabinet. Once the conservator and other agencies look at the applications for these appointments, they provide us with feedback as to who would be the most appropriate appointee and then we take those to cabinet for that decision.

MS CHEYNE: For how long is the term of the appointment?

Ms Lane: The tree advisory panel is under city services, with the tree protection unit. They are the administrators, if you like.

MS CHEYNE: I can direct that question to them.

Ms Lane: The conservator does not actually get involved in that.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary on that. Do you advise the government on people who will be appointed to panels for both leased and unleased land?

Ms Lane: No, I do not get involved in advising the government on the appointment to the panel.

MR DOSZPOT: As to the appointment of people who are working on unleased land, who makes the decision or the recommendation there?

Ms Lane: Do you mean for the tree advisory panel?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes.

Ms Lane: That would be within city services. You would have to direct that question to them.

MS CHEYNE: At the bottom of page 215, the matters that were referred for full investigation under the act, I was just wondering if you could talk me through two of them, notwithstanding privacy details. They are No 3 and No 9. No 3 is the three matters of offenders entering a closed reserve and infringements being issued. Could that be related to a reserve being closed for kangaroo culling, could it be related to Tidbinbilla nature reserve being closed due to heat or could it be any of those and someone has just wandered in?

Mr Iglesias: It was the former. It was in relation to access during kangaroo culling activities.

MS CHEYNE: All three of those?

Mr Iglesias: To my knowledge, yes.

MS CHEYNE: Then No 9 is the matter of a person taking a dead animal. Is that taking a dead animal from a nature park and would it be a kangaroo that has passed and someone has decided to take it away?

Mr Iglesias: I am not familiar with the detail of this particular case. Given that it involved the AFP, I wonder whether it is in relation to someone, if you like, taking the opportunity to think that they can remove a carcass off the road, but I would have to get back to you with the details as to exactly what that was.

MR PARTON: I want to talk about African lovegrass. What work is being done to ensure that building materials, soil and sand brought into the ACT for building works, are not contaminated by African lovegrass?

Mr Gentleman: I think African lovegrass in general is a very important thing to discuss. In relation to materials that are brought in, I am not sure that we have any new testing regime in a planning sense to see whether it is brought in. But it is so rampant across the ACT that it is very important that we implement the work that we are doing and the resources we are providing to treat weeds right across the ACT. But in relation to particular testing of soils, I will take that question, if you like, and come back to you and see if I can get a better answer.

Mr Rake: But we do have programs in place to look at the spread of that weed and other invasive grasses, particularly to our conservation areas.

Mr Iglesias: With African lovegrass, what we have done with that particular weed is try to understand where the hotspots are for its movement. What we have found is that roadsides are probably one of the most readily accessible areas that can transmit seed. Just the pure simple act of people driving along the parkway can transmit seed. That is translated to a response where we focus our weed control along roadsides, for example.

Our emphasis has been on education, on taking every opportunity to educate people on African lovegrass and how amazingly good it is at spreading. We have had lots of successes both in relation to our park care groups and catchment groups in mapping where it exists and then prioritising where we can go to spray it to try to minimise the spread. It is a species that is common now in the ACT and most of our effort is in keeping it out of high conservation areas.

Mr Gentleman: There is quite a bit of work that landholders do across the territory too in relation to weed control but sometimes, disappointingly, their neighbours next door might not do the same amount of work. I know particularly of a couple in the south of Canberra who have worked all of their life on their property to ensure that they have controlled their land and they have no African lovegrass on their property,

but the neighbour next door has not done the same amount of work and it is becoming a real issue for them.

MR PARTON: I saw in the report that these cooperative programs across these rural properties were funded under the ACT rural grants to control it. It is not just African lovegrass; it is a couple of other things as well, is it not? What sort of work are we doing to address the spread in suburbs and backyards? I know it is radically different in suburbia but—

Mr Rake: It is another area that we are using technology in. Our PCS staff have developed an app very similar to the nature app where they can record the location of plant weeds and then they quite proudly engage in search and destroy missions to go out to clean those up. Through the nurseries, we have education campaigns encouraging people not to buy plants that are likely to escape their backyards and invade the native areas. So we try to discourage the planting of invasive weeds.

You are right; we do focus on more than the African lovegrass. There is serrated tussock, St John's wort, blackberry and Chilean needle grass. That sort of work takes up about 70 to 80 per cent of our weed budget and is focused on those species alone because they are so invasive in this area.

Ms Lane: Also, in terms of urban areas, we work with city services, particularly around where there are remnant patches of native grasslands within the urban area. We work with city services on their mowing guidelines to ensure that weeds are not allowed to encroach into those areas of native grass. That has been quite successful.

MS LEE: I have a supplementary, chair. What was the actual funding for weeds management in 2015-16 and what is it in 2016-17?

Mr Gentleman: For 2015-16, \$1.5 million was spent on the invasive weed control contracts and there were about 5,000 hours of operational control work undertaken by park staff on top of that. That is on top of the work done by ParkCare and volunteers.

MS LEE: And then 2016-17?

Mr Rake: Do you mean 2015-16?

MS LEE: That was 2015-16?

Mr Gentleman: Yes.

Mr Rake: You want a budget figure?

MS LEE: Yes, a budget figure.

Mr Iglesias: For the current year it is about the same. It would be very close to that \$1.5 million, if not a little bit more.

MS LEE: How often does the weeds advisory committee meet and what was their recommendation for funding for weeds moving forward?

Mr Iglesias: The weed advisory group is made up of a panel of experts who provide us with all sorts of advice. Generally speaking, when we are in the process of producing what we call our weeds operational plan they are involved in that determination. We come to them with specific issues that we may have which we believe they will be able to add value for. They explain to us whether there are any new weeds or whether they feel that current weeds are not being addressed as well as they might. They might encourage us to lift the priority value of some weeds.

We meet at least twice a year. I actually chair the meeting myself because I consider that aspect of getting the advice from the community in relation to weeds to be really quite fundamental to our having an ear to the ground as to what the community are seeing as well as what our rangers are seeing.

Mr Gentleman: If you look at the work that the group is doing with these resources that we are providing, there are some 15,500 hectares, as Gary said, of search and destroy and over 3,141 sites in the territory. So it is quite broad.

MS LEE: Chair, I have a substantive question. Minister, this goes back to waste policy initiatives. In respect of the proposal that was put forward by FOY, when did they first come to speak to the directorate? At that time, what was done by the directorate to make any assessments about how that proposal fitted with the current guidelines for the ACT waste feasibility study?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, I have not got the exact date in front of me for when it was first discussed, but I was briefed on it fairly early in the process. It certainly—

MS LEE: What year was that?

Mr Gentleman: Last year.

Mr Rake: It was around the middle of last year. If I may, this does fall into our planning portfolio rather than environment but we will back on Friday; so we are happy to answer. The engagement will have been with our development assessment team. They will have asked about the process through which we make our decisions. We will get you the precise date of that interaction. We have provided a fair bit of information to interested community members on that already.

Our team steered them towards the appropriate decision track within the planning framework and the process that needs to occur. The most material of those was the environmental impact statement. An environmental impact assessment is an exercise in understanding the issues that a proposal would raise—the challenges, the potential problems it could cause—and assessing whether there are treatments available to respond to those problems. It does not in and of itself say that this proposal should go ahead. It tests whether, if this were to go ahead, what the potential issues would be and how you would manage them.

We then conduct an assessment. The minister forms a view on whether that identification of issues and responses is appropriate. The minister determined that additional work would be necessary and commissioned a panel. If I jump past that, the

next step in the process, if everything had gone well there, would be for the proponent to put in a development application. We would again be involved in testing whether the solutions that were identified in the EIS were actually put in place.

The simplest example would be to think about a fuel spill. It would be identified as a risk in the EIS. One of the potential treatments, one of the best treatments, is to have a bunded sealed area around the compound that is capable of holding the maximum likely spill. That would be identified in the EIS and probably ticked off as a suitable treatment.

At development application stage, we would then look at whether the physical dimensions of that bunded area were large enough to hold that volume; had it been designed with a waterproof or chemical-proof membrane to hold the sort of liquid; did it have access for whatever sort of vehicle would come to pump the material away afterwards? All of that would be tested in the development application process. Then the final step would be in the building certification. There would be another test that it was actually built to the standard that the planning approval and EIS had indicated were appropriate.

Mr Gentleman: As you can see, in all of these processes, it is opportune for the community to be on board as well in regard to submissions and comments. We have seen quite a number of submissions on the original EIS. Now we have the panel going out offering more opportunity for the community to consult. If a DA goes ahead, again, there is another opportunity to work with the community and, of course, then in the building process too.

MS LEE: Earlier this morning the commissioner for the environment was saying that one of the things the ACT—any jurisdiction, I think she said, to be fair—could do better was better engagement with the community. Would you agree with that statement, minister?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly. In recent discussions with developers across the ACT I have advised them that I think they should go out earlier and have pre-consultation with the community. They can get a feel then for whether the community will be on board for their proposal. It is very important, I think, to engage at the earliest possible opportunity that you have.

MS LEE: Yes. Was it that FOY clearly perhaps did not follow your advice to the T when they sort of gave 10 days notice of a meeting; the last one that happened last year some time? Would that be right? Would it be fair to say that?

Mr Gentleman: I can only encourage anybody who wants to go ahead with an opportunity here across the territory—whether it is waste to fuel or a residential development—to engage with the community at the earliest possible time.

MS LEE: The ACT government has classified this as an impact track for development.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lee, I think that is probably a planning question, if you are talking about impact and merit tracks. In the interests of time, it would be best to direct those

questions to the planning department.

MS LEE: Sure. Mr Rake, did you say Friday?

Mr Rake: Yes.

MS LEE: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: Before we break, are there any other questions? I note that we will be going to heritage when we get back; so we might not have the same people.

MS CHEYNE: I have a short question. I promise it is.

Mr Rake: But is the answer short?

MS CHEYNE: That is up to you. I can only control what I ask. What can now be achieved by doing high resolution vegetation mapping?

Ms Lane: The mapping itself has been quite revealing because it has allowed us to classify some communities that were not previously classified and understand how common they are, for example. But where it is really very important is for planning. It is very important for management as well: where are our important conservation areas, for example? Where are they located within the territory? Are they under protection, do they need protection, what are the threats, for example?

Also around development, it helps to inform some of those development applications. It is quite wideranging, useful information both for the territory and at a national level as well because we get a good understanding of the extent of our threatened ecosystems.

Mr Gentleman: Some new technology too that that EPD has been working on in response to vegetation mapping is the LIDAR technology. I might ask Gary to explain the technicality of that.

Mr Rake: It is essentially a form of radar involving a plane flying over the city scanning the environment below. The technology used can tell the difference between a building and a tree. It is able to give us live data across the entire ACT capturing our foliage patterns. We can look at a suburb and get an accurate estimate of its canopy cover, for example. That information gives us a 3D form. So we know the size of the tree. By running some algorithms we can make a pretty reliable guess at the species of the tree based on the pattern that we are seeing; the leaf shape and the canopy presentation.

MS CHEYNE: Right down to an individual tree?

Mr Rake: Right down to individual trees. That information is then being exported into things as diverse as the 3D modelling that we are using and some private developers are using to capture live images of the city, to design buildings, to show different perspectives and to adjust heights, colours and formats on the fly to help the community better understand the impact.

We can do the same thing in 3D modelling to change the species of a tree that appears in a street. Thinking about the replacement of our urban forest over the next few decades, we could look and say, “If we took elms out in this street and replaced them with oaks, what would that look like?” A lot of that data is underpinned by this LIDAR technology.

Mr Gentleman: That takes, I suppose, the responsibility out of thousands and thousands of hours of individual survey work that our directorate staff used to do prior to that. It is quite an advance.

MS CHEYNE: I can imagine it might help things like the conservator in relation to tree assessments as well and maybe even city services. They know exactly what tree people are talking about without having to visit the property in the first place.

Ms Lane: It also really helps us with our monitoring and understanding the condition of systems, for example. If we are restoring an ecosystem, for example, having a look at how that is growing in terms of its structure and the species that are there. Maybe it will take some of the legwork out of our monitoring.

MS CHEYNE: I really am done.

THE CHAIR: We will break there for lunch. I remind everyone to have their questions in within five days. I get to say that quite a lot today because we have changes in line-up all the time. We will resume at 2.30 with Minister Gentleman again talking about heritage and other things.

Hearing suspended from 1.28 to 2.30 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back, minister. We will continue with Environment and Heritage, looking at heritage, the Heritage Council, land management, parks and conservation, and public land management. I believe you have all had the privilege statement pointed out to you. Mr Doszpot, would you like to go first?

MR DOSZPOT: I would love to. Page 84 of the annual report outlines heritage registrations. In 2015-16 the backlog of nominations to the ACT heritage register reduced from 143 to 136, a reduction of only seven cases. That is on page 46 of the annual report. What is the reason for the slow progress in clearing the backlog?

Mr Gentleman: Mr Doszpot, thanks for the question. The Heritage Council does an important job of work. Of course, there are a lot of things to consider in each nomination. As you are probably aware, there are 10 criteria that need to be looked at with each nomination, so it is quite an involved process. During that process we look at all aspects of heritage nomination. Indigenous aspects and architectural aspects of heritage nomination need to be looked through. Overarchingly, we are now receiving more nominations, and the amount of work involved in looking at each nomination is quite detailed.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, be that as it may, is there any reason why the backlog would contain a heritage listing nomination that is 16 years old? That is the age of your government. I would like to know why it has not progressed in that time.

Mr Gentleman: Certainly. Is there a particular nomination that you would like to point to that we can go into detail about?

MR DOSZPOT: I would hope your department would be aware of it. That is the next question: can you give us a listing of the oldest nominations that you have?

Mr Gentleman: The directorate has advised me that they know which one you are talking about.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, bear with me for a moment. I am trying to make sure that I am asking a question that you can answer. In relation to the backlog, how old is the oldest nomination that has yet to be considered and what is the average age of nominations? Obviously, I do not expect you to have it—

Mr Rake: Yes, we can take some of those statistics on notice. The list of outstanding items on the nomination list peaked at around 320 in 2008. So it has come down quite considerably with some targeted work, guided by the secretariat, working to the Heritage Council, and also by the work of the council members themselves.

The list, as at a fortnight ago, sat at about 131. One of the reasons that items sit there for an extended period of time is complexity around the number of heritage values that could be argued for each particular place, and quite often we have received multiple nominations for the same place. Of the items that are on the list at the moment, there are 38 that we think are very probably duplicate nominations that cover such close ground that they could sensibly be assessed together, but we need to work through a statutory process to—

MR DOSZPOT: Duplicate nominations from different individuals?

