



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2017-2018

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2017-2018 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2017-2018](#))

Members:

MR A WALL (Chair)
MS B CODY (Deputy Chair)
MR A COE
MS C LE COUTEUR
MR M PETTERSSON

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 22 JUNE 2017

Secretary to the committee:
Mrs N Kosseck (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

Community Services Directorate.....	358, 425, 435
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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.31 am.

Appearances:

Stephen-Smith, Ms Rachel, Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations

Community Services Directorate

De'Ath, Mr Michael, Director-General

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Deputy Director-General

Dunne, Ms Ellen, Director, Office for Disability

Starick, Ms Kate, Acting Executive Director, Strategy, Participation and Early Intervention

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Senior Director, Finance and Budget, Corporate Services

Gibson, Ms Sally, Director, Quality, Complaints and Regulation

Jordaan, Ms Elise, Senior Manager, Child Development Service

Collis, Dr Mark, Executive Director, Child and Youth Protection Services

Pappas, Ms Helen, Senior Director, Child and Youth Protection Services

Khan, Ms Azra, Acting Director, Community Participation Group

Forester, Ms Robyn, Director, Officer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

THE CHAIR: Good morning everyone; welcome to day five of estimates. This morning the committee will be examining expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Community Services Directorate and Housing ACT which relate to budget statements G.

As you are aware, the proceedings are being recorded and then transcribed by Hansard. If you take a question on notice, please clearly state, "I will take that question on notice." Everyone has had a chance, I hope, to look at the pink privilege statement in front of them, and I trust that you are aware of the implications. Minister, before we go to questions, I will offer you the opportunity to make an opening statement.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thank you very much, chair. I acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement across my portfolio, supported by the Community Services Directorate.

This budget, along with announcements we have made since the election, delivers on all of Labor's election commitments across the community services, disability, children and youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs and multicultural affairs portfolios.

Of course, this week is Refugee Week, and we have seen some great examples of Canberra's welcoming approach. Today we are hosting a forum to discuss how we can do more to give practical effect to our commitment as a refugee welcome zone. As part of this, in the budget we delivered on our commitment to invest \$1.4 million

over four years to deliver employment support and better access to English language programs for refugees and other recent arrivals. This means a dedicated job broker will be employed to engage directly with multicultural communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, as well as with employers, to ensure people can find jobs that utilise their skills and qualifications.

In the disability portfolio, we recognise the need to keep supporting the implementation of the NDIS as we transition to the new scheme, with an additional \$2.2 million for the office for disability. The ACT is, of course, the first jurisdiction to see all eligible participants transition to the NDIS, and I need to acknowledge the incredible job Disability ACT has done in managing this transition. Disability ACT will formally cease to exist at the end of this month, and it is appropriate that I pay tribute to all the staff who have managed this complex transition process so remarkably well.

I would particularly like to acknowledge Maureen Sheehan's contribution. Those of you who have been in the Assembly for some time will no doubt know Maureen, given her 17 years of service as a senior ACT public servant, first in the health portfolio and then in various positions in CSD and its predecessors. Maureen's work to establish the ACT as a trial site for the NDIS has been widely recognised. She negotiated the phased intake of more than 5,000 people to the NDIS, led a multidisciplinary task force to oversee the implementation of the scheme and negotiated with the commonwealth on behalf of the ACT over many years.

Yesterday the director-general advised CSD staff that Maureen has decided she will not return to CSD after her current period of long service leave. I therefore want to put on record our enormous appreciation of everything Maureen has contributed, and my personal thanks for the support she gave me in settling into the portfolio and trying to get across the complexity of the NDIS.

The office for disability still has a big job to do. In addition to managing the ongoing NDIS transition, the office for disability will continue to promote social inclusion and participation, including through the Involve campaign, which is the ACT's response to the national disability strategy. They will also manage an additional \$50,000 a year in grants for community organisations to enable them to become more inclusive of people with a disability, and they will oversee CSD's role in developing the disability justice strategy, which is a joint project with the justice and community safety portfolio.

We have also recognised the need to support the community that supports people with disabilities and other vulnerable people in the community. The budget includes \$70,000 for SHOUT to ensure that it has a secure funding base for 2017-18 as it works to establish a sustainable model for the future, and we have committed \$250,000 to the development and initial implementation of an ACT carers strategy. There is \$200,000 reflected in the budget, and an additional \$50,000 that has already been invested with Carers ACT and Democracy Co to undertake consultation with carers, those they care for and the wider community about what the carers strategy should include.

In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs portfolio, I was pleased to deliver

on a former minister's commitment to a program to provide seed funding grants to new and emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled organisations, totalling \$100,000 over four years. This program aligns with the government's commitment under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement to stimulate interest in developing culturally appropriate services and options, led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

I am keen to ensure that this funding complements and builds on broader supports for new organisations and businesses. I know well from my background in innovation policy that new organisations are more likely to succeed if they are embedded in an ecosystem of support and have a clear pathway to sustainability.

Of course, the major financial investment in this budget across my portfolios is the additional \$43.8 million for child protection and out-of-home care. This comprises \$10.1 million for two new casework teams in the directorate and an additional \$33.7 million in support of the ongoing implementation of the five-year out-of-home care strategy A step up for our kids. I was very pleased to be able to announce this alongside a representative of Barnardos, which leads the ACT Together consortium that is delivering a continuum of care to children and young people in out-of-home care that represents a new, nation-leading model of support.