Mr Rake: Yes. Person A and person B both identify a place with some commonality to the way they express the value claim for that place, but with some areas of difference. So we need to work through the framework to assess that, and make sure that we are accurately assessing the interests as put to us. I think it is the Oaks Estate one that you would be referring to regarding that extended period of time. It is a very complex nomination in terms of the parties that are interested, the potential coverage of privately held land, publicly held land, public infrastructure, relationship to different elements of the history of the place, the heritage of Canberra and the region. It has been a very complex—

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Rake, 16 years: pharaohs probably built the pyramids more quickly than that, when you think about how much effort had to be—

Mr Gentleman: We do not go that far back, Mr Doszpot, in ACT Heritage.

MR DOSZPOT: Well, I am surprised. If you go back 16 years, I would not be surprised how far these issues go back. In all seriousness, I am simply after the information that we have asked for. You would think you could work out some of these things in 16 years.

Mr Rake: The Heritage Council continues to give particular attention to some of the longer standing and more complex assessments. They are going about their work. We will come back to you with some stats.

MR DOSZPOT: The question I asked was in relation to the backlog: how old is the oldest nomination that has yet to be considered, and, if it has been considered, why hasn't it been finalised?

Mr Rake: Yes, we will take it as “yet to be determined”, because all of them will have been, at the least, examined at some point.

MR DOSZPOT: You are down to 131; is that correct?

Mr Gentleman: That is correct, yes.

Mr Rake: One hundred and thirty one at the end of February.

MR DOSZPOT: A fortnight ago, you said, yes.

Mr Rake: Less than a fortnight ago now, end of February.

MR DOSZPOT: When you have a look at the backlog of 131, can you give us an approximation of how long it will take to clear that backlog?

Mr Rake: That one will be harder. We will give you a response but it will be harder because the quantum of work for each assessment is not formulaic. We cannot say that it will take us three days to look at it. Some could be done in hours. As we have

seen, some can take many years, with the to and fro of information. The statutory test for including an item on our heritage register is that it meets criteria to a high degree. Sometimes we might be able to see that it is headed in the right direction to cross that threshold, but we do not have enough information, nor can we get it ourselves. So the Heritage Council members face quite a task to satisfy themselves. If we get it wrong, particularly in respect of private property, we potentially open up another legal argument that is expensive and time consuming.

MR DOSZPOT: Part of the concern is that there are some private properties. Having been tied up for such lengthy times, there is obviously a very big financial impact on people who have not heard back yet. You have mentioned that it is very difficult to clear the backlog because of resources.

Mr Rake: I do not think I said that.

Mr Gentleman: No, it is not resources.

Mr Rake: I think I referred to the complexity of the matter, not the resourcing that is available.

MR DOSZPOT: You said there was some resource problem. I am asking: have you got enough resources? Do you have enough manpower to handle the number of issues that have to be looked at?

Mr Rake: Every part of government could always make use of additional resources, but we think we have adequate resources allocated to the heritage secretariat function. The team have put a lot of effort into refining the support they give council members. It is ultimately the council members that need to make each of these decisions. The team have done a very good job in working out how to standardise the provision of advice and make it more efficient; hence the reduction from 320 down to 130.

MR DOSZPOT: I asked you about the resourcing part of it. How many staff are involved in looking at this?

Mr Rake: We have 1.6 FTE allocated to heritage nominations, to the assessment—

MR DOSZPOT: 1.6 FTE?

Mr Rake: Yes, 1.6 full-time officers working on heritage assessments only, noting that we have a range of other heritage activities. So the team itself is bigger than that, but that is the assessment component.

MR DOSZPOT: How big is the team?

Mr Rake: Have you got your full team size there, Tony?

THE CHAIR: Tony, because this is the first time you have joined us today, I need to draw your attention to the pink card on the table, the privilege statement.

Mr Carmichael: Yes, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Can you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Carmichael: Yes, I do.

Mr Rake: There are 10 FTE in the heritage team.

MR DOSZPOT: I ask again: if you have 10 in the whole area and 1.6 looking after the backlog clearance, is there potential to either get some additional staff or transfer some staff to clear the backlog? Is that one of your options?

Mr Rake: It is one of our options if we believed that that would be the limiting factor, but it is more around the complexity than the arms and legs.

MR DOSZPOT: I will look forward to getting your response.

Mr Rake: We will come back to you.

MS CHEYNE: My questions relate to the advice that ACT Heritage has provided; the significant amount of formal advice. I just wanted to get a sense of the second subpoint there about the 35 pieces of advice to the conservator regarding tree protection. That related to 73 individual heritage trees. Does that mean that with the 35 pieces of information and 73, there were some areas that were about groups of trees? Is that reasonable?

Mr Carmichael: We get requests for formal advice on a continual basis. We just respond to a range of agencies within government. It could be anything from development assessment to tree conservation. It does not necessarily imply the number of trees, for example, giving advice on a case-by-case basis, just in terms of the heritage impact on those trees. There were 35 different types of advice but, off the top of my head, I would not be able to say how many trees were involved. It is the quality of the advice in terms of giving advice on whatever is the requirement. It is the potential impact on those trees because of development. I am not sure; I do not understand the question. If it is around numbers of trees—

MS CHEYNE: On page 85, it says that it is 35 pieces of advice, and those 35 pieces of advice related to 73 individual heritage trees. Obviously 35 and 73 are different numbers, so I just wanted to check—

Mr Carmichael: There will be multiple trees involved, yes.

MS CHEYNE: Yes.

Mr Carmichael: Only slightly. It could be two or three trees; it could be more than that.

MS CHEYNE: Yes. That is my question. Can you talk me through how something gets classified as a heritage tree? What qualities does it have to make it a heritage tree?

Mr Gentleman: Chair, we might ask Ms Fiona Moore to come and give us some more detail on that.

THE CHAIR: Just to go to the formalities again, Fiona, can you refer to the pink sheet on the table and state for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Ms Moore: I understand the privilege implications of the statement.

Mr Gentleman: Could you just give your name and title.

Ms Moore: I am currently the manager of ACT Heritage and the secretary of the ACT Heritage Council.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Moore: Do you want to repeat the question, please?

MS CHEYNE: What criteria go into it being decided that a tree is a heritage tree?

Ms Moore: There are a number of ways that trees can make their way to be part of a listed place on the ACT heritage register. The majority of our trees are included in the heritage registered precincts, so as part of a landscape setting.

MS CHEYNE: Right.

Ms Moore: They are a collection of trees rather than a singular tree.

MS CHEYNE: That answers the question.

Ms Moore: Singular trees are often only registered where they are Aboriginal, cultural trees, such as a scar tree. That is where a tree will be identified in isolation.

MS CHEYNE: Can a heritage tree be on a private property?

Ms Moore: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: How many are on a private property?

Ms Moore: I would not be able to answer that.

MS CHEYNE: Would you be able to give a rough estimate of how many heritage trees are on private properties versus on public land?

Mr Rake: In the heritage precincts, it could be quite a lot. In the Kingston or Griffith heritage precincts, where we might protect, say, in Kingston, three residential blocks of heritage houses, the trees are included in the heritage values of that place, so a nature strip which is part of the private leasehold might have five or six heritage trees for a corner block.

MS CHEYNE: So the suburbs where we would expect the most heritage trees to exist in would be some of our older established suburbs?

Ms Moore: They would be garden city precincts where we would see the majority of advices being issued on trees. They are places such as Red Hill, Yarralumla, Ainslie and Reid, the suite of the older suburbs that are listed under garden city planning principles.

MS CHEYNE: When someone buys a property, or even if they are renting a property, do they get notification that they might have a heritage tree on their property that they might need to be aware of or that they cannot necessarily do anything to because it is protected?

Ms Moore: When a lease conveyancing report is done for the sale of a property, it identifies if a block and section is heritage listed.

MS CHEYNE: How can someone apply to get a tree heritage listed?

Mr Gentleman: Write to the council, I imagine.

Mr Rake: That is right. It would be a nomination process, looking at the values, which can range from Aboriginal values through to association with a person. An example of that, not on ACT land but on commonwealth land, is at the top of Kings Avenue, at the corner of Kings Avenue and State Circle. On the left-hand side there is an oak plantation. The first oak tree there was planted by the Duke of York. That would be an example of a tree that could be uniquely heritage listed as having an association with a person and an event in the history of the city.

MS CHEYNE: And that one has been?

Mr Rake: It is on national land, so it would have a different set of heritage criteria. But yes, that entire area is protected. Something like that on our land would have the same sort of ability to be listed.

MS CHEYNE: How many applications would you get each year for a tree to be heritage listed?

Ms Moore: Very minimal for an individual tree. We might have a handful for Aboriginal trees, but trees in an urban setting would usually come in relation to a place, associated with a building.

MR PARTON: My question is in regard to the ACT heritage grants program. Page 82 shows that 18 projects were funded totalling more than \$214,000. I could not help but think, reading it, that there was enormous value for money here. These people who applied for grants are doing a lot with not much, which is wonderful. Could I get someone to talk me through how that grants program works in terms of the application process and the decisions made on it?

Mr Gentleman: Mr Parton, you are right. It is fantastic for the ACT community to

come together to look after our heritage on, if you like, the smell of an oily rag, sometimes literally, when we launched the heritage grant with the locomotive last time.

It is important that we look at some of the priorities that we have for heritage. Those include conservation works and projects that enable continued use to access places on the heritage register. We do that through conservation management plans; through community events and displays that increase the awareness of engagement in heritage places; through projects initiated by involving the community, including the Aboriginal community, in local heritage activities; and through projects that provide partnership opportunities between community organisations and ACT government agencies. That is the overall task of priorities for this particular lot of heritage funding for the grants, but I will ask someone to give you a bit more detail on how they look at each one.

Ms Moore: The grants are run annually, the grants program. We have just opened this year's round. For a six-week period, the government advertises the grants program and applications are accepted. Once those applications are received, they are assessed by the directorate to ensure that they have met all the criteria. There are grant guideline criteria. If they have met those criteria, they will be assessed against their value for money and that they meet the funding priorities that are determined each year. Then the directorate will recommend to the minister what projects it believes satisfy all those criteria and recommends those for funding.

MR PARTON: Surely not everyone is a winner. If you meet the criteria, it does not mean that you are going to get a grant, does it?

Ms Moore: There are instances where people do not satisfy the criteria.

MR PARTON: Is there a ceiling figure that you work on at the start of this process? This process just started again for this year. Is there a ceiling figure? Do you say, "The maximum we will give out is this amount?" Or is it a bit more—

Mr Gentleman: We have an overarching figure that I argue for in budget cabinet, starting tomorrow.

MR PARTON: Right.

Mr Gentleman: Individually, there is no particular ceiling. But we only have a certain amount to work with.

MR PARTON: What is that certain amount?

Mr Gentleman: This year—

Ms Moore: It was \$336,000.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: I cannot refer to a page number for my question, which is really

why I am asking it, because there is no reference in the annual report to the development of conservation management plans for Canberra's heritage housing precincts such as Reid, parts of Forrest and Oaks Estate. As you would be aware, this is a matter of great concern to the National Trust and many residents of the various precincts. What is happening with these? Are you developing heritage management plans for heritage housing precincts?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly, with the conservation management plans, we work through those in the heritage sense as well for those particular areas. As I mentioned, the priority for the 2015-16 funding round was for conservation management plans for particular areas. I will ask the directorate to give you some more information about how those procedures go forward.

Ms Moore: Conservation management plans are not prepared by the council. Under the legislation they are endorsed by the council but they are prepared by the property owners themselves, to guide their management and conservation work for the place. To assist the community in developing their CMPs, it encourages property owners to apply for grants to receive funding to develop a conservation management plan for their place. Through the provision of statutory advice, it encourages property owners, where there is not one, to develop one.

MS LE COUTEUR: I understand that for Reid and Oaks Estate they have basically been written at some stage in the past. Certainly, Reid residents have shown me something that is quite a few years old. I am sure someone here would have a better memory than I of exactly how many years old it is. I believe Oaks Estate is in the same boat. So substantive work has been done by the communities.

Mr Rake: To bring together the individual property owner's obligations to conserve heritage in the place they own as individual leaseholders, in a coordinated manner for those suburban precincts, each of them has a clear statement of the conservation values that underpinned its listing, and that sits as part of our planning framework.

If somebody wanted to put an extension on a property in the heritage-listed part of Reid or the Blandfordia part of Griffith, they would need to assess their development proposal against the guidelines. That will include things as diverse as presentation, the extension to the street, what would be visible, whether the architectural style complements or offends the area. There are different plot ratios for the garden city suburbs. That is pulled together at an aggregate level and sits within the planning framework. It serves as a surrogate for a precinct-wide conservation management plan. To do one in detail would be outside our statutory powers where the obligation falls on the property owner.

MS LE COUTEUR: You are basically saying that for the precincts you do not believe there is a role for a conservation management plan because of different—

Mr Rake: We think the important elements of that are wrapped up in the framework description that underpins the planning. It deals with landscape, built form, the relationship between buildings held by different owners.

Ms Moore: There is a difference between guidelines and a conservation management

plan. They are two very distinct functions under the legislation. Mr Rake is referring there to guidelines, and they are developed by the council. They are developed when they register a heritage precinct, for example—they are mainly with precincts—and they identify what plot ratios, setbacks, heights, building envelopes and vegetation the council wants to see conserved in relation to the registration of that place. So that is a heritage guideline.

A conservation management plan is a separate tool. It is to guide the management and maintenance of a heritage place. It is at an on-the-ground level. It is helping to inform the property owner about what paint colours should be used and how it should be done. That document is developed by the property owner but it is endorsed under the legislation by the council to ensure that whatever conservation methods are proposed in that conservation management plan do not affect the heritage significance of the place.

MS LE COUTEUR: How does this work in the precincts, bearing in mind also that the ACT government has a considerable role in this because of all the verges? I know there have been issues around street signs and lamp posts, which are clearly the responsibility of the ACT government, not the responsibility of the individual landowners. How does this work together in the heritage precincts?

Mr Gentleman: We work with the community through those processes, too. With respect to the inner south group, we work together to look at the particular things that you have talked about—street signs and the lights—to see how we can go forward to protect those into the future. Indeed they received some funding for that work. It is about the work we do with the community, looking at management plans for particular precincts, as well as the work that the Heritage Council do and the guidance that they provide.

MS LE COUTEUR: With the management plans that you talked about for each precinct, that is not what Mr Rake was talking about. I am getting more confused, I am sorry.

Mr Rake: There are three levels. A conservation management plan will deal with an individual heritage asset, prepared by the owner and endorsed by the council. A guidelines framework is put in place by council and is used by us in part of the planning system. I think it is the best thing for holding the precinct together. We then have partnerships whereby we can bring forward individual projects.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, when you talked about the conservation management plan, what were you talking about? I am confused.