This is not a comprehensive list of our budget measures, but of course we are happy to take questions, starting, I understand, with the disability portfolio.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I will kick off with a question. As the transition has progressed, there have obviously been a few expectation issues between families or individuals that have transitioned across to the NDIA and the types of supports and the services that are being made available to them as part of their package. I am aware of a few families who have taken the federal agency to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to try to get a resolution, and others that are continually fighting to have packages either reassessed or revisited and renegotiated. What role does Disability ACT or your department have in advocating for a better and fairer outcome for individuals where there seems to be a genuine gap, particularly in services that they were receiving prior to the transition compared to post?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The first thing to say is to acknowledge that there are a lot of people who have had a good experience with NDIS and are getting access to more services than they were previously. I think we need to acknowledge that, because often we hear the stories of people who have had difficulty with the pathway and with their plans, and those are concerning.

There are a few pathways for us to support and advocate for those people. Individually, when we hear about cases, or people write to us, we provide them with information about the services that are available through NDIA and through ADACAS to seek reviews of their processes. We have advocated individually—I know the directorate has advocated individually—to NDIA on behalf of some participants who have had particular difficulties in negotiating the NDIS processes. At a systemic level, of course, I am a member of the Disability Reform Council, the ministerial commonwealth-state council, and raise these issues both in that forum and directly with Minister Porter and Minister Prentice at the federal level, on the

systemic issues.

It is fair to say that there have been significant issues raised about the participant pathway in NDIS—the participant experience in initial plans. We are trying to avoid the use of “first” plan because it means both a specific process and the first plan that people have as an NDIS participant.

From the national implementation to transition to full rollout from 1 July last year, there were some changes in the way the NDIA did business. Those have significantly affected some people in the ACT, who were getting their initial plan and who had undertaken significant pre-planning and were then met with a process that did not meet their expectations—with the first plan process, more of a benchmark sort of model where people’s individual needs and expectations were not necessarily being taken into account in the way they would have previously expected during the trials. There were also people who received reviews of their plans in a way that was unexpected, in the sense that they would receive a phone call and they did not even realise that that was a review. That is some of the feedback that we have had; then they would get a new plan and be surprised at that new plan and then have to seek another review.

One of the issues in that whole process has been that every time there needs to be a change to a participant’s plan, the current process is that that triggers an entire plan review, which is a very time consuming process. So there is no current capacity to just change one element of a participant’s plan.

Those issues have been recognised by the Disability Reform Council and now by the new NDIA board. They have been doing significant work around improving the participant pathway. We had a report on that at the Disability Reform Council last week. They have also recognised, though, that rolling out changes cannot be done overnight. That is how some of these issues were created. They have a significant program of reform around both participant and provider pathways that they will be rolling out. That will replace the first plan process that they have acknowledged was somewhat flawed in its implementation, in an effort to speed up the transition of people into the scheme.

I will hand over to Ellen Dunne, to speak specifically about how ACT officials can support or have been supporting people.

Ms Dunne: Thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you this morning. Following on from what the minister said, the senior officers working group was established to support the DRC. It comprises officials from all jurisdictions as well as DSS and the national disability agency. There are a number of working groups that have been established within that governance framework. Planning is one of the policy issues that the working group has been established to oversee.

It has been overtaken by the NDIA’s review of the pathway for participants and providers, and significant work has been done in a very short time. A number of recommendations have come forward out of that review. The senior officers working group will be looking at the action plan that the agency will put forward in order to make some changes to enhance the experience of providers and participants, and work

through what the implementation issues are around all of that. We will have an opportunity to influence that work. There are other governance arrangements in place at the local level. We have an operational working group with the local area regional manager; and operational matters are often discussed in those meetings—thereby monthly. Sitting below that particular group are a number of portfolio working groups. Usually, they will engage with directorates who have operational issues that need working through.

The thing for us to be able to continue to do is to advocate on behalf of the community and the participants in the ACT who are experiencing these problems. Having said that, though, there has been a significant amount of advice received from the agency, from the board members and chair of the agency board to explain what changes are going to be considered. The Productivity Commission review and its position paper, which was released on 14 June, have also highlighted a number of areas of reform. The agency is working very closely with the Productivity Commission as well to see what needs to be done.

Mr De'Ath: I acknowledge the privilege statement. I would like to add an overarching statement to what both the minister and Ellen Dunne have provided. It is important to note that Minister Stephen-Smith has given me, as director-general, very clear direction on the ongoing role of the territory government and the directorate in relation to support, advocacy and oversight for all those people who are either affected or are supporting people with a disability. That is why we have established the office for disability and staffed it with the appropriate skills to ensure that these ongoing roles and functions are carried out; in particular, the high level, ongoing nature of negotiations and discussions with the commonwealth at quite a high level of policy. So that is firmly established within the directorate.

MS CODY: You just mentioned, Mr De'Ath, about the office being established to ensure that you have a good understanding of what is happening during rollout. Do you see continued involvement after full implementation for the ACT government and for the office?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, absolutely. That is why we have made the additional commitment in this budget to ensure that we can continue that NDIS implementation support with territory officials. It is important to remember that, although the commonwealth has responsibility for the NDIA operationally, the ACT government and other state and territory governments currently contribute almost 60 per cent of the funding for the NDIS. In the longer term we will still contribute about half the funding for the NDIS. It is important that we have an ongoing oversight role, and we are certainly committed to seeing that continue.