Mr Gentleman: I was highlighting in the report some of the strategies we had for funding heritage grants during the process in 2015-16. One of the strategies and priorities for that was conservation management plans. That was the funding arm.

MS LE COUTEUR: I might take advice from some people and ask more questions about this on notice because I am certainly feeling confused. Given all of this confusion, I think I can truthfully say I am not the only confused person as to the rules and what is happening. Do you feel that the heritage values of these precincts are

being maintained or are we gradually, little change by little change, changing those values?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly, the ones that are listed are regulated, so I do not see a change there. Are there particular areas that you consider need to be looked at?

MS LE COUTEUR: I have had considerable representations, particularly recently from some Reid residents and from people who live in the Forrest firehouse precinct, both of which I am absolutely sure you would be well aware of. They express the view about it being death by a thousand cuts. An individual change is unimportant but with a thousand individual changes it changes the character. This is a concern about the cumulative impact.

Mr Rake: That is always a risk but we do look at cumulative effects. At some point we would have to make a judgement that the 900th cut might start to cause damage and we should not go beyond that point. In general, I think the character of these areas is being preserved. It is driven foremost by residents in the area undertaking work that shows they do value the heritage in the area that they chose to buy into or live in. There will always be slight differences of opinion. Heritage is a value assessment. There is no very clear black or white expression of a heritage value.

In the Forrest fire station precinct there is a difference of view among some of the people who live in the precinct about what is sympathetic and what is unsympathetic. Our assessment sides with the work that has been done. It is the same in the Kingston area. There are discussions; they range from the height of hedges to the width of hedges and the colour of extensions. Broadly, we find that people who live in the area do try to preserve the character.

Mr Gentleman: I am glad you mentioned Reid because that is where I grew up. When I look at that streetscape, for example, in Gooreen Street, it does not seem to have changed a great deal. There is a bit of a change with the way people are treating the front. I do not see as many hedge treatments, which were there originally to screen from the roadway. That appears to have changed a bit, in that they have removed some of those. The other really big change for Reid would be the Argyle Square complex, down on the corner. Originally, that was a hostel in my day. But the rest of it, from memory, seems to have retained that really nice heritage value of Reid.

MS LE COUTEUR: There is no reference in the annual report to working towards a central national area or to the hills being added to the national heritage list. Can you update me on where we are up to with that proposal?

THE CHAIR: That might actually count as a new question.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will wait.

THE CHAIR: I want to have a bit more of a chat about Canberra Tracks and the program that you have been running. I refer specifically to the works that you have done around the signage consolidation and the app, promoting those tracks and making them more accessible.

Mr Gentleman: It is a fantastic opportunity to work with new technology. I was privileged to launch the Canberra Tracks app a few years ago. It provides a bit of tech to understand how the tracks were developed and how they work. The launch at the time at old Rose Cottage Inn was absolutely fantastic. We had some original Canberrans talk about the time before Canberra was a city. They were farmers around Mount Arawang and Mount Painter. They talked about their heritage in regard to rabbiting at the time. It was pretty interesting.

The tracks provide a fantastic opportunity for Canberrans to get out and understand some of the heritage in the ACT, and to actually walk it. You can use the interpretive signs. When you get to the interpretive sign, there is a scan code that you can read on the app. It will provide that interaction with better technology, to tell you an interesting story about that particular region and other regions as well. There is sometimes a video story on it as well, so it is fantastic.

THE CHAIR: Excuse my ignorance but what are the tracks that we have in place?

Mr Gentleman: There are a number of tracks around Woden and Tuggeranong. There are 160 signs that have been installed across the ACT. There is a Canberra Tracks brochure that we have placed at 100 tourist outlets across the ACT, so that people can get involved in Canberra's heritage. You can have a look at it on the website as well.

Mr Rake: Tracks is a branding rather than a reference to particular tracks and trails.

MS CHEYNE: I have a supplementary. You briefly mentioned the brochures, that the brochures can be downloaded from within the app, that they are provided at those 110 tourism outlets across the ACT and that being available within the app means that some savings have been provided. How much in savings has been achieved by putting it in the app and does that mean there are fewer physical brochures available? Is that still servicing the need?

Ms Moore: In terms of the monetary value, I will have to take that part on notice. In its original form, the brochure had numerous pages and had foldouts of physical trails that people could follow. With the introduction of the app we have been able to reduce the size of that brochure to a minimal number of pages. Those tracks and maps that were once included in the brochure are now on the app.

MS CHEYNE: So it is cheaper to produce?

Ms Moore: Yes, the printing cost.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I ask a supplementary on that? What about people who do not have the app? How do they go on the walk without the pull-outs that you had before?

Mr Gentleman: Mr Doszpot, you can still get the brochure. Then when you get to the walk there is an interpretive sign that will give you details on the actual walk itself.

MS CHEYNE: How many people have downloaded the app?

Mr Rake: Over the period to December 2016 we have had about 900 downloads of the app.

MR PARTON: How long has the application been available?

Mr Rake: I think it was launched in mid-2015.

MR PARTON: I am assuming that the download rate has increased dramatically in the second—well, I do not know how far it went in 2015.

Mr Gentleman: It was lightly touched, if you like, in 2015. It takes a while to actually spread the word and let people know that it is occurring.

MR PARTON: What feedback and reviews have been received in relation to that phone app?

Ms Moore: We have received really positive feedback, actually.

MR PARTON: Good.

Ms Moore: It ties in really well with our Heritage Festival as well. We often see that lots of the places that appear in our Canberra tracks brochures and on the app have events in the Heritage Festival. We see really good synergies between both of the two community programs. We often receive emails direct from the community about the Canberra tracks program, also plenty of recommendations for what can be added and what places they would like to see included in that trail.

Mr Rake: In terms of helping people become aware of the app and learn how to use it, the team put a lot of effort in during heritage events. We take a train-the-trainer approach. The team have spent a lot of time with organisations such as the National Trust making sure they understand that we have the app and how it works and that message gets spread. Quite often the feedback the team will receive will be from someone who has heard third or fourth hand about the app or who saw a friend with it, downloaded it, discovered it for themselves and sent in the feedback.

We have brochures available for people who do not have phones and access. But what we are finding increasingly is that lots of people of all demographics have access to modern technology like smart phones. They just need a little bit of help from us and then they are off and running.

It is something that we encounter throughout the work of the directorate. We talked about it earlier today in the nature space. We can talk about it on Friday in the planning space. The use of apps is vastly improving our ability to get information into citizens' hands.

MR PARTON: You mentioned earlier that although we refer to this as heritage tracks and Canberra tracks, there is not a specific number of—it is a broader—

Mr Rake: There are areas of interest.

Mr Gentleman: St John's is a good example where there is not a track around St John's church. But the scan code gives you information about the church. Sometimes there are events that occur. In Heritage Week we had ghost tours of the graveyard of St John's. We learnt about Canberra's heritage from people who lived here hundreds of years ago and their input to Canberra's history, if you like. It took a number of hours to do those events each night for the ghost tour. We did have a scary cat that followed us around the ghost tour as well at one point; so that was pretty interesting.

You get feedback there too. People come along and say, "I have used the app on the scan code. I have read about St John's. Now I want to hear more firsthand about the history of Canberra's early inhabitants." So you get to sort of grow on that as well.

Mr Rake: Within the tracks there are some trails, aren't there?

Ms Moore: There are suggested routes, yes. There is a suggested itinerary such as a Woden and a Tuggeranong heritage itinerary to take them around to some of the key places in the region.

MR PARTON: I must download it. Does the directorate see an increase in the number of trails and tracks and suggestions on this in the 2016-17 year or is it a dynamic, living, breathing and growing thing?

Mr Rake: Within our capability, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary. I think Ms Le Couteur talked about a level of confusion. And there is a little confusion about trying to explain this. First off, your annual report states:

The Canberra Tracks brochure was reprinted with new embedded downloads using the app. This creates 'a brochure within a brochure', saving costs of producing a detailed publication.

When I asked the question, "What about people who do not have iPhones or apps?" the minister said, "They can use the old brochure." But I presume there was a saving in not printing new brochures. Do you actually have old brochures left?

Mr Gentleman: No, I did not say we use the old brochure. No, I said that you can use the current brochure, which will take you to those sites. Each site then has an interpretive discussion about that particular site. That will give you further information about that particular site.

MR DOSZPOT: But it will not give you the detailed maps that are now within the apps. It just does not make sense, minister.

Ms Moore: The short answer is no, the pages are reduced to contain less information. We are encouraging people to go to the website or to use the app. We have contacts on the brochures to contact ACT Heritage directly if they have difficulties using the brochure or would like to obtain more information. They can contact us directly and we can provide information to them that way if they are unable to access the internet.

MR DOSZPOT: Of the 110 locations that you mention—tourism outlets, including hotels—that have these brochures, do you have a stocktake as to how many brochures are still available?

Ms Moore: We could get that information. We would—

MR DOSZPOT: It is not the information I need. I am just asking whether, for your planning, you are aware of how many brochures there are in circulation.

Ms Moore: Absolutely. We have a print run. We know how much we print and we know how many we distribute. When those agencies come to us for a refill we can track how many they are going through and how many they are distributing through their outlets.

Mr Rake: We do not go out and count how many brochures are on their rack. They give us a call when they run out or when they are getting low.

MR DOSZPOT: How do you overcome that when they have run out and you have not got the new brochure with the same information that the old brochure contained for those people who have not got apps or who do not have access to apps?

Mr Rake: We are holding stock. We can provide more stock.

MR DOSZPOT: Now, these tracks—

Mr Rake: The saving comes through lower demand for the brochure because more people are able to get better access more conveniently. I know that if I pick up a brochure I then need to remember to take it with me when I go on the walk. If I am out and about and think, “I have seen a sign. I wish I had my brochure. No, I will get my phone out and do that.” We are finding that more and more people of all age groups across the city are taking that up.

I was in a meeting last week on the planning app. There were some residents from an inner suburb concerned about not knowing that there were new DAs. I explained the efforts that we go to to make that information available. They said, “It is all very hard for us.” I said, “Look, I do not mean to be cheeky but could I please see your phones?” They said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Could I see your phones?” Very quickly out came two iPhones and a Samsung Galaxy. In five minutes we had the app set up for each of them. They are now up and running. We find that works in many other spaces, including in the heritage space here. We do that through our work with community events.

MR DOSZPOT: I am all for savings and I am all for new technology being applied. I come from the IT sector. However, I am also conscious of the fact that a lot of people covered in my shadow portfolios are seniors. It is not an ever-growing number there. There are a lot of people there of a certain age group that are involved in walking. I have been on a couple of the city tracks. That is my concern. I am also concerned for the people who do not have apps and who probably are not likely to get them.

Mr Rake: I do believe we are still meeting their needs by providing sufficient brochures for that.

MR DOSZPOT: How many tracks are we talking about?

Ms Moore: We have eight dedicated trails or suggested itineraries.

MR DOSZPOT: Out of those eight, how many are not city, not urban tracks, but are sort of out-of-the-city tracks?

Ms Moore: We have a track that covers each area of the ACT. There are some urban, as you referred to, and then we have got the Woden and Tuggeranong ones that extend all the way down to Lanyon and the same for the north that extend up into the northern reaches of Gungahlin.

MR DOSZPOT: Are any of these tracks like bush tracks as well or is that a different situation?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly the Tuggeranong ones take you amongst what would have been the original bush of Tuggeranong. As I said, the descriptor when you start the trail tells you all about that heritage as well. But we have a listing up in Blue Range hut, the old part of the forestry settlement to the west of Canberra, which is certainly in the bush.

MR DOSZPOT: My final question on this issue is this: in all of these areas where the apps are to be used, is there reception for iPhones or iPads? There is?

Mr Gentleman: The only one on which I do not have the data on how much signal you get is Blue Range. It is about the furthest out but there are repeater stations on Mount Coree and a number of other hills around there.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Any other supplementaries on that? Mr Doszpot, you have a substantive?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I do. I turn to the Heritage Council and the review of the Heritage Act. On page 83, there is a section that says:

Minor policy amendments were made to:

section 10(c) which is there to clarify the meaning of heritage significance ...

Then it says, “add new sections”. While it states that amendments were made to section 10(c), have these other sections 30(2)(d), 30(3)(c) and 30(4)(a) been added or are these proposed to be added?

Mr Carmichael: From time to time we make incidental changes. They are generally to make the act work more efficiently. They are not actually a policy change; so we bundle those all together. Governments do that across the range of their

responsibilities. That is why you will see some bundled together, which is making the act maybe less dense, more efficient, taking out superfluous language and making some administrative changes. That is what that is probably referring to. But they are not—

MR DOSZPOT: Probably referring to?

Mr Carmichael: I do not have that in front of me but that is where you will get bundles. We have got a PABELAB process each year where we bundle lots of administrative changes which do not go to policy.

Mr Gentleman: We do that in the omnibus bill.

MR DOSZPOT: I would like a little more than a probable answer to my question.

Mr Carmichael: I will have to take it on notice because I do not have the section of the—

MR DOSZPOT: I would appreciate it if you could take it on notice. Let me state what I am asking for, just to be sure that you understand what I am asking for. Again, I am quite in favour of amendments. I am not trying to be difficult for you in this. But I am simply trying to understand whether you have yet to add these new sections, and they are in here just to provide notice, or whether the new sections have been added.

Mr Carmichael: No, they were made.

Mr Gentleman: Those changes were made to the legislation. It says quite clearly, “Minor policy amendments were made to section 10.” And then to add those new sections, 30(2)(d), 30(2)(c)—

MR DOSZPOT: That is what I am asking.

Mr Rake: It was through as part of the PABELAB bill that passed the Assembly on 3 May 2016. I am pulling the legislation up now. We will confirm that I can see the new provisions.

MR DOSZPOT: I am happy for you to come back on this, Mr Rake. That is not a problem. I simply reiterate that I want to make sure that this is yet to be added and is something still under consideration. That is all I am trying to get at.

Mr Rake: I can confirm those are all in place in the legislation now.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. I turn to appeals in ACAT, which is covered on page 86, I think it is. There is—

THE CHAIR: Are we going to a new question?

MR DOSZPOT: I did not ask much on the previous question. So you are taking that on notice?

THE CHAIR: Ms Cheyne, you have a substantive?

MS CHEYNE: I have some questions about the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival. What is this year's theme?

Ms Moore: Questions and change, celebrating the 1967 referendum, when Aboriginal people were recognised to vote.

MS CHEYNE: Will there be an increase in Indigenous themed or related events?

Ms Moore: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: Does it rule out non-Indigenous related events?

Ms Moore: Not at all.

MS CHEYNE: But that is the theme. Okay. How much money is set aside for the hosting of the festival?

Ms Moore: This year or the year in—

MS CHEYNE: Both.

Ms Moore: It is around \$55,000.