Mr De'Ath: I endorse the minister's comment. There is no doubt that on such a massive reform, holding an idealistic view that at 2019, at full implementation, the territory is done and dusted in this space is just not right. There is an ongoing role, and it is very clear that there is an ongoing role. We will continue to carry out the range of functions to support government as we navigate forward beyond 2019.

MS CODY: And obviously the users of the NDIS as well.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. It is also an important point to say that the users of the NDIS, the participants in the NDIS, are also users of a whole bunch of other ACT government-supported services. One of the important roles we have is looking at the intersection and the interface between NDIS and mainstream services. That has been something that the Productivity Commission identified in their position paper as a challenge in the system, that is, some of those interfaces are not as good as they could be. There are claims of cost shifting in both directions. Certainly something we highlighted in the ACT government's submission to the Productivity Commission was the intersection between the health system and NDIS and the fact that those relationships and pathways need to be improved.

Mr De'Ath: It is really important that it is something we monitor. It is important that we do not do the commonwealth's work for them given their new role in this space. However, during the time of transition it is clear that we need to collaborate extensively to ensure that Canberrans get the right outcomes.

MS LEE: Minister, with the transition, a number of local organisations that have been providing services for a long time in Canberra do not fall within the ambit of receiving NDIS funding for whatever reason. I acknowledge that you have done some work with the groups in that regard, but what assurances can you give the Canberra community, especially Canberrans who are reliant upon those services, that they will not fall through the cracks?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I was just trying to find the letter that I wrote to you recently, Ms Lee, about some of those services in particular. We are all aware that during the transition to information linkages and capacity building there were organisations that have been funded in the transition. We are talking about SHOUT and Pegasus and TADACT and Radio 1RPH and a bunch of other organisations that had been funded to provide information linkages and capacity building-type services during the transition period before that stream of NDIS funding was established in 2016-17. That transition funding came from the commonwealth as Disability ACT had cashed out.

Some of those organisations were successful in applying for ILC funding. Indeed, we should acknowledge that the ILC funding round that was recently announced delivered \$2.9 million in support to the ACT compared to the \$1.3 million that was delivered during the year of transition. It is a significant increase in support in that part of the disability space.

But there were some organisations that were supported during the transition that were not successful in receiving ILC funding in this round. Those included SHOUT, Pegasus, Radio 1RPH and TADACT. We are continuing to work with all of those organisations, both to strengthen their capacity to apply for the next round of ILC funding, which we understand will open in October, and also to identify other pathways to a sustainable future.

SHOUT, for example, got some specific funding in this budget to ensure that its core activities continue through 2017-18 while it works on a model for a sustainable future. It was not an unsuccessful ILC grant applicant; it also received \$123,000 under ILC to do some work on a virtual portal for its organisations to connect in a virtual space.

Both Pegasus and TADACT are part of the national riding for the disabled and technical aid to the disabled organisations. In both of those cases there has been recognition over a period of time that those models did not necessarily suit the individualised funding arrangements of NDIS or were going to have difficulty transitioning to the NDIS for a variety of reasons. Work has been going on—I will pass on to Ellen to talk a bit more about that—about how those organisations are going to be treated nationally.

I have written to Minister Porter at least once and possibly twice encouraging that that national policy work to be expedited so we can try to secure a sustainable future for those types of organisations. In the shorter term we initially secured an additional two months of funding for the ILC transition organisations to take them through the period until the latest grants round was announced. The unsuccessful organisations have now received an additional six months of funding to take them through to the end of February. Again, I pay tribute to the ACT officials who negotiated that with the commonwealth to see those organisations funded through to the end of February 2018 to enable them to get ready and apply for ILC in this next grants round.

MS LEE: A body like ADD Support Group, for example, that does not fall into the same category as Pegasus and TADACT and 1RPH and SHOUT. Have you got anything to reassure groups like that about their future?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I do have some information, but I will pass over to Ellen because she probably has more detail.

Ms Dunne: We have been working with the NDIA to ensure that there is a very clear strategy around these organisations so that the opportunity for them to continue to provide necessary supports to people within the community is considered. I think we have done quite well. If we go back to the trial period, say, in 2015 a huge body of work was done in relation to ILC and what that means in this space. That work did not continue last year. There has been a lot of change in personnel, in people, across the agency as well as here. When the results of that grant round were announced, we had a look at that work, and we realised that there was some opportunity to reinvigorate that and put that forward to the agency to ask whether there was an opportunity for us to work together to see whether we could put something in place that would better support organisations such as those you mentioned.

It is interesting to note that the Productivity Commission has a recommendation in its position paper that more funding should be provided to these organisations. We will continue to work with the NDIA to make sure we support all organisations that decide to put in another grant application in October and that the outcome of those grants is very carefully considered. We are working in partnership with the agency to make sure this particular tier of support within our jurisdiction and then nationally is properly thought out.

MS LEE: In terms of ADD, for example, my understanding is that they are going for ILC funding; they are not within that ambit. Do you have anything to add in relation to that specific body?

Ms Dunne: Yes. We will engage with them—I think we have engaged with most of

the organisations now—and we have offered support for the organisation—

MS LEE: Support by way of funding?

Ms Dunne: Yes. We will be able to provide a small grant through the sector development funding to enable them to decide in conjunction with their board what their future is going to look like. The board needs to make a decision about their future: whether they merge, amalgamate or wrap up. We will provide financial assistance and other support to help them achieve that with their boards.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, you were talking about things where it was not clear whether the NDIS was doing the transition. One in particular is school transport for children with a disability. This is budget paper 3, page 121. It says that you are going to continue transport until it is fully funded in anticipation of the handover of this program to the NDIS scheme. But you are continuing all four years of funding. In fact, the funding goes up every year. I am not anti the funding, but my question is: what is happening to this? Will it be transitioned, because it does not look that way when you are funding it up to 2021? My understanding is that it has been a vexed situation with Transport Canberra and Education in the past.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think it is fair to say it is a vexed situation with transport overall, but Ellen has the details.

Ms Dunne: It certainly is. The NDIA have a strategy of making sure that the market is ready to take on all types of supports and services and generally in approaching complex areas such as special needs transport, as we call it, having a national approach to implement that as a cashed-out service. In reality what is happening is that we are providing that support as an in-kind service. That is why it appears as it does. There is a plan to formulate a national structure to enable the NDIA to take responsibility for transport nationally, and it is anticipated that it will be cashed out by January 2020.

MS LE COUTEUR: So, in effect, the ACT government is being a service provider to the NDIS?

Ms Dunne: It is continuing to make its contribution in kind; it is continuing to provide that service within the ACT. The arrangements under the national disability insurance scheme—and the agency's view and DSS's view—are that those in-kind supports should be cashed out and should be part of the cash contribution by the year of full scheme which is 2019-20.

MS LE COUTEUR: And at that point of time some new organisation will—

Ms Dunne: That is the complexity about it. Each jurisdiction has different eligibility rules and criteria. The ACT contract needs to be renewed and needs to be in place to be able to provide those services until it is actually cashed out. The cashing-out situation is under negotiation at the senior level. There are a lot of complexities, and there is a lot in the media, especially in Victoria, about whether it should, in fact, be part of the NDIS or not because of its complexity. We will continue to provide that service until there is a national decision about moving it into the NDIS as a cashed-out

component.

Ms Stephen-Smith: One of those complexities—correct me if I am wrong, Ellen—is around the provision of support of transport under an NDIS model as an individualised activity where individual plans will have to support that. At the moment I would expect that some people using that service would be NDIS eligible and some may not be, and there are always going to be those boundary areas. It is potentially a service that is more efficiently provided as a service available to people who need it as opposed to relying on individualised funding. That is some of the complexity we deal with in this space.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the organisations that are currently dependent on or wholly beholden to receiving the ILC grants from the commonwealth and going beyond, what role do you see the ACT playing in supporting those organisations from our own revenue sources as opposed to saying to them, “Commonwealth funding is your only option”? TADACT is a classic example where the scope of the community they are servicing is far beyond simply those with a disability and those eligible for the NDIS.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Actually, one of the groups TADACT is servicing, and quite significantly, is people over the age of 65 who also are the responsibility of the commonwealth in terms of aged-care support. TADACT was successful in applying for federal funding. I cannot remember the name of the program, but they actually have quite a significant amount of federal funding for the next year to provide services under that program. I was really pleased to see that they were pursuing that option. That includes being able to hire a therapist who will then be able to do assessments for people of the types of equipment and assisted technology they need.

THE CHAIR: Specifically, though, going forward, what role do you see the ACT government playing in supporting these organisations?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think that will depend on the individual circumstances of the organisations. One of the things I have said about SHOUT, for example, is that we need to recognise that it is not just a disability support organisation. Neither is it just an organisation that supports people with chronic illness and their peer support networks. As ACTCOSS has described it, it is social infrastructure, if you like. We probably have to look at whether it is appropriate for the ACT government to support that kind of service, whether it is the current SHOUT model or another model. That is the work we are doing over the next six months. With other areas where we have clearly cashed out a disability service to NDIS and it is clearly a disability service, it is, as the Chief Minister said, frustrating if there is then an expectation that we will continue to fund that service.

The work that we are doing at the moment with those organisations is about trying to work out how they can effectively transition to the NDIS or to a source of funding through the aged-care system if, in fact, the people that they are supporting are largely older people, or whether there is another stream of ACT funding that would be more appropriate to support those services. That work is still ongoing.

As the Chief Minister said, it is frustrating to have made this transition to the NDIS with tripartisan support and then have an expectation that, with anything that

does not successfully transition to the NDIS, we knew it was going to create a new marketplace, and, in the marketplace, some things will continue and other things will not. That is part of giving people choice and control. With the expectation that we would pick up and fund everything that does not continue, if it does not continue as a result of the transition to the NDIS marketplace, we are not going to be able to meet that expectation. At the same time we are going to take every situation on its merits and consider whether there is a case for the ACT government to provide some kind of ongoing support or support that organisation to transition to another existing funding source.

THE CHAIR: Is there a guarantee under the funding agreements between the territory and the commonwealth that a certain amount of money will be made available specifically for the territory in grant funding for ILC grants?

Ms Stephen-Smith: There was an expectation for this first round. We knew that it was going to be up to \$3 million. I will pass over to Ellen for further information.

Ms Dunne: I do not have any further information about that, I am afraid.

THE CHAIR: Are you happy to take that on notice?

Ms Dunne: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Just for my benefit, I have not been able to find, with my quick look through this section of the budget papers, what the territory contribution is to the NDIA for this financial year and the outyears.

Ms Dunne: Yes, certainly.

THE CHAIR: I am happy if that is pointed to on notice.

Ms Dunne: I have those figures here.

THE CHAIR: Okay, go for it.