MS CHEYNE: Again, to draw on Mr Parton's language, it is a pretty good bang for your buck. Are there a similar number of activities this year compared to last year? There were 164 activities last year.

Ms Moore: We are still in the process of accepting the applications. We are on track to hit; we are over the 100 mark. But in terms of meeting 160 events, it is unknown at this point in time.

MS CHEYNE: What is your target number of people attending? Over 20,000 people attended last year, which is excellent, and I commend you for that. Is there a target you aim to achieve each year? Is 20,000 meeting that target or does it depend on the number of events and the types of events you hold?

Ms Moore: It absolutely does depend on the volunteers that want to host an event, what type of event they coordinate and also how many numbers they can facilitate with their own events. Some venues are necessarily constrained by visitor numbers, such as a house museum. Others, such as the National Trust open day, can have hundreds at them. While we do not necessarily have a target of how many people attend the festival, we set targets for engaging with new audiences, such as younger persons. Last year we had the Urban Polaris, which tapped into a really great network of cyclists who had openly said they had not seen lots of these heritage places. So we aim for new demographics, new targets, as opposed to a set number.

Mr Gentleman: We ask them to steady down on the lycra. We are happier for them to have coffee.

Mr Carmichael: But, importantly, we had 60 per cent of people participating in last year's festival who had never been to a festival before. It was trying to broaden the engagement of who understands or who has some exposure to heritage issues in the ACT.

MS CHEYNE: It is commendable to reach new groups of people, but does that mean, and is it purposeful, that we might not have repeat attendees? Could that figure also be interpreted as saying that we did not have people who came from year to year who see it as an attractive thing, something to mark off on the calendar each year? Is it more about the programs that we are holding?

Ms Moore: We do have a lot of repeat applicants, such as the National Trust. It does depend on the theme as well, and the availability of the volunteers. All the events are volunteer based groups that are running the events. It depends on their workload and capacity and how they can fit into the theme. They might not feel that they are suitable. But we do encourage everyone who has been in a past event to apply again and be part of the ongoing phenomenon that is the festival.

Often some of the repeat event organisers such as the National Trust really assist new event organisers in getting off the ground. In having events such as the open day, we see that they help facilitate some of our traditional skills for people out there in the community who cannot necessarily run an event on their own but can tap in with the National Trust and get out there in the community and show what they have to offer.

Mr Carmichael: Importantly, it is also a good place to showcase the heritage grants. Everybody who gets a heritage grant is encouraged to participate. With people that we have seen who have won a grant, we see what they did with the grant, and that is usually celebrated through the heritage festival.

Mr Gentleman: There are incentives there for people who attend them. Most of the events are either free or entrance through a gold coin donation. The results of previous events are that 95 per cent of people who have attended have said it has been fantastic. That is the results in the surveys.

MS CHEYNE: That is excellent. Do volunteers get a thankyou barbecue at the end or is it more just the job, the value or the reward they get out of it from attending?

Mr Carmichael: We do bring them together after the festival. We seek feedback from the people who presented or who participated to understand how it went, how we can improve the support to them, what things worked well. But part of that is a thankyou sort of evening.

Ms Moore: Also, at that event they have a survey, with customer feedback forms that they distribute through their events. We collate all those and provide data back to them on the attendance at the festival and what people have said about the festival. We give guidance on next year's or future festivals to assist them in growing their own events.

MS CHEYNE: My final question is: do you have an idea about what next year's

theme will be, and how do you come up with the theme? Obviously, anniversary dates are helpful, but for future themes.

Ms Moore: We also try to align with the national heritage festival theme; we are aligning this year with their theme. We look at what is happening around Australia and ensure that the ACT is in line with that and in step with that. Or there may be a key event such as a centenary. Obviously that was our very own special theme that we could not pass up.

MR DOSZPOT: Regarding the information that is gathered through surveys and whatever, can somebody describe for me the methodology regarding the way the survey is conducted?

Mr Gentleman: There are a few different types. Some are simply interactions with the proponents in the heritage grants; others are direct either through the website or through email correspondence. Do you do Bang the Table as well?

Ms Moore: Not for this one. With a lot of the events, people are just coming in for a gold coin or walking in off the street. We use a paper form and we distribute those or provide the website to them to provide their feedback. And the same questions are asked at all events for consistency.

MR DOSZPOT: Presuming you had over 20,000 people attending, how many of these survey forms were returned?

Mr Gentleman: We will take that question on notice and come back to you with the answer, do some research for you.

MR DOSZPOT: Could I also get an indication as to how the 95 per cent relates to an actual quantitative measure? If you had 200 people return the forms and 95 per cent “Great work” type comments, that is one thing. Can we better understand how the survey is conducted and what these figures are based on?

Mr Gentleman: Sure; we can do that.

MS LEE: I am just wondering if you have had any engagement or consultations with our local Indigenous community in relation to the theme.

Mr Gentleman: Yes, we do, regularly. I think that is the best answer to that. We try to work as much as we can with the local community, especially with the heritage this year, this heritage festival, looking at Indigenous culture across the territory. There is regular input into the planning of these events with our local Indigenous community as well. I will ask the directorate to give you the detail.

Ms Moore: We work very closely with the Aboriginal community on all aspects of our work, particularly in relation to the festival. We have representative Aboriginal organisations that we liaise with regularly. We have an identified Aboriginal liaison officer; he works heavily with our festival event coordinator to ensure that the messaging is right for the festival, the imagery is right. And on this occasion we are working really closely with one of our parks rangers, who will be the face on our

poster this year. It is quite a dynamic process.

MS LEE: Finally, how does the festival market itself? What marketing activities does it undertake to ensure its viability and that the great numbers continue?

Mr Gentleman: There are quite a number of activities that we do. There is direct messaging from my office through government portals, TV and radio media, and advertising as well. And then there is more direct advertising in print form.

MR PARTON: I am on page 86, appeals in the ACAT. One DA was appealed in the ACAT after being refused by the Planning and Land Authority. It notes here at the bottom that the matter was to be heard in the ACAT in August of last year. Has this been determined, and what was the outcome?

Mr Rake: The matter is closed. It went to mediation in the ACAT, and the applicant decided to withdraw the development application that would have offended the heritage guidelines. That is the DA to vary the boundary between two blocks in Forrest?

MR PARTON: Yes, that is right.

Mr Rake: It was withdrawn by the applicant after mediation. Essentially, the views of the heritage team in their assessment prevailed. That is an example of the precinct values being protected. The variation of that boundary would have cut across the guidelines of the Blandfordia 4 estate.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lee, a substantive question?

MS LEE: No. My next question is on the land management part.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the situation with working towards having the central national area and the inner hills added to the national heritage list? I understand that has been in progress for many years.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Rake will give you the information.

Mr Rake: The decision as to whether or not to place any part of Canberra on the national heritage list is a decision for the commonwealth heritage minister. It is not something that falls within our statutory purview. There have been, for a number of years now, at least two nominations under consideration by the federal body. We have, administratively and through the elected government, expressed some reservation about each of those nominations potentially having unacceptable impacts on private property owners and the future of the city.

The values described for each of those listings are quite complex, and we need to understand how they could be distilled down into a regulatory framework if they are going to be effective. When we deal with ACAT appeals or planning decisions, we need to be able to get down to quite a clear, codified version of how to interpret

values and how to think about the impact of applications.

The commonwealth has been working on those assessments, as we understand it, for quite some time. There has been no recent update. There is a range of models around the country for dealing with national heritage list approaches to precincts. One of the better ones is the listing for the Adelaide inner city street grid, which protects the geometry of the street grid but does not impede private development rights within that street grid. So there are models out there, but that is not the format of the nominations that have been put forward to date.

MS LE COUTEUR: So there has been no action basically—

Mr Rake: It is not our process to assess, so it is sitting with the commonwealth at the moment.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is clearly something you are interested in and involved with, to an extent?

Mr Rake: Any time there appears to be active assessment underway, the commonwealth gets in touch with us; we go and speak, and help where we can. I am not aware of there being any recent work on that.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lee, if you have a question on land management, you can ask it now.

MS LEE: Minister, I want to ask a question in relation to the transfer of parks and conservation from TAMS to EPD. What was the rationale behind combining the staff and functions of parks and conservation in EPD from July?

Mr Gentleman: It was a decision made by government to ensure that we are getting the best outcomes in each directorate that we can for the Canberra community. The government made that policy decision to change the way it was operating. Since I have taken on board that role, certainly the staff in PCS seem very happy that they are going down that track. I am pleased that the decision has been made, now that we are getting on with the work.

MS LEE: What impact, if any, does it have—you talked about the staff being quite happy—on staff numbers and their classifications? Have there been any significant shifts in that regard?

Mr Rake: No, we have essentially joined the organisations together in their previous forms. At an operational level it allows our environmental researchers to work very closely with their land management colleagues within the same organisation. They were previously working together, but across different organisations we can harness some of our effort and get shared advice now.

MS LEE: There have been no reclassifications for any staff either at TAMS or EPD?

Mr Rake: Not that I am aware of.

MS LEE: And no loss of staff in that regard?

Mr Rake: No reduction in staff numbers attributable to coming together. It was not a savings exercise; it was an exercise in bringing like-minded functions together so that they could work even better together.

MS LEE: Have you been able to articulate or put down on paper in figure terms other savings that perhaps can be made, apart from staff issues? You talked about streamlining and working together.

Mr Rake: We have not approached it as a saving or streamlining. It is more about doing the work better for the same resource base. One of the most positive things we heard from colleagues in PCS was when, a month or two in, we asked, “How are you finding it? Have we managed the transition well?” We heard staff say, “It’s like coming home.” That is a good feeling for us. The teams were already working closely together in different directorates, and to have that reflection, and the science research guiding the land management approach, is great for the environment.

Mr Gentleman: I gave Daniel and the team a little challenge when we had our first briefing, in regard to the symbols that PCS have—the gang-gangs on the shoulder. He assured me that they do not want to change that symbol; they want to keep it the same. It is an in joke!

THE CHAIR: I have a question about urban land management as well. The TAMS report on page 27 mentions that the design standards for urban infrastructure for things like public toilets, urban open space, and street and park furniture were reviewed, and the changes were to have been in operation by early 2017. Can you tell me what changes have been made to the design standards?

Mr Iglesias: Chair, I note for the record that I have read the privilege statement, which I do not think I did the first time.

THE CHAIR: That is fine.

Mr Iglesias: I should state that that particular body of work does not sit within our portfolio. It actually sits with TCCS. It is in city services.

Mr Rake: It is in the portion that stayed.

THE CHAIR: It is in the portion that stayed? Okay, I will direct my question to TCCS. Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Land management plans: who are regarded as stakeholders in respect of preparation of a reserve management plan?

Mr Gentleman: The Canberra community and those that operate within that jurisdiction are the key stakeholders.

MR DOSZPOT: How often are consultations held and reserve management plans updated?

Mr Gentleman: I will ask Mr Iglesias to give you that information.

Mr Iglesias: Typically, the range of stakeholders can be extremely wide. When a management plan is in development, our process is to go out early and often to our stakeholders. We have a good idea as to who our stakeholders are, and during the course of the year we would have a reason to engage with them on all manner of things.

When the time comes to formally consider a management plan, we do it formally and we do it informally. Typically, I am thinking of the Canberra Nature Park management plan. We will run public hearings, the most recent of which was at Yarramundi Reach. We had a structured process whereby we invite our stakeholders along, we take them through a process which explains what we are trying to achieve with a review of the management plan, and we give them the opportunity to test those assumptions. More often than not they come forward with some great ideas that we are able to incorporate.

The engagement is around the development of the draft plan. People are then in a position where they can provide an informed response in writing. That is considered by the conservator, and a report is prepared for the consideration of the minister. We then look to make amendments to the draft management plan and produce the final for the consideration of the minister.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned the Yarramundi Reach plans. Can you elaborate a little bit more on who some of the actual constituents were?

Mr Iglesias: I believe that was in the case of the Canberra Nature Park plan of management that we held at Yarramundi Reach. That would have been attended by members of the recreation community, such as people with an interest in mountain biking and people with an interest in walking. There are people that have an interest in the equestrian use of Canberra Nature Park. Canberra Nature Park is basically the bush on your doorstep; there are any number of community groups that value the place. We get over a couple of million visits a year to these sorts of areas. We try to focus on the peak groups, to get them on board, but there is no limit to who might be able to make a submission.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any representation of the seniors community at these meetings?

Mr Iglesias: Sure. I know that we actively engage with the Walking for Pleasure group, which have a large jurisdiction being the more senior. We have upwards of 30 Parkcare groups. Seventy to 80 per cent of their membership is retired people. In fact I have said to them before, "Be proud of the fact that you are the constituency in our Parkcare groups," because they are always worried about getting young people to come through. What I have found is that the young people of today will be our park carers of tomorrow. Really, the older constituency is very well represented through our Parkcare groups.

MR DOSZPOT: You are quite happy to talk to people over 40?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, we speak to each other all the time!

MR DOSZPOT: How do you get on with the Chief Minister?

Mr Rake: He is over 40, so he and I speak to each other as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Across the 39 reserves within the ACT, how are they managed and staffed?

Mr Iglesias: I will just check. I think it is on page—

Mr Gentleman: Daniel does the management, so there is the first part of it.

Mr Iglesias: Yes. There is a spot in the annual report that gives a summary of our staffing profile. As of 2015-16 we had 43 rangers. They are spread out across the entirety of the ACT. About half of that number is dedicated to looking after the areas you mentioned, Mr Doszpot: the parks and reserves within the urban area. These are the most visible parts of the bush in Canberra and relate to the bush on the doorstep—areas like Mount Ainslie and Black Mountain, with literally millions of visits a year.

The management of those areas is packaged up in what we call Canberra Nature Park. So we collectively call those units Canberra Nature Park, and our management is guided by that policy framework. We also have other documents that we rely on, like the strategic bushfire plan. A lot of these areas have great areas of bushland but their fire fuel needs to be managed, both for the benefit of the environment and for the protection of the people who live around it. So the bushfire plan is an important plan that we take into account as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Do any of these areas have a specific educational input, such as from schools? Do schools go out with a particular range of activities that they can pursue within your management purview?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, absolutely. We have a smaller team within the parks and conservation service that is dedicated to community engagement. We run a number of activities. Some are available to the general public as well as to schools. Some are focused more at schools. For example, our Murrumbung rangers spend a lot of time visiting schools and engaging with younger Canberrans about the amazing Aboriginal history we have in this place. Our rangers often go and visit schools. It tends to be driven more as an initiative raised by the schools, but there are other areas, such as in Tidbinbilla, where we have a specific focus on trying to provide activities that meet the national curriculum, and they are a little bit more targeted. We also work closely with Birrigai to make sure that when they are delivering activities on campus there might be opportunities for our people to come across and add to the experience.