Ms Dunne: In 2017-18—it is on page 5. If you refer to page 5, it gives you the numbers.

MS LE COUTEUR: Page 5 of what document?

Ms Dunne: Budget statements G. On page 5 there are the participant numbers that were agreed between the ACT and the commonwealth. It does not specifically say what the contribution amount is, but I do have the contribution amount for you. In 2017-18 it is \$130 million, and that will increase in 2019-20 to \$167 million. The increase in participant numbers from 5,075 in 2016-17 to 5,126 in 2017-18 and 5,177 in 2018-19 is a growth factor that has been agreed.

THE CHAIR: What happens should the territory exceed that growth factor?

Ms Dunne: At the moment nothing is happening, actually, because we have still got

that agreement in place. But we are in discussions with the commonwealth around the numbers. The numbers have exceeded and we are working together to have a look at the implications of that.

MS CODY: Minister, I turn to output class 2.4, office for disability. I noted on page 12 of budget statements G that you talked about establishing the community organisations access grant program. Can you give me a little bit more information on that?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The community organisations access grant program is about providing support for community organisations for things like training, leadership support and small-scale infrastructure improvements to enable them to better include people with disability in their activities. We see some really great examples of that around the community. One of the things that will be really important in implementing this program is understanding what exists both in our current disability grants program and, even more so, in other portfolios around inclusion grants. I know the sport and rec portfolio, for example, already has some inclusion grants in existence. In terms of designing this, we want to make sure that it complements the existing activities and really grows the capacity of the community sector to include and engage people with disability. Ellen, do you want to build on that at all?

Ms Dunne: We are going to start scoping this very soon. We will use the disability reference group to help us with that. Ideally, we would like to provide small grants to groups and organisations, just to make sure that people with disability in Canberra have an opportunity to participate and experience full inclusion, just like everyone else. We have not actually mapped it out yet, but we will be working on that very soon.

MS CODY: When you say you will be mapping that out shortly and working on what direction that takes, will that be with officials, with people with disability? Do you have a group in mind?

Ms Dunne: We will engage with the community. The disability reference group helps us and advises government on these matters, so their input will be very valuable. We will consult broadly and we will make sure that, with the money that we have available to allocate, we will get the best possible use and outcome.

MS CODY: Obviously, we have these grants, and the minister just spoke about the fact that there are already inclusion programs happening. Are there things in particular that we as a government and you as a department, as an office, have in mind regarding what sorts of things you will be talking with the community about or is it really an open discussion?

Ms Dunne: I would like to see it as an open discussion. We want to enable easier access. If there are some infrastructure changes for people with disabilities, perhaps in wheelchairs, to be able to access groups or venues, we will be looking at supporting that. Also, in terms of education and training or awareness provision, we will have a look at whether there are some programs that will assist in that respect. It is really about organising information to allow people with disability to understand that there are certain groups and organisations that they may be able to access to their benefit

and enjoyment. We will work with those groups and organisations as well as individuals to see whether we can come up with a really effective plan to get the best possible outcome.

MS CODY: Those sorts of things, as you said, are access and education?

Ms Dunne: Access, training, education and infrastructure changes.

MS CODY: I was privileged to go to the Woden Valley Soccer Club on the weekend. With a grant that they received, they have done a whole bunch of access for people with disability and made the sports clubhouse more accessible. So they are some of the—

Ms Dunne: They are the kinds of things, yes. It is important that people in wheelchairs can get to places and participate in events. Those modifications are probably one of the biggest things that we would like to focus on; likewise awareness training and letting people know what is available. And encouraging people to participate in various functions and groups is really important.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Certainly, some of the feedback I have had from community organisations is a lack of confidence about what they need to do to support people with disability to participate. So that training and leadership development support is a really important part of it as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: One of your priorities on page 1 is to “establish the position of the ACT senior practitioner to provide oversight of the use of restrictive practices and to work towards reducing and eliminating their use in the disability services sector including under the NDIS”. Does the directorate collect data on the use of force and restrictive practices currently? I understand that Bimberi and ACT mental health services would have some information in terms of their spheres. Do you collect overall information and where do you get your information from, in order to oversight?

Ms Gibson: Thank you for your question. The short answer is that we do not currently collect information on the use of restrictive practices. Disability ACT, when they provided services, did keep records of the use of restrictive practices in those services, but we are not aware of the extent of the use of restrictive practices otherwise. From the figures that came through Disability ACT, there is clearly a need for some oversight of the use of restrictive practices.

The national disability insurance scheme, in its quality and safeguards framework, has a role for a senior practitioner nationally. That senior practitioner will work with senior practitioners in the states and territories who will have an authorising role. In saying that they will have an authorising role for the use of restrictive practices, that would be within the framework of working towards the reduction and elimination of the use of those practices. Any authorisation will be on the basis of a plan that looks at each individual, their circumstances and how they can be supported to change their behaviour so that the restrictive practice is not required. A big part of the role of the senior practitioner will be to educate service providers, families and carers.

MS LE COUTEUR: At present you have no oversight or no knowledge of it. I was going to ask you how you thought you were going to be able to do it, from the point of view of service provision, given that the commonwealth is the primary player, but it seems that the question is even bigger than that. How is anybody going to have oversight?

Ms Gibson: The service providers will be required to notify any use of restrictive practices.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do they notify anyone in the ACT?

Ms Gibson: Not currently.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said you did not have any numbers, so are you saying that that means that there are no restrictive practices happening in the ACT, which seems highly unlikely?

Ms Gibson: No. We know there are restrictive practices.

MS LE COUTEUR: So what is happening? Is it happening and you are not being notified?

Ms Gibson: In my role as the human services registrar regulating quality and safeguards for disability service providers in the ACT, currently, through the transition to NDIS, organisations are required to notify us of critical incidents. We do get notified about some uses of restrictive practices through that process. It is more where providers feel there is an inappropriate use of a restrictive practice by somebody else or they have been asked to do something they feel is an inappropriate use. As I said, we know from the figures from Disability ACT, which only ceased to provide services and transitioned the last of its properties at the end of last year, that there is a significant group of people where the use of restrictive practices exists. So this is about—

MS LE COUTEUR: That is the question: the ACT has transitioned out of direct service provision, so how are we having the oversight? This is only for disability. Clearly, we know that restrictive practices happen in aged care—and, arguably, in our education system. You could describe the cage situation. Without going into all of this, we all know that it is not just in disability. Why do we only have this oversight role for disability? Why is it not there for the broader parts of the ACT where we are aware it is happening?

Ms Gibson: The proposal in the budget which was successful, for establishing an office of senior practitioner in the ACT, came about as a result of an inter-directorate working group which includes Education, Justice and Community Safety, Health and the Community Services Directorate, to look at how we can address this issue across the board. But to begin with, the key area to get it established is in disability. For children in schools, for example, with that instance you gave, it is quite likely that that person is a person with a disability. So they would have a plan that would go with them into school, if there were to be a need for a use of restrictive practice, potentially. A senior practitioner will be resourced initially for discussions with other directorates

about how they manage restrictive practices. Aged care is another issue because the commonwealth regulates aged care.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, but there is an awful lot of it, and I am a personal observer—

Ms Gibson: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: as I imagine many of us have been, of restrictive practices there.

Ms Gibson: Yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I asked the same question myself around aged care just recently. Unfortunately, we do not have a role in oversight of that in the ACT government. We do not provide aged-care services, so we do not have a role in terms of government-provided aged care either.

MS LEE: I have a question but it is in relation to therapy. Would that be a good way to transition? I understand that comes under output class 2.2.

THE CHAIR: We will go down the line. Mr Coe?

MR COE: I am happy to defer to Ms Lee.

MS LEE: Thank you. This is a question about Therapy ACT. I understand that the ACT has to establish a child development service with Therapy ACT because there has been a gap in the NDIS. I acknowledge your comments earlier, minister, about some services not transitioning. Is this a long-term thing or is the ACT in a position where it is thinking, “Hold on, we will eventually convince the commonwealth to take it on”? Is it the case that you acknowledge it is actually not going to continue under the NDIS and so ongoing long-term funding needs to be available for that service?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, there are some transition arrangements, because the ACT also has not had up until this point the early childhood, early intervention element of the NDIS, which is now being established. ECEI is the provider for that, but I will hand over to Ellen and Kate to talk about the child development service.

Ms Dunne: Thank you, minister. From my perspective, the child development service was not as a result of a gap in the NDIS. It was established to continue a continuation of support to mainstream services, and that will continue on. I would like to hand over to my colleague Elise who manages that particular service.

Ms Jordaan: Thank you for that question. The child development service was actually established through the transition of Therapy ACT. The ACT government identified that the assessment of children, which was occurring through the education directorate, the Health Directorate and the Community Services Directorate was quite a disparate service. It looked at actually integrating the service for families.

That was one of the primary objectives of establishing the ACT child development service, to provide that really early identification of children in the age of nought to

six and to provide a very integrated service. You may be aware that we are located out at the Holder centre. We also have community paediatricians and child health and medical officers that are collocated with us.

This service has an integrated intake service. Through that intake service, we provide a comprehensive assessment of a child's needs in order to determine which is the best pathway to put a child on to so that services are integrated for them. These assessments are provided by the multi-disciplinary team which includes medical officers, if that is required. Families then receive that very integrated service very early on. As the minister has just mentioned, the new early childhood early intervention partner will then complement that service in terms of children moving from that service, once their needs are identified, to meet that threshold for supports through the NDIA.

It is a really integrated service. You may be aware that ECEI—the early childhood early intervention partners—are collocated at Holder; so really it is a hub for families to be able to access services for their child and to identify what that need is. It is a quite comprehensive service provision for families in the ACT.

MS CODY: What did you call this new service?

Ms Jordaan: We are the ACT child development service. The collocated service is the early childhood early intervention service partner for the NDIA is collocated at Holder with the ACT child development service.

MS CODY: Is Therapy ACT transitioning into that? Did I misunderstand?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It has already.

Ms Jordaan: Therapy ACT has transitioned and closed and that provided a whole range of services, as you are aware, but this—

MS CODY: I am. My son accessed them regularly; so very aware of the services of Therapy ACT.

Ms Jordaan: As I mentioned before to Ms Lee, the child development service is actually in that space of early identification of children at risk of a delay—nought to six—with that comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach, which includes health and education. That is a collocation, an integration of services to identify children at risk and to enable and to support families to get that information and that service and also to support that referral into the early childhood early intervention partner. The collocation will make it really physically much easier as well.

MS CODY: Excuse my ignorance because a lot has changed since my children were young. So that would then mean that parents who end up with their child having a diagnosis, an early diagnosis, of a longer-term disability could then follow the pathway in through to the NDIS? Is that where this is sort of positioned?