MR DOSZPOT: Birrigai is not under your direct control?

Mr Iglesias: No.

Mr Gentleman: Education.

MR DOSZPOT: Wonderful work has been done there; I know that for a fact. Well done regarding the interaction. My final question is: you mentioned that there are now 40 rangers employed. What is the staffing structure of the parks and conservation service overall?

Mr Iglesias: We are a branch within the environment division. Last time I looked, we had about 185 FTEs. The parks service is not tasked just with delivering the protection of our protected areas; it also acts as a de facto agriculture department. So we have an interest in biosecurity and maintaining our borders free from any potential pests, especially now that we have an international port. We look after bushfire fuel management as well. There would be approximately 40 to 50 FTEs—maybe a little bit more—associated with that part of the business. We also have management planning. We have two FTEs that are dedicated to keeping an eye on our management plans and reviewing them. The balance of our FTEs is dedicated to the traditional national park protected areas management.

MR DOSZPOT: What is your total budget?

Mr Iglesias: Gary will correct me if I am wrong—

Mr Spencer: It varies. The recurrent funding is between \$34 million and \$38 million. It changes over the years, depending on what initiatives are expiring and what initiatives are going through the budget process. We have capital funding of about \$6.56 million or \$7 million, which transferred across for the 2016-17 year. That drops off, and we will have to go through another bidding cycle for the capital funding.

MR DOSZPOT: Has there been any reduction in your overall budget for the past year as compared to the previous year?

Mr Spencer: We will go through the budget process, and during that budget process there will be some considerations. I would imagine we will consider initiatives, and we will consider savings.

MR DOSZPOT: I am talking about the previous 12 months.

Mr Spencer: We had a process some years ago in terms of the efficiency review, and during that process the parks and conservation service was assured of the same level of funding. There was no reduction in funding. In fact it was one of the few areas that received the same level of funding and no cuts.

MR DOSZPOT: The reason I ask is that in heritage apparently grant funding was reduced from \$285,000 to \$214,000. Have you suffered any similar reductions in any of your programs?

Mr Spencer: No. There is obviously a challenge in delivering services within the funding you have, and we move funds around and do priorities based on the management plans that are in place, but there are no significant reductions in funding.

Mr Gentleman: You heard from Mr Iglesias on the number of staff that we have and

the number of visitors into our nature parks. To use Mr Parton's words, more bang for your buck is right on the ground here with parks and conservation.

MS LEE: That seems to be the theme, I think: bang for your buck. The rangers whom you have across the 39 reserves within the ACT, are they attached to a specific area or do they move around? How does that work?

Mr Gentleman: We have some rangers attached to a specific area who have great knowledge about that area and are able to share that knowledge, which is really good, but some rangers do move around as well.

Mr Iglesias: We get a bit of both. Generally, when our rangers come into the organisation we get really well-educated people. They are basically graduates. They come to us with a lot of skills. They start as a base grade ranger. We find that, as they stay in a particular area, they are looking to get different experiences. It is not unusual for us to have a really healthy churn of people moving from park to park. Namadgi National Park is prized by staff. Usually when rangers get there it is like getting out the crowbar to move them because they love it. Even within Namadgi National Park there is a good change of people over the course of, say, three to five years.

MS LEE: There are 185 FTE equivalents—

Mr Iglesias: That is right.

MS LEE: but there are 43 rangers; is that right?

Mr Iglesias: There are 43 rangers, as in the ranger classification. They are spread out across the whole ACT. Supporting those rangers are field staff; there are about another 40 of those. There are also technical staff and administrative staff. They are spread across the seven depots that make up the Parks and Conservation Service.

MS LEE: It is an enormous amount of work, it seems, for 39 reserves.

MS CHEYNE: My question is about the pest control program. How effective has the \$270,000 been in reducing the number of rabbits, wild dogs, pigs and deer?

Mr Gentleman: More bang for your buck, again, I think is the answer here. For that amount I think we get a very good result. Mr Iglesias will give you the detail.

Mr Iglesias: Rabbits have been with us since Europeans have been in these parts, so from about the mid-1850s. There have been times in Namadgi National Park where the rabbit infestation has been—well, you have to see it to believe it. We know for a fact that there are hotspots in our protected areas where rabbits will take hold. We tend to invest in those areas more than others.

MS CHEYNE: Where are those hotspots?

Mr Iglesias: For example, in our grassland areas. Gudgenby Valley in Namadgi National Park can have hundreds of thousands of rabbits if we take our eye off the ball. These are areas within our estate that we know we have to focus on. We also sit

down with our rural lessees and, where we see that there are patterns of rural lessees taking up initiatives to control rabbits, we will go in as well and do our bit where we adjoin because with rabbits, as with almost every other pest, you have to think about a landscape approach. If you just focus on little pockets on their own you can spend a lot of money and not see an appreciable improvement because rabbits just come in from the surrounding areas. It is about looking at your budget and seeing where you will get the best result in the landscape and where you will get the best improvement in environmental values.

With Gudgenby Valley, for example, we have spent a lot of money in the past two years. My rangers explain that where there were rabbit warrens, so just holes in the ground, and with very little vegetation, there is now native vegetation coming through after an extensive control effort. With rabbits, it is a matter of trying to stay ahead of the game. We will never get rid of them. Hopefully I will be proven wrong, but—

Mr Gentleman: To date we have not seen any—

Mr Iglesias: It is very difficult to get rid of animals such as rabbits and foxes. The best we can do is to suppress them so that they do not impact as much on the native landscape and on rural production.

MS CHEYNE: Would rabbits be the biggest pest we have in the ACT?

Mr Iglesias: If I were to pick an animal, it would be rabbits.

MS CHEYNE: Followed by?

Mr Gentleman: It is the focus of expenditure as well. If we look at the amount of money we spend on pest species, 45 per cent of that budget is spent on rabbits, 16 per cent on wild dogs, 10 per cent on feral deer, 16 per cent on feral pigs, and 10 per cent on feral horses.

MS CHEYNE: Does that match the population or the impact that they have? So are we dedicating our money to the things that have the biggest impact or are the hardest to control?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly the impact on the environment. That is why Mr Iglesias was saying that rabbits have the biggest impact on our environment.

MS CHEYNE: Obviously in places like Gudgenby it is huge, but what about in our urban areas? Are there hotspots within the city of Canberra?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, there are. There are some interesting hotspots—Mount Ainslie, for example, but there are rabbits taking to the grounds of the War Memorial as well. From time to time we sit down with the War Memorial and say, “You’ve got a bit of money and we’ve got a bit of money; let’s try to get them before they get too high.” Another hotspot is Red Hill, around the golf course. We often get reports of rabbits taking off there as well. It is wherever you get grassy ecosystems, not forested. For example, Black Mountain would not be as susceptible to rabbits as a place like the Pinnacle or Mount Painter.

MS CHEYNE: What about Lake Ginninderra? I see rabbits there all the time, but maybe it is just the time of day and it is actually not that many comparably.

Mr Iglesias: Lake Ginninderra; I see them there as well. There is not a place in the territory where it would be remarkable not to see a rabbit. We try to invest our effort where we are going to get the best bang for our buck, so where we can get the best return for the environment.

MS CHEYNE: Where are the deer? Where would I find deer?

Mr Iglesias: Deer is an interesting one. We suspect that we have had them in very low numbers for about 10 years or so. We used to have a deer farm not far from here. I do not remember where, but it was close by. When that farm closed, we suspect that the animals might have just been let go. In spite of that particular place, deer are in the environment all over the Australian Alps. There are three or four species that we are keeping a close eye on. At the moment there is a hotspot at Googong in New South Wales, and also in the Bullen Range at Tuggeranong. So that low range of hills that you can see immediately out to the west, there is a good population of deer there as well.

MR DOSZPOT: Just a final supplementary from me, Mr Iglesias. Are you aware of the federal plan to eradicate rabbits? I think there is something coming your way at the moment.

Mr Iglesias: I think that plan is the release of the K5 variant, which is not so much to eradicate; it is to try to give it a good hit. I think they are hoping that it will reduce numbers by about an extra 40 per cent. We are part of that process.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, that was my question.

Mr Iglesias: Later this week we will release a variant of the rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus, which is the same virus with just a little bit of a tweak on it, which might surprise the rabbits a bit and get a good kill for us.

MR DOSZPOT: I just wanted to make sure that we were part of that, because obviously it is relatively the same problem—

Mr Iglesias: Exactly.

MS LEE: Minister, in relation to what you were saying earlier: of the \$270,000, if 45 per cent is spent on rabbit pest eradication or management, it means about \$125,000 would be spent on rabbits. Do you have any numbers in terms of how many rabbits that would be, if we are talking bang for buck?

Mr Gentleman: Thousands.

Mr Iglesias: Yes, they would be in the tens of thousands. It would be an estimate, but I would have to take it on notice and get back to you.

MS LEE: You think it is probably in the tens of thousands?

Mr Iglesias: It would be in the tens of thousands of animals.

MS LEE: If you can get back to me, that would be great.

THE CHAIR: Because the minister for the environment will be leaving us and we will have a different line-up across the table, can I just remind everyone that supplementary questions should be lodged with the committee support office within five business days of the uncorrected proof of transcript becoming available, responses to questions taken on notice should be provided within five business days, and responses to supplementary questions should be provided within five business days.

Sitting suspended from 3.59 to 4.15 pm.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Dawes, Mr David, Executive Director, Economic Development
Priest, Ms Jenny, Director, Active Canberra
Kelley, Ms Rebecca, Deputy Director, Active Canberra

THE CHAIR: Because we have a new minister, I get to read the statement again. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you Minister Berry and your officials for attending today. Today the committee will be examining the sport and recreation portfolio as contained in the annual report of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Can I draw your attention to the privilege statement before you on the table? It is the pink card there. Could you and your officials please confirm for me and for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Ms Berry: Yes.

Ms Priest: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. May I also remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and webstreamed and broadcast live. Before we go to questions, minister, do you have an opening statement?

Ms Berry: Yes. Thanks for the chance to talk about some of the really great achievements in sport and recreation over the past year. This portfolio touches so many in our community. The ACT is the most active jurisdiction in Australia and we are working hard to keep it that way, because active living is so important to health, inclusion and participation. Sport and recreation are also an important part of our economy, another reason to keep working to grow the sector and the opportunities that come with that.

In pursuing these goals the ACT government made some great gains in 2015-16, working together with many local sporting organisations, clubs and volunteers. These included more than 800,000 visits to community pools and the commencement of design work for a new aquatic facility at Stromlo; the launch of nature play Canberra; completion of the indoor sports facility study, which we are now using to help connect more school facilities to community sports clubs; more than \$2.7 million in community grants to support a broad diversity of sport and active recreation; we have progressed key infrastructure projects; we supported many amazing Olympic and Paralympic athletes; we engaged the sports community around the new CBR sports awards program; we started work on a clear agenda to push towards true gender equity in all levels of sport.

The government's election commitments continue our agenda of striving for greater

opportunities and inclusion in sport, particularly for women and girls. This will include \$500,000 in infrastructure improvements to create more female friendly sporting environments during this term. Sports funding will be targeting specific funding for programs that engage more women and girls as participants and leaders.

The government are also supporting greater equity in elite funding and we are already working with local sporting organisations to ensure that by 2020 all funded peak bodies have at least 40 per cent female representation on their boards, reflecting the positive impact governments have made through gender equity.

This government recognises the challenges for many smaller sports in Canberra, particularly in promoting their activities and finding adequate places to play. A few examples of that include Disc Golf Club, who received a recent facility grant; canoeing, where the government is supporting the expansion of the Burley Griffin Canoe Club at Molonglo Reach; ice sports, where funding has been made available for the delivery of Labor's election commitment to work with this community towards a new facility for our growing ice sports and skating community.

Sport has always been a key role in the development of our city and our community. The ACT's participation levels in sport and physical recreation are the highest in the country. Sixty-six per cent of our community aged 15 years and over are active at least three times a week, compared to the national average of 59 per cent. Underpinning this participation is the diverse range of sporting choices and recreational opportunities that the ACT has to offer, and the government will keep working with the local sporting community to give everyone the chance to participate in sport and active recreation whatever their ability.

Thank you for allowing me to make that opening statement. We are happy to take questions from the committee.

THE CHAIR: I would like to start. I would like to ask some questions around nature play Canberra, the new program that is going to start. Can you give us an idea, first of all for those who might not be so familiar with nature play, what the program entails and what things you are doing at the moment under the program banner?

Ms Berry: Nature play is pretty much what the title calls it. It is about using the natural environment and doing the things that we have done forever, making mud pies, playing with sticks, playing in the dirt, getting dirty. I am a big fan of getting outdoors when you get home, when the kids get home from school, and just playing in the dirt. Nature play is one of those really great initiatives developed to help families, schools and community organisations to recognise and increase the time that children spend outdoors in that unstructured kind of play, self-directed play outdoors and in nature, which is described as mud pies, sticks, climbing trees, climbing on rocks, all of those kinds of things.

It almost seems quite crazy that we are having to introduce the nature play initiative as an actual thing when it is something that we have all naturally grown up with, but the whole program is being supported by a website and a social media presence, a central information hub. It has been a really great tool for engaging and connecting the community and reminding everybody that it is quite easy to be physically active and

using those less formal recreational activities. That is nature play. Do you want to talk a bit more, Jenny, about how we have rolled it out?

Ms Priest: Yes. Just reinforcing a couple of things that the minister said, nature play as a concept is something that is rolling out over quite a number of jurisdictions nationally. It is underpinned—if people are interested to look into it a little further—by a book by Richard Louv called the *Last Child in the Woods* and it really is about ensuring that children from the earliest stages are able to engage with their natural environment and all the mental, social and physical benefits that come from that and, I guess, preparing children for what we hope will be then a lifelong evolution into other, more structured forms of sport and recreation. But, as the minister said, it seems crazy that we need to reintroduce people to it through a structured program, but it is something that we are doing and it is something that has been very warmly received.

In addition to some grants programs that we rolled out last year—we provided \$20,000 in financial assistance to local organisations for the delivery of quality based nature programs, services and events and we announced those recipients back in December last year—we have also launched just recently a nature play passport, which is effectively a passport so that a whole range of different providers, playgroups and other providers who are interested in doing this, mums and dads who want to register on the website, can get out and their kids can get involved and basically tick off a whole range of fun activities that they can go out and challenge themselves to do, such as going out and running around in puddles. In fact, there are a number of different elements to the nature play passport. You might want to add to some of that.

Ms Kelley: Yes. The activities that Jenny is referring to are nature play missions. On the website there is a scope and they are tailored by age groups, birth to five years and then moving up to 12 years. There are playlists that we have that accompany that, 49 things to do before you are 12, things like watch a sunrise, fall off a bike. There are some things that might be confronting to parents but they are things that research is telling us are good for children and good experiences to have; hence their inclusion. But it really is open to the imagination. The whole point of the website is to really prompt parents who perhaps are struggling with those ideas as to how to get their kids active.