Ms Jordaan: Yes, we have universal access. The child development service actually works through the child and family centres as well across Canberra. We work very

closely with Health. Can I give you an example?

MS CODY: Please.

Ms Jordaan: If a child was born in a Canberra hospital and was diagnosed with Down syndrome, that child would immediately be referred to the NDIA, the early childhood partner, as we currently understand that. In terms of that assessment, if any assessment was required for that child, the early childhood early intervention partner will support the family. That child clearly meets eligibility for the NDIA and the new partner will work with that family to access them. It is children that are at high risk.

I can give you another case example. Say, for example, that a child is born extremely prematurely in the Canberra Hospital. That team will then work with that family. When that baby is transferred home, that is when the child development service will come in, because the child does not have an identified developmental delay. The child is at risk.

The evidence tells us that for children born extremely premature, there are two major risks for them. One is that the parent has a 50 per cent chance of developing post-natal depression because of the extreme care that is required for these children. The other thing is the trajectory. It is that 50 per cent of those children are at risk of a developmental delay. That is where our service comes in.

Our service is providing wraparound services for that family when they enter the community. A social worker will visit the mother; she will provide a needs assessment, psycho-social assessment. Therapists visit the home to provide advice and support for that mother to put that child on the right trajectory. It is that economic impact of early intervention with those long-term outcomes for children.

MS CODY: Sorry to harp on about this. I am really interested. I have a child with autism. Well, he is not a child; he is 19, almost 20. My mother actually diagnosed him when he was two.

Ms Jordaan: Yes.

MS CODY: We went and saw what was then not Therapy ACT. It was called something else. It became Therapy ACT. But your service would not necessarily pick up children like my son, or would it?

Ms Jordaan: Yes. There are two ways that we provide our service. If you have to visit our service and come into our drop-in clinic, a speech pathologist would probably meet with you. If we thought your child had autism, we would initially then look at identifying what those support needs were, without actually diagnosing your child at that point.

MS CODY: Yes.

Ms Jordaan: That process I will talk about in a minute. It is quite complex.

MS CODY: Yes.

Ms Jordaan: But we do provide that service as well. So we would immediately look at the quickest pathway to get supports for your child, which would probably be, for example, around their communication or their behaviour. That would require us to link you into our new partner, as we now understand, who would then provide you with those supports.

Concurrently, if it was decided, with the parent's permission, that that was probably ultimately what we were looking at, the child development service provides a tertiary service of multi-disciplinary autism assessments. Working with paediatricians, we would then place your child: once we have received all that necessary documentation and they have seen the paediatrician, we would then provide that autism assessment for you.

MS CODY: That is fabulous.

Ms Jordaan: It is a tertiary service in terms of autism diagnosis in particular, because I think the ACT government identified that that is a need for a complexity of autism assessments. We have continued with that. We do provide services for children up to the age of 12. The ACT child development service provides services for children in the ACT up to the age of six.

MS CODY: Thank you. Sorry for putting you through all that. I really wanted to get it clear in my mind.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said up to the age of 12. What happens after 12, in terms of diagnosis? My understanding is that kids have to go to Sydney, and this is very traumatic.

Ms Jordaan: Are you talking particularly about children with autism?

MS LE COUTEUR: I was particularly talking about children with autism, because that is what you just said, but if it is more general I would be interested in that as well. I was thinking autism.

Ms Jordaan: Diagnosis of autism, as you know, is something where our skill as professionals has really increased. Generally we find that many children or most children are already diagnosed with autism by that age.

MS LE COUTEUR: Sure.

Ms Jordaan: Understandably, there would be cases where children are not diagnosed. If I may draw on my previous Therapy ACT knowledge, we ran this service for people nought to 65 with autism diagnosis. The prevalence of autism being diagnosed after 12 is pretty low. Generally the differential then is that a child has anxiety or other co-morbid difficulties that are occurring. That is not something that our service does, but there are services: psychiatrists will work with children; CAMHS will look at children who have these other developmental difficulties. The highest rate of children being diagnosed is in the ages of nought to six.

MS LE COUTEUR: Right. Looking at the budget paper, page 11, the thing that really surprises me is that we are putting less money into this. It is estimated as going down from 5.7 to 4.3. It appears, as you were describing, to be something which is expanding. Then you go to page 15. It clearly is expanding: you are providing an extra thousand hours of service. I am really not understanding this. Why is the money going down, and how are you doing an extra thousand hours of service?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will get the CFO.

Mr Hubbard: Over the past three years, with the transition into the NDIS scheme, we have put a lot of work into reorganising our outputs into the different areas, and we are also expanding quite a bit the transparency and amount of information coming out of output 2. Part of that expanding was to reallocate quite a bit of corporate overhead. The really big difference is the shifting of corporate overhead rather than fewer staff or less administrative money. Thanks for that question; it is a technical reshuffling of our resources.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you are really managing to do an extra thousand hours without miracles, staff exploitation or whatever? I was wondering how you were doing it, less money and more output.

Mr Hubbard: I always like them working hard, but not to the exploitation level. If you look at the output overall for output 2, you will see that the actual funding going into output 2 overall has increased by about \$2 million. So it is really the reorganisation of resources inside.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

Mr Hubbard: I think there is also a context behind that reorganisation and greater delineation of output 2. Michael, do you want to talk about the alignment?

Mr De'Ath: Yes. I will just digress for a moment, even though it is not a specific question. I have just undertaken an exercise within the directorate that looks at how we can respond in this term of government in a much more effective and efficient way, and carried out a review of our current organisational arrangements. In that, there have been a number of changes. I will not go into all of the detail, other than to say that that all gives some effect to how things are reported in output classes. Ian can explain the machinations of that.

Suffice to say that we have taken steps to ensure that we, in particular, have some much clearer lines of accountability, address some issues of span of control, and also address some issues particularly in relation to the likes of the Human Services Registrar to create greater independence through the reporting line. There are a number of features in those changes. I am happy to talk about them with any of you at any stage. Ian, you might like to comment on any impact of the output class reporting.

Mr Hubbard: Yes. If you look at output class 2, in the previous year we essentially did have early intervention services, child development services and community participation. We have added a couple more outputs to expand it out. As you can see, we have established the office of disability. We have also got some more focus on

service design, policy and accountability and, as you have spoken about already, the area that Sally is responsible for, quality and human services regulation. So we have sort of expanded those out. With the expansion you can see that, especially for the last three, there was no budget allocated in 2016-17, but in fact there is budget allocated in 2017-18. That demonstrates the redistribution of resources, to be clearer on that.

THE CHAIR: Okay. A new substantive question, Mr Pettersson?

MR PETTERSSON: Yes, thank you. I was wondering if you could tell me what the child and family centres are doing to support ATSI families.

Ms Starick: Thank you for the question, and I acknowledge the privilege statement.

One of the initiatives that you will have seen in the budget for 2017-18 is the growing healthy families initiative, which is a community development program currently being provided through the three child and family centres. That targets specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It focuses on parents' strength, health, education, parenting and family supports, and also provides advocacy and linkage services. The programs are designed to be culturally safe and accessible. The programs are developed with community and the other services that operate in the local area. The program also works to develop staff in the child and family centres to provide culturally safe, appropriate and competent services.

The three outcomes that the programs are designed to work with are mental and physical health, parenting capacity, and involvement in improving the delivery of services. There are some examples that I would like to share around how growing healthy families has co-designed, with community, the types of programs that growing healthy families helps facilitate access to.

One is in Gungahlin. The growing healthy families coordinators worked with the Child and Family Centre and families in the Gungahlin region to create a playgroup that is called the deadly bubs playgroup. The group runs on a weekly basis at the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre during the school term. We partnered with the Smith Family to develop that. It is attended by speech therapists and an occupational therapist. An NDIS representative participates, and also Gugan Gulwan participates. It is a good example of how services operate together in a place-based way to provide those services that are suitable for that particular community.

Another example is in west Belconnen. When growing healthy families consulted with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families there, their concern, or their service need, was around leading healthy lifestyles. They developed a program that focused on healthy eating, emotional wellbeing and physical fitness. In order to deliver this program, the partnerships they have developed are with ACT Health, then Territory and Municipal Services, Rock Development, Belconnen Fresh Food Markets, Fernwood gym, Belconnen Community Service, Gugan Gulwan, Greening Australia, the University of Canberra, and a whole range of other organisations, including the Smith Family. It is, I think, another example of how local services have collaborated to provide access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait families where they need it, and that is growing healthy families.

Through the next year, growing healthy families are going to be working very closely with the child and family centres so that this approach to facilitating access to appropriate services can be embedded more fully in the service models out there.

MR PETTERSSON: Bear with me on this. What is the growing healthy families program like in practice? You mentioned a playgroup and you mentioned this kind of holistic approach for all different groups. Is it like a daily get-together? Is it a nine to five kind of commitment? Can you shed some light on it for me?

Ms Starick: Sure. Growing healthy families itself is about—I will use one of those government words—facilitating. It works with families and identifies, through case management, those services that are going to be most appropriate for those families. The playgroups that I talked about are open to all families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and all families. Some are targeted; some are more universal. Growing healthy families connects children and families with those programs that are going to be most suitable for them. It is a nine to five service, although there have been some events. Growing healthy families works in community development, has a community development approach, so it recognises that children are part of families, families are part of networks and networks are part of communities. Growing healthy families has an approach to develop cultural safety, accessibility, recognition and identity across a whole community as well, so some of those events happen outside of business hours.

MR PETTERSSON: You mentioned Gungahlin as one of your main examples. I am not sure if there are privacy concerns in answering this, but how large is that group? How many people are accessing the programs from Gungahlin?

Ms Starick: From Gungahlin? I do not have the full details for you. I can tell you that in Gungahlin child and family centres there are five groups that target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. These are the boomerang groups, deadly mob at Harrison School—we provide outreach to these—Ngunnawal homework club, boys group at the Child and Family Centre and the deadly bubs playgroup. These groups are often rostered in line with school terms. In addition to those services, there are individualised services and other services, but they are the ones specific to Gungahlin.

MR PETTERSSON: That is Gungahlin. What about west Belconnen? Is it larger, smaller?

Ms Starick: Again, I would need to take some of that information on notice, but I can tell you that there is Koori kids, which is run out of west Belconnen. That has 15 children. The Koori leadership group, which works with Gagan Gulwan, has 12 young people who attend. The strong women's group, which is in partnership with Belconnen Arts Centre, has 14 women participating. The Koori playgroup has 12 families. And there is also a men's art group.

MR PETTERSSON: I imagine there is something similar down in Tuggeranong. What happens to ATSI families that live towards the city centre? All of these kinds of discussions focus on the outer areas of Canberra. If someone