MR DOSZPOT: Welcome to the hearing minister, Ms Priest and Ms Kelley. Minister, can you tell us how many international cricket events were held over the summer of 2015-16 and can you explain the costs involved with these events and how they were funded?

Ms Berry: We might need to take that one on notice and speak to our colleagues in the venues.

Mr Dawes: They do have all of those stats but I have not got that with me to answer that question. That is more aligned to both venues and the events, for which the hearing was last week.

Ms Berry: But we can take it on notice.

Mr Dawes: But we can take it on notice and provide you with that information.

MR DOSZPOT: Just for our information, does sport and rec play any part in the staging of those games?

Mr Dawes: Again, it is run mainly by the venues. Sport and rec will have some input into it but it is really for the venues and working with the major events unit within the Chief Minister's department.

Ms Berry: I was just asking if we can break it down on what venues are responsible as far as these kinds of international events that are played at Manuka are concerned.

Mr Dawes: Yes, certainly.

Ms Berry: And other events and what sport and active Canberra are responsible for and that might make it—

Mr Dawes: A bit easier.

Ms Berry: And then we will get that other information about the international cricket.

MR DOSZPOT: Are you taking it on notice? Is that the idea?

Mr Dawes: Yes I am taking it under notice. I could have rattled the information off but I have not got all those stats with me.

MR DOSZPOT: In that case, I will pass for the moment.

MS CHEYNE: On ovals, how do community hire rates for ACT sportsgrounds compare to those of other jurisdictions?

Ms Priest: In terms of cost recovery or the amount of subsidy that the ACT government provides for its sportsgrounds, we are sitting at about 86 per cent of subsidy of the cost of running our sportsgrounds at the moment. Around 14 or 15 per cent is the amount of cost recovery we are putting towards the running of the sportsgrounds.

A number of years ago—and it is something that we have been targeting as a result of that—we identified that across the board, across a range of comparable jurisdictions, around 20 per cent cost recovery was the benchmark. Over a number of years, over the past three or four years, we have been implementing a strategy to bring the cost recovery of maintaining our sportsgrounds back closer to the national benchmark of 20 per cent cost recovery. We are not there yet.

I think it is important to understand that, in terms of all of that—the variables and the costs associated with the different jurisdictions—in the ACT we pay the highest water prices in the country and we have a very harsh, dry climate in the summer. The cost of watering our sportsgrounds is quite high and it is very difficult to say how we compare with other jurisdictions, because our costs are all very different depending on the jurisdiction you are talking about and what the variables of cost are, including

things such as water.

MS CHEYNE: Can you expand a bit on the maintenance of our ovals? Obviously keeping them green is quite a big challenge, but what else goes into making sure that ovals are fit for use, and what are the challenges that you have in achieving that?

Ms Berry: The main challenge is the irrigation, really. There are 280 hectares or something like that of irrigated ovals and—

Ms Priest: That is right. As an average, the total maintenance cost for ACT government sportsgrounds per year is approximately \$50,000 per hectare. We have 280 hectares of irrigated sportsgrounds in the territory and about \$50,000 per hectare, which is an average cost, noting that the maintenance costs will vary on a site-by-site basis and also vary from year to year. Climate is a big thing that impacts, as the minister said, in regards to water and how much water we use.

On the breakdown of maintenance costs, typically expenses may include utility costs, water, electricity, gas; mowing, cleaning, waste removal, pest/weed control; fertiliser and turf remediation, including soil testing, aeration, dethatching; renovation costs, including top soil and seed supplies; irrigation repairs and materials; floodlighting repairs; repairs and maintenance for buildings, including random vandalism that can occur from time to time; plant and equipment, including maintenance of vehicles and machinery; management and operational staff costs.

As you can see, there are a lot of aspects to maintaining our sportsgrounds in there which do vary from year to year, but on average we are saying about \$50,000 per hectare.

Mr Dawes: And I think one of the unique things with the maintenance of them is that, if you have a very wet summer, as well obviously there is more mowing; and the opposite, if you have a very dry summer, it is more water. And just to do that it is somewhere in the order of \$2.2 million and \$2.5 million per annum, whether it is dry or wet. It is pretty consistently the same.

MS CHEYNE: And it sounds like the majority of those variables are quite simply out of your control, but are there ones that are within your control? Can you work with the people who use the ovals to ensure the mitigation of any extra maintenance that you have to do to those ovals? Is there any role that active Canberra plays in that?

Ms Priest: Yes, absolutely. There is a whole range of considerations there as well—everything down to how we book the facilities and how sports are booking facilities. We do work very closely with our clubs and all peak bodies to ensure that bookings are at the best level that we can get them. We do not always get it perfect and sometimes obviously the demand for sportsgrounds is such that we need to do the very best that we can.

But we find that our clubs are very willing to work with us to make sure that the facilities are maintained as well as possible. Obviously they stand to lose if the manner in which the facilities are used is not done in the most responsible way and in a way looks after their needs and the needs of their co-users. There are very

cooperative and collaborative relationships with the sports around how we maintain and use the facilities.

We also have a number of arrangements in place with a number of different sports, depending on their particular interest, capability and ability to fund where they co-contribute at different times for different elements of maintenance, but it really is on a case-by-case basis and it depends on the individual clubs.

MS CHEYNE: And just finally, where is the greatest demand for oval use in the ACT?

Ms Berry: Rebecca, have you got an indication of where the greatest demand might be in the north-south perspective?

Ms Kelley: It is probably one that we could come back to with more accurate detail because it obviously varies from season to season, but we know the demand areas. We know that Gungahlin is one of our demand areas at the moment. So that is where there is an increased demand and at the moment usage from that area is probably falling back into the inner north. Certainly we could readily provide you with the usage details for the past 12 months.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary from Mr Milligan and then Mr Dospot.

MR MILLIGAN: My question is in relation to the cost of water. Obviously water is a huge cost for the government, but our clubs and associations wear that cost. Can you give me an indication of what ovals use grey water and the costs associated with grey water use versus non-grey water use and the percentage of ovals using that?

Ms Priest: I might ask Rebecca to answer that question.

Ms Kelley: The primary area for grey water and non-potable use at the moment is off the north Canberra stormwater reticulation scheme, Southwell Park and some of the inner north wetlands works, Hackett and those surrounding areas. We can certainly provide you with a full list of the grounds in terms of the hectares that are non-potable.

As to the costs associated at the moment with them, we are paying in excess of \$5.24 a kilolitre for potable water, but where we can get non-potable supply, it is just a water abstraction charge. If it is coming out of a dam, it is around, I think, 27c at the moment. We can confirm all of this detail for you, but there is significant difference. Certainly we are looking to explore more non-potable supply where possible, but there is the cost of the capital infrastructure required to set up the connectivity, and the pump and tank infrastructure. It is not just about the water supply but about how we actually apply it to the grounds once it is on site.

MR MILLIGAN: Have you looked at the costs associated with putting this infrastructure in yet?

Ms Kelley: We have. Not too long ago, to go back to 2008, there was a \$16 million commitment by government called “Where will we play?” A primary goal of that scheme was to look at a full water abstraction scheme out of Lake Tuggeranong. As

that program progressed, the economics and the viability of that scheme sort of undid itself in terms of the costs of the work, with the dam infrastructure and probably securing up our water future. Then there were the costs of actually installing the reticulation scheme. It came to an end.

We looked at different alternative strategies to reduce our water use. The bulk of those funds then went into turf replacements where we were putting in couch grass as opposed to rye, we were looking at irrigation system replacements, and we were looking at different soil make-up, greater carbon content and water-holding capacity. So it was a whole range of things. We replaced our irrigation management system with a new Rain Bird IQ. There have been a whole lot of water-saving strategies that have been put in place in lieu of greater non-potable supply, simply because of the costs of establishment.

A positive that came out of that down south is that we had a number of sites that have ended up with tanks and pumping structures on site where we had water pressure issues. It is great that we can have great irrigation systems, but if we do not have the water pressure, those irrigation systems will not put the distribution of water where we need it to get good coverage on the turf, so you end up with a whole range of different issues. We have solved some of those problems with that initial funding from 2008.

Ms Berry: Just before you go on, the other initiative—and technology that is changing every day—is synthetic turf. More and more, we are seeing synthetic turf being installed. Whilst it is expensive up front, it does not need the water and the irrigation that grass does. There have been some big changes in synthetic turf over the past couple of years. Jenny, do you want to expand on that?

Ms Priest: Yes. The technology in synthetic turf, as the minister has indicated, is improving all the time. As part of our strategy moving forward, we are looking at the extent to which we might look to supplement and provide some additional turf surfaces. We are about to conclude and open the new synthetic pitch at Melrose school. There are a number of synthetic pitches already starting to roll out across the city, and we will be looking to see, where that makes sense, how many more we might be able to do.

THE CHAIR: One more.

MR MILLIGAN: Can you tell me how often a synthetic pitch will need to be replaced and the costs associated with that so that we can break it down per year and then compare that with the cost of water?

Ms Priest: Yes, sure. It is roughly every 10 years that it needs replacement, and the cost of replacement around—

Ms Kelley: About a million per pitch.

MR MILLIGAN: So \$100,000 a year pretty much is what it is costing the government, or private business. How does that compare with actual grass use and watering an oval instead?

Ms Berry: I think there is everything else that would have to be considered in that cost as well, not just the irrigation. Whilst that is one part of it, there is all the other maintenance as well and the ability for that turf to be able to be used in rain, hail or shine, pretty much, without the damage that can be caused to ovals when it is quite wet. And then there is the repair for the ovals. All of that would need to be taken into account.

Ms Priest: That is right. The technology is evolving, but not all sports are yet ready and open to play on synthetic turf. And there are still some inherent issues with synthetic that need to be worked through. As we said, it is something that is definitely on the radar of where we are evolving to, and we will continue to keep our eye on the technology and continue to do those comparisons.

I think you make a very good point, and they are certainly the things that we are looking at in terms of usability, and the willingness, preparedness and capacity of sports to actually use synthetic turf as opposed to natural turf pitches. But also there are other inherent costs associated with not just the replacement but the ongoing maintenance that need to be considered. They are not simple, as you would imagine. It is not just a case of putting in a synthetic pitch and then replacing it in 10 years time. There is a lot that goes into maintaining synthetic pitches.

MR DOSZPOT: I probably have a supplementary on those last few questions, but I will begin with a supplementary on the original question, on playing fields. A few years ago, over 40-odd grounds were taken offline because of deteriorating grounds and repairs that were needed. How many have currently come back online out of that group of 40, and what is the number still left in that reserve bench, if you like, for grounds?

Ms Priest: You are absolutely right; in the years of drought we turned off a number of sportsgrounds, the 40 sportsgrounds. In the time since those sportsgrounds were turned off, there has been a review in conjunction and collaboration with the sports sector about what seemed to be an appropriate sportsground provision model. There was the old neighbourhood oval. In the early days of Canberra, all of the early neighbourhoods were developed with a neighbourhood oval; it was just par for the course.

As sport in the city has evolved and as the need to be mindful of how we use our resources becomes more and more of a consideration as we move on, the sports also, relying heavily on volunteers and wanting to ensure that they can aggregate and concentrate their efforts, have indicated a very strong preference for the district playing field model so that you have multiple sportsgrounds in one location.

Moving forward, let me go to one of the things that we introduced in revising the sportsground provision model, Mr Doszpot. Since the ovals were turned off in the drought, a very cognisant and thoughtful decision has been taken not to just turn back on neighbourhood ovals, unless it is very well and strongly argued as a one-off sort of thing. That is because they are labour intensive; they require sports to be there at one field as opposed to having their entire sport operation on the weekend at a district playing field arrangement where they can have a canteen, they can have volunteers,

and they can have coaches, administrators and officiators all there working on site.

But also, in terms of our requirements for maintenance, it is much more cost effective to be doing that at a concentrated multi-oval site. There were a number of sportsgrounds turned on recently: Weetangera, Watson, Bonython, Ngunnawal, Charnwood—

Ms Kelley: Ngunnawal, Charnwood, Isabella Plains.

Ms Priest: over a number of years. It was because there were strategic decisions made because of their collocation. Watson, for example, was collocated with a school. The sportsground provision model, moving forward, also looks at where you can collocate an oval with a school. Certainly for new suburbs and new school developments, that is what you look to do.

Outside of that, we have the community recreation park, which is a new, hybridised model of informal play spaces that cater for mums and prams through to kids on skateboards but that also have irrigation. That is the important difference between what we provide at a community recreation park and what might otherwise be provided at a town park, where you can have some informal training and kick a ball around. Sporting groups can go out there and perhaps run their training sessions. It is not necessarily for formal sporting play on the weekend, but that is where your district playing field would augment that.

In terms of the question of how many more sportsgrounds there are to turn back on, whilst the sportsgrounds that were switched off are certainly there for informal recreation purposes—walking your dog, throwing a frisbee, having an informal run around or kick around—it is not a fait accompli or a given that those sportsgrounds would ever be turned back on and irrigated as a formal sportsground, for all the reasons that I mentioned.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you for that information, but I would like some more accurate numbers. You have named, I think, four ovals, if I have written them all down: Weetangera, Watson, Bonython, Charnwood. Does that leave 36 still in that other category?

Ms Kelley: We will get you some more information.

Ms Priest: We will get you the absolute number of those that were turned off which remain turned off.

MR DOSZPOT: While you were saying that there is no guarantee that they would be brought back, originally there was a guarantee that most of them would be brought back. The sporting community is very much in need. Rather than asking about the highest demand areas, I would like to ask about the highest sport demands. Various sports have different demands for this. Yes, they do fall into areas as well, but the sports themselves are all over Canberra. Take football, for instance. I know cricket has a few problems in some of the areas where they need more grounds.

It is the number of grounds that are still sitting vacant. I am concerned about that and I

will come back to that with another question. The commitment originally by this government was that the majority of those grounds would be brought back. All the sports were affected, and they are still being affected because our population has boomed and we have a lot more kids needing to play in some of these sports areas. First, could you get back to me, if you want to take it on notice, minister, with what the intentions are with these grounds. I would be grateful for that.

And just getting onto another aspect, what is happening to these other grounds in the meantime? You mentioned that they could be right for occasional use but surely there would have to be a lot of maintenance if people are going to use it occasionally.

Ms Priest: They get what we call an informal use maintenance regime, which includes a dryland grass mow every six weeks, four to six weeks in the summer, in the high growing period. Our rangers are always doing a visitation and drive-by to ensure that there are not any other issues cropping up with those facilities. We also find that if something is untoward at an informal use oval, we fairly quickly hear about it from the community, and we use that as an opportunity to respond. We have certainly done that in all cases where there have been issues or concerns raised by the community that maybe there have been some branches or what have you that have fallen onto the area surrounding the oval or what have you. We work closely with Transport Canberra and City Services to ensure that those things are addressed, and are addressed fairly quickly.

MR DOSZPOT: So you will take on notice how many of these grounds are currently still offline and where these grounds are?

Ms Priest: And where they are? Yes, sure. Yes, I am sure we can provide that. I think we have provided that before, but I am sure we can provide it again.

MR DOSZPOT: I am just trying to keep track of it.

Ms Priest: Yes, that is fine.

MR DOSZPOT: The other supplementary is on the usage of synthetic surfaces. We have been over this in a number of hearings; I think we are both in agreement that it is good, but there is probably a bit of an issue with the way the benefits of synthetic grass have been calculated, because there is still a fairly high watering cost. Even though it is synthetic grass, it does require to be watered before it is played on, and that is a substantial amount of watering that takes place. So with the formula for working out the cost efficiencies between synthetic grounds versus normal grounds, I would like to get a better understanding from the department as to what those real differentials are, taking into account what I have just said.

Ms Priest: Sure.

Ms Berry: We are not going to replace every field with a synthetic field—

MR DOSZPOT: I understand.

Ms Berry: but it is certainly an option. It is something that works well in school

communities and those ones that do not need to be watered, like the hockey pitch at Lyneham or some of those more elite level synthetic ovals. With the normal kinds of community-level sport synthetic pitch, there is probably a whole other different economy behind that.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that, and thank you for clarifying. I am sure my colleague who is now the shadow sports minister will be keeping questions up on just how many of these grounds will come back. I am just concerned that there is going to be almost a throwback to what happened years ago. You just said there was never any commitment made. There was a commitment made that most of them would come back. I would like to know that the furphy thrown in at times, by the users as well, because they are not aware of the complete story; they are hoping for more synthetic grounds, but if they had a choice of having a synthetic ground that they can get to or get to an available ground to play their various sports, and I am talking across just about all codes, I think a lot of them would really love to have some access to the 36-odd ovals that currently are not being used for anything else. And my final question on that is that I hope they are not being kept for development purposes.

Ms Priest: The zoning on the land where the informal use ovals sit is urban open space. Whatever the zoning is dictates the use. If there were to be any change of use for any of those facilities it would require a territory plan variation, and that would need to go through a very public and Assembly process. At this stage, the use of those facilities, as far as I am aware, is very much dictated by the fact that it is urban open space zoning and that is what the use allows for now.

MR DOSZPOT: There was a fairly large oval, and I think the land is still there, in Lyons, where there was a football field some years ago and the football field has long disappeared. There is some urban usage, community usage, of the ground, but that is one of the grounds I am talking about where it could be made into a ground for cricket, AFL or soccer in an area where there is quite a need in the south for further ovals. Has the classification of that ground changed at all?

Ms Priest: At Lyons?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes; it is opposite the Lyons shopping centre.

Ms Kelley: Lyons neighbourhood oval.

Ms Priest: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, and it is a fairly large stretch of land.

Ms Priest: I am not aware, Mr Doszpot, but I am happy to check whether or not the zoning of that land has been changed in recent times.

MR DOSZPOT: I would be very interested in the context of our discussion that we have been having as to whether anything has changed in the status of that ground.

Ms Priest: I think the important thing is that if there were to be anything proposed or to occur on any land that is currently urban open space, it would need to be done in

very close consultation with the community. You only know what you know at a given time. As you say, whereas, when the ovals were switched off, there may have been a commitment at the time, since then—and 2012 is when we brought out the new sportsground provision model—there has been consultation with the sector and an evolution of thinking about the old neighbourhood oval model, which is why we have sort of evolved in our thinking in conjunction with what the sectoral needs are. My comment was not that there was never any commitment: I guess there has been a change of thinking, which has happened in consultation with the sector.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MR PARTON: Please excuse my ignorance. I think I am in the right directorate with this, but I am not sure. I am still on work experience. I am referring to CMTEDD's financial statements on page 96 of volume 2.1 of the annual report. I note that advance funding of \$1.4 million was received for international sporting events. I am keen to find out what that is for.

Ms Berry: This is not with us. It is with venues, isn't it?

Mr Dawes: It is.

Ms Berry: Yes, it is with venues.

MR PARTON: I feared you would say that.

Mr Dawes: Yes, it is just the way we have got some of these things structured as well. I will get that detail for you.

MR PARTON: Can I leave that behind and move to something completely different?

THE CHAIR: Just this once we will let you do that.

MR PARTON: Thanks for that. Stromlo pool continues to be on the books. I am referring to page 65, volume 1. But we note that progress is limited to design works. What finances have been put aside for this?

Ms Priest: Under the current budget there is \$33 million committed for the construction of a pool at Stromlo. We have undertaken consultation with the community in regards to the options and potential mix of facilities to be included at the Stromlo pool. The commitment at this stage for the \$33 million is to deliver a 50-metre pool with associated facilities.

We are at the point now of finalising our design work to go out to tender for design and construction of the Stromlo pool, taking on board the feedback we received from the community. We are still sort of synthesising and going through that. We are very close to being at that point now of being able to go out for design and construction of the facility.

MR PARTON: A 50-metre pool; what else is in it?

Ms Berry: That is the start of the project, really. That site is going to have more than just a swimming pool. Eventually it is going to be a sort of central sporting hub for that part of the city and for the rest of the city to enjoy. I think one of the other things that is considered as part of that development is what is happening with the ANU, the ideas that they have for uni court and about building a pool there.

Ideally, everybody would like a 50-metre pool, but maybe a 50-metre pool is not the answer in different parts of the city. Maybe it is a 25-metre pool with a play fun park and other bits and pieces added to it that make it more viable and user friendly for that particular part of the community.

MR PARTON: Is there an ETA on this? When can residents expect to actually get their feet in the water?

Ms Priest: 2019.

Mr Dawes: Yes, construction will start either just before or just after the end of this financial year or early into the new financial year.

MR PARTON: Excellent.

MR MILLIGAN: I have a supplementary. \$33 million is a lot of money just on a pool. You mentioned that it will include other facilities. Will it include a gym or will it include an indoor sporting facility, as recommended by the indoor sports facility feasibility study? Will it also possibly include a dive pool?

Ms Priest: There is certainly the need for us to contemplate as part of the design process the opportunity for future expansion of the pool. We will be making sure that whatever the design is, and whenever the design is completed, it does not preclude the opportunity for additional facilities to be added over time, such as a dive facility. They are the fine details that we are working through at the moment. We are not quite at a point where we are able to share that, but we do not expect to be too far off.

Just to give you an indication of the facility, you are dealing with a very different topography for a start at Stromlo as opposed to Gungahlin. The facility that we delivered at Gungahlin was a \$28.9 million facility that many years ago. That was on flat land in Gungahlin.

To give you an idea, the uplift to \$33 million is probably about right; they are sort of comparable. But you do not necessarily get like for like because you have to deal with the topography. You need to deal with the site preparation that is involved in an area like Stromlo as opposed to Gungahlin.

We want to get the best value for money which, firstly, is why we have consulted with the community to understand what they see as priorities in addition to a 50-metre pool. But we know that we are working at this stage to a budget limited to \$33 million. We want to ensure that where there is opportunity for the design to allow, without any excessive additional cost, for the additional facilities, we make provision for that as well.

MR MILLIGAN: The Gungahlin Leisure Centre—correct me if I am wrong—has a 50-metre pool as well as a gym and also facilities for hiring out rooms and whatnot; is that correct?

Ms Priest: Yes, and a splash pool.

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, so it is quite possible that the Stromlo Pool could quite easily accommodate a gym and other indoor sporting activities as well within that same budget, possibly?

Ms Priest: I would be cautious to say that it might be able to deliver lots of indoor facilities, but I am sure there will be a mix of indoor facilities and an element of gym facility within it.

Mr Dawes: We are not trying to evade the question. Obviously what we have done with the community engagement is to look at what their priorities were in doing that. We are in the process of just reviewing what those community comments were and we are looking at how we can then prioritise some of that into this build to finalise the plans. This could be very much what I would consider stage one of a complex that will be built at Stromlo.

MR MILLIGAN: Are the community comments available publicly to see?

Ms Priest: They will be shortly; very shortly.

MR MILLIGAN: They will be?

Mr Dawes: Yes, we plan to put that up on our web as well.

MR MILLIGAN: Okay.

MS CHEYNE: Is there demand for more ACT government pools in the territory and specifically is there any demand in Belconnen or is Belconnen largely serviced by things like CISAC and Lake Ginninderra?

Ms Berry: Belconnen has about six pools in the area or close by. There is CISAC; there is AIS. Is Kaleen still open? There is Kings; there is Big Splash; and there is Dickson just across the road. As a region, as a part of the city, it is quite well serviced by pools.

Ms Priest: We have a very high ratio of pools in Canberra per capita. So we are very careful in terms of our future strategy for aquatic facilities, noting that most people have only got to travel around 10 kilometres to get to a swimming pool.

Mr Dawes: Actually, I think someone was saying—I can get the article for you—that the ACT has more 50-metre pools than any other jurisdiction in the country.

MS CHEYNE: Do we have any materials for people about how to get to swimming facilities? I guess what I mean by that is, is there a way that we create awareness about what pool facilities are available for people so that they know they only have to

travel 10 or fewer kilometres to get there? Are there any resources?

Ms Berry: On our website we have information about all the facilities that we provide. Are you speaking more broadly in terms of all the different aquatic facilities across the city, in terms of privately and publicly owned?

MS CHEYNE: Yes and how to get there. For example, “Here are some public transport routes that you might want to consider,” or things like that?

Ms Priest: No, I do not think we do have that at this stage.

Ms Berry: Although another report from—has Community Services been here, Rachel Stephen-Smith?

MS CHEYNE: Yes.

Ms Berry: Well, I will not tip you off then.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a supplementary on the pool issue. There are fewer pools on the south side than on the north side. I have received quite a number of complaints, essentially, from some of the seniors. There was a pool at Deakin that was originally intended to be a fairly major pool but it was cut down in size due to development.

Ms Berry: Is that Kings pool at Deakin?

MR DOSZPOT: It is the one near the Mint.

Ms Berry: Yes, it is a private pool.

MR DOSZPOT: It is a private pool, but arrangements were made by the previous minister regarding what they could do with the pool. It was lost to community use, let’s put it that way. There were issues on the south side, obviously, with the closure of some pools for a period of maintenance and also the city Olympic Pool. What is the status of that? Is that back in action?

Ms Priest: Yes, the Canberra Olympic Pool is continuing to operate at this stage.

MR DOSZPOT: So it just continues to leak?

Ms Priest: It does and it has from the day that it was built.

Mr Dawes: The day it was built.

Ms Priest: There is ongoing monitoring and efforts are being made to do running repairs where we can, all the time. Over recent years we have substantially reduced the amount of leakage, but it is an old system. It is a little bit like an old human system. When you make repairs to one part of the system, because the system is generally weak and because it is past its useful life, you always run the risk of new leaks popping up from time to time. The best we can do at this stage is to continue to monitor that, and we are. At this stage the water usage has stabilised and we are not

having any additional or excessive leaks going on at the moment, beyond—

MR DOSZPOT: When you say “stabilised,” it is still leaking?

Ms Priest: It is still leaking.

MR DOSZPOT: How is it stabilised?

Mr Dawes: It is not leaking to the extent it was.

Ms Priest: It is not as bad as it was.

MR DOSZPOT: It has fixed itself?

Ms Priest: No, we have—

Mr Dawes: We have actually carried out a number of repairs on the site as well. We still have not got the exact location of some of the leaks. As Ms Priest has mentioned, you fix up one area and it tends to pop up somewhere else because it is a very old facility. But we have cut the leaks back substantially. It would probably be close to 50 per cent to what it was with some of the repairs and maintenance, and that is ongoing.

MR DOSZPOT: Last year there were still a number of discussions going on about the overall opportunities to keep using that pool, especially for the divers who have nowhere else to go, as far as I understand it. Is there any plan to give some clarity to people on the long-term usage of the Olympic Pool or are there other plans for a similar pool to be put in somewhere in Canberra?

Ms Priest: As was mentioned with regard to one of the earlier questions, in the context of the design for the new pool at Stromlo, we are going to be considering the opportunity of making provision in that design for a dive pool.

Ms Berry: All of this has to be very carefully thought out and managed as far as time frames are concerned. The Olympic Pool is quite costly to keep open. It is an old pool, but we know that the Canberra community have affection for it and lots of good memories of it. The dive pool is only open for summer. The diving community, I think, use foam dive pits during the rest of the season when the dive pool is not open. I think there are some other sports that use different facilities as well when the dive pool is not open.

So we have got an old pool at Civic, we have got a new pool about to start construction at Stromlo and we have got an idea being talked about at ANU for another pool as well in the city. Lining all of that up so that we are not closing anything and there is not a gap in people’s ability to participate in their sport is tricky. We are trying to work all of that out. In the meantime, we are doing our very best to keep the pool at Civic open and operating and not costing us too much money. At the worst, 80-something kilolitres a day were lost at that pool and we are now up to around 33. That is when the outdoor pool is closed. We have done some work there and it has made some improvements, but it is old and it is costing more than a newer

pool would cost to maintain and keep going.

Mr Dawes: Just as an add-on to that, Ms Priest and I have been looking at a number of different alternatives. We have been talking to the AIS about how we might be able to work in with them during their non-peak periods. We are looking at a whole lot of different things to try to make sure that we can accommodate the community as much as possible.

MR DOSZPOT: That was my question. Obviously there are specialist pools for clubs like the diving group and so on, but there is a growing number of seniors who also require pools for their usage as well—not their exclusive usage. I would not like to see a lot of people being excluded because of the new pools that are being planned.

Ms Priest: I think that is one of the things that we could potentially have some further conversations about and look to do better. Obviously seniors do not necessarily need to use the pool space during peak demand times, which are in the morning before school and in the afternoons after school when they are there doing swim club, learn to swim and all that sort of thing. It is about getting better programming into the existing facilities. In the middle of the day when you have your quiet times, seniors are encouraged, enticed and, I guess, educated—maybe that comes back to some of the things that you were saying about how well do we promote what pools are available where—to access pools that are available during the day.

MR DOSZPOT: I could not agree more. That is exactly what I am trying to get across. There is a shortage and, if we have not got facilities, it could be thought about a bit more strategically. What you are saying is absolutely spot-on. If we can make people aware of when they can use the pool, like seniors, it would be one good direction to have. We do have a problem with the number of pools and the quality of them.

Ms Priest: I would be more than happy to talk offline with COTA or whoever you think. It would be a good starting point to get into that seniors market more. If there is a demand that is unmet at the moment, it might help us better understand that demand and match them up with available pool space and time.

Ms Berry: Ms Cheyne raised a good point earlier about public transport and the announcement by Transport and City Services around seniors having access to cheaper or free bus travel off peak. So it is about connecting that all up with—

MR DOSZPOT: That just brings us to what Ms Priest just suggested.

Ms Berry: That is right.

MR DOSZPOT: It would be out of the hours that normally would be covered by the concessions. If they were using the pools they would not be eligible till 10 o'clock. It is 10 till four. Putting a time limit on concessions for usage by seniors, I think, has to be reconsidered. That is one of the points that you—

Mr Dawes: Sorry, Mr Doszpot, just to clarify what you were saying there: obviously the peak periods for pools are early in the morning for swimming classes. The

off-peak period, I would have thought, would be between about 10 and four.

MR DOSZPOT: If I understood Ms Priest correctly, regarding early morning usage, it is schools that really take up most of the volume at those times—

Mr Dawes: Early in the morning. That is what we are saying.

MR DOSZPOT: No, schools do not come that early.

Ms Priest: The peak use time at our pools we find are mornings and then afternoons after school. The middle of the day—

Mr Dawes: That 10 till four we were talking about.

Ms Priest: is a quieter time. So it feels like a match made in heaven.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. Let's explore it.

MR MILLIGAN: I have a substantive question. I refer you to page 92 of the second volume of your annual report. In 2015 the other expenses estimate or actual was \$7.8 million. In 2016 the budget estimated only half a million, yet the actual for other expenses for 2016 totalled \$114 million. My question is: why was the original budget so low considering spending for the previous year was \$8 million, yet it has blown out to \$114 million? Can you explain what that covered and what that was for?

Ms Berry: We might take that on notice, because it is also in another book that I am not responsible for. We will take it on notice and get some information back to you.

MR MILLIGAN: Can you explain now what “other expenses” actually cover in this graph?

Ms Berry: It is not Active Canberra; it is not sport and rec; it is Chief Minister.

THE CHAIR: If it is not within this committee, it is going to be hard for the—

Mr Dawes: Yes, I think the simple answer is that we will take it on notice. But you will find that this comes around a lot because of admin changes as well. There are quite a lot of moving parts in that. But we could certainly come back and give that as a break up. You have to look at the fact that the Chief Minister's department was in the order of 100 people; it is now 2,500 people. That gives you an idea of balance of economic development and that coming into it. You have Access Canberra. There is a number of moving parts.

Ms Berry: It is a whole lot of agencies coming into one directorate.

Mr Dawes: That will explain it. If we had had our financial support here, he would have been able to rattle that off for you, but there are many moving parts to that.

THE CHAIR: I have a question around the women and girls in sports policy. How has this informed the policy and programs within the portfolio? What I am trying to

get to is this: what are you doing within sport for women and girls and really highlighting their participation?

Ms Berry: Last year, prior to the election, we had a number of conversations with women and champions in the sporting community as well as young women and girls in school about participation in sport and what were some of the barriers around women and girls' participation in sport but also what we needed to do around addressing the issues of gender equity in our sporting community here in the ACT.

Following on from those conversations, we developed our election commitments last year, which were informed by all of those conversations. We increased the funding to our elite women's teams, the Caps and Canberra United, and committed to four-year funding. What that four-year funding means is that for those two clubs they can go out now and get more sponsorship knowing that they have got funding certainty from the government for a four-year sports program.

For them that is a big deal. It gives them those chances to get more sponsors on board for their sports. In the conversations we were having with the community, also part of that was the fact that young women and girls wanted role models they could look up to to follow their pathways through community sport into more elite levels of sport. So making sure that we put our women's elite teams at the front of that conversation was really important to us in developing our women in sports policy and our election commitments.

We also funded the first part of developing a website portal so that women and girls can connect up with sporting communities and other women, and network. One of the things that emerged when we were talking to the young girls about some of the barriers was that they did not know which sports to connect up to, but they also did not want to do it alone; they wanted to do it with other women at the same time and that the best place for them to do that was on social media or through the internet. That portal will be coming online very soon.

We are also in the next financial year making some commitments around our infrastructure to ensure that our clubs can improve their infrastructure so that it is more female friendly and more inviting for women and girls to play sport. There are some really simple things that can be done to make it better. Part of that will also include a requirement for clubs to have at least 40 per cent women representation on their boards as well. So lots of work is happening over the next couple of years in implementing that policy and there is a continuing conversation with women in the sector about how we improve gender equity.

THE CHAIR: That was my question. Mr Doszpot, did you have a substantive?

MR DOSZPOT: I will defer my substantive to my colleague Mr Milligan in the interests of time.

THE CHAIR: I am going to take this opportunity to excuse myself too and hand over to Mr Doszpot.

MR MILLIGAN: My question is in relation to Boomanulla Oval. It was closed in

2014. What was the cost of the wind-up and what is happening with the sporting oval now?

Ms Berry: The ground is closed at the moment. We are going through a process with Winnunga around developing their expression of interest about what is the future for that facility. It has been a fairly complex but very important process to ensure that in respect of that community facility, which is so important not just as a sporting facility but also as a gathering place and a cultural facility for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, we get the management and the future vision for that site, for Boomanulla Oval, right. The conversations that we have been having with Winnunga, who were the successful bidders for the first part of the expressions of interest for that site, are about what are the possibilities for it. I do not know how we did it; we might have to take that one on notice.

Ms Priest: I am happy to talk to that briefly. The wind-up of the Aboriginal Corporation for Sport and Recreational Activities, or ACSRA as they were known, was not a lightly trodden into process. We embarked with ACSRA and worked with the Elected Body at the time to explore every avenue. We also worked with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, ORIC, to look at whether or not there was a way in which ACSRA could be salvaged. That did not prove to be possible. So ACSRA were then wound up by ORIC. I would have to find out what the exact figure of the wind-up was. I have not got that amount at my fingertips.

As a result of the wind-up, one of the things that happened was that the land, which was held under lease at the time by ACSRA, was surrendered back to the territory. The territory at the moment is the temporary custodian, noting that, as the minister has said, it has a very strong cultural connection with the Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community here and sporting ties to that land.

We kicked off an expression of interest process and invited Indigenous organisations to express an interest and to put forward proposals that might lead into a second stage of the process, which is a tender process. Winnunga were the only successful respondent to the expression of interest process. They have now moved into a select tender. We are working through that process with them at the moment looking to come up with a viable proposition that would see that land returned to competent Indigenous management as soon as possible.

How that looks and what that will be coming out the other end is not yet known. But we are in the midst of that process. We are working very closely with Winnunga and have been keeping the Elected Body informed on the process.

Mr Dawes: During that sort of process as well there was a joint committee established with the Elected Body. The chair of the Elected Body and I were the chairs of that particular group to work through all of these issues and workshop some of the things that we could do. It has been quite a good process. I think we would all like to see it reinstated as quickly as possible. Hopefully, over the course of the next few months as we work with Winnunga we will be able to make some positive announcements.

MR MILLIGAN: I have a supplementary. Do you have an estimate of roughly what

it would cost to repair that oval and get it back up to operating standard? Who is responsible for those costs?

Ms Priest: This is part of the thing or one of the things that we have been charged with by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and particularly through the Elected Body and through the interim advisor group that David mentioned: it is one thing to say, “Let’s have Boomanulla Oval restored and returned to operation as an oval.” It is another thing to say, “What can be done with this site in partnership with the right people, Indigenous led, to ensure that this facility is something special in Canberra for the community and for Canberra?”

It is not simple. It is an opportunity. If we work through it carefully and if we work through it in the systematic way that we have been doing, I think we have a real opportunity to turn that facility into something much more than it potentially has ever been and get it back to sustainable Indigenous management, but also to make it potentially a special place where people that come and visit Canberra could say, “Wow, this is something special!”

MR MILLIGAN: Is it right that you are hoping to come up with some sort of arrangement in the next few months?

Ms Priest: I would say several months might be more like it but, yes, absolutely. We know that Winnunga is working with a number of other interested parties. Before ACSRA was wound up we were successful in securing Indigenous advancement funding that would have otherwise travelled to ACSRA. They were being wound up and we did not want that funding to be lost to the territory. So we made an application. We were supported in our application by Winnunga and by a number of other Indigenous organisations. We were successful in securing that funding, some of which—up to \$50,000—is available to create this new vision for Boomanulla.

So it is very important that in getting it back to where it is going to go there is consultation with the Indigenous community. That is what we are working with Winnunga to get crystallised at the moment. What will the process be? How will that work? What does the concept look like at the end of that for the Indigenous and the local community, obviously, there in Narrabundah?

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Doszpot): Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you. You launched the new Canberra CBR Sports Awards last year. Did you get any feedback about those awards?

Ms Berry: Yes. In fact—

MS CHEYNE: Positive feedback?

Ms Berry: Yes. We got positive feedback from Mr Milligan on the night.

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, you did actually. Yes, it was very good.

Ms Berry: It was one of the best award ceremonies I have been to, I have to say. It

was really well done. Thanks to Active Canberra for putting it all together and for bringing everybody together on that. It was quite a remarkable celebration of sport and the sporting community in the ACT. More than ever, more community clubs—ordinary people in the sporting community in the ACT—were part of the whole sporting award program. But also, sport being sport, we saw the good sport competitiveness that it brought out in everybody. Afterwards they were saying, “This is great. We are going to win it next year. What are we going to do better so that we can actually be the winners next year?” It was really great.

It was not just celebrating our elite sports, which is important as well; we need those as role models in our community. But it was also celebrating all the great work that our community sporting clubs do. Yes, I have not heard anything but positive feedback.

Ms Priest: Agree.

Ms Berry: It was a really great awards ceremony and I cannot wait to do it again.

Ms Priest: Having said that, you always look at ways in which you can improve and do things better. But I think that in all honesty the benchmark has been set pretty high for future years’ events and we are certainly going to work towards making sure that this year is as good, if not better.

MS CHEYNE: Do you have any specific goals for this year?

Ms Priest: Certainly, as good as or better. Honestly, it was a great venue. There was a great mixture, as the minister said, of community through to elite level sport. We were fortunate to be coming off the back of an Olympic year; so we had great people like Patty Mills and Kim Brennan. Patty was not able to make it but certainly his parents were there. We had the Ginninderra Little Athletics Club and the Woden Valley Gymnastics Club. There was a great spread of people and interests. There were a number of sports that came up to me after and a number of people that have been involved in past awards. They shook my hand and said, “That was great. Thank you; we really enjoyed it. We wondered about it but we were really pleasantly surprised.”

Mr Dawes: I think as a result of that it will be a lot easier to look at sponsorship for the following events as well. Sponsors are always looking at value for money. Based on the reports that we have had back and the feedback, I am not saying it will guarantee our getting sponsorship dollars but it does make it a lot easier.

Ms Berry: It has put us in a good place.

MS CHEYNE: How many staff were involved in the organisation of the awards?

Ms Priest: A few staff from my team and we also had Earlybird Events, whom we got on board last year. They were actually involved in delivering the Hall of Fame the previous year. When ACTSPORT wound up their operations, part of the commitment of the ACT government was a commitment to deliver the Hall of Fame event that they had started. We did that. We got Earlybird Events on board to help us to do that. Because of their past experience, time frames and what have you, we also used them

in undertaking some consultation with people that had been involved in past awards with a view to looking at how we were going to design and pull together a new awards event.

So it was picking up on and taking forward the legacies that ACTSPORT had put in place through Hall of Fame and sports star but certainly looking to refresh and have a new branded gala sports awards event, which is what we have done while maintaining the Hall of Fame within that.

ACTING CHAIR: I have a supplementary on that.

Ms Priest: Sure.

ACTING CHAIR: What is the cost involved in having an outside agency deliver those two events that you have just mentioned?

Ms Priest: Yes, there was cost; sorry, what was the cost involved?

ACTING CHAIR: What was the cost?

Ms Priest: Yes, sure. The cost involved in paying Earlybird was \$58,660. We obviously had a number of set-up costs, including setting up a new website and all of the collateral that went around the rebranding that we will not have as additional on-costs going forward. One of the things I was getting to was that we had engaged Earlybird as the one-off deliverer of the first event. We will be going out to tender for the second and subsequent.

I think we are going out for about a three-year period looking, again, to get best value for money but building on the collateral that we have now already got. As David mentioned, we are going out with what we believe to be a much stronger position in securing ongoing sponsorship that will offset those costs.

MR PARTON: I will only ask this if it gets a quick response; if it is in the slow cooker and is ready to come out. Beach volleyball: last year's annual report makes no mention anywhere of the beach volleyball project or its impending completion, or if it did I could not find it. Where is that at?

Ms Kelley: The beach volleyball is complete and has been opened since November 2015.

MR PARTON: There it is.

ACTING CHAIR: Sorry; supplementary. When was it opened?

Ms Kelley: It was completed in November 2015.

MR DOSZPOT: Was there a public opening of it?

Ms Priest: There was an opening. I am told that you were invited but were unable to attend.

ACTING CHAIR: I would have gone if I had been available I can assure you but I do not recall getting an invitation to it. There was an official opening, was there?

Ms Priest: Yes, there was.

ACTING CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Parton. This is your question but I have another supplementary. What was the final cost, because there is no mention of the cost here?

Ms Kelley: The final cost—the full value of the project was \$1,035,380. Of that the territory contributed \$814,000 and that was coupled with Volleyball ACT's contribution of \$221,364. It did come in under in terms of what was the anticipated territory contribution, which was initially projected at upwards of \$900,000.

ACTING CHAIR: \$750,000 was the last one I recall.

Ms Priest: \$750,000 in terms of government contribution? The final was 814 but I believe we did brief on that throughout the course of the project.

Ms Berry: Anyway, it has been very successful. Lots of people are using it not just for volleyball but also for beach touch football as well. It has been well utilised.

ACTING CHAIR: Mr Milligan, you have got a quick question.

MR MILLIGAN: It will take one minute. It is in relation to staffing in your own department and the government's own target of two per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. Is this department hitting that target? What is the percentage that is actually employed within your department? What levels are they employed at?

Ms Berry: That two per cent applies across Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development.

Mr Dawes: We can give you a break-up if you want.

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, that would be great.

Mr Dawes: We have all of that there as well. We have got it broken up into not only the whole Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate but also for the different divisions within it. So we can give you that break-up.

MR MILLIGAN: Fantastic. I think that was less than a minute.

ACTING CHAIR: That concludes the committee's proceedings for today. On behalf of the committee, thank you for attending. Before we adjourn, I remind members that supplementary questions should be lodged with the committee support office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. Responses taken on notice should be submitted to the committee office, again, within five days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. Responses to supplementary

questions should be submitted to the committee five days after the questions are received. The committee's hearings today adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 5.29 pm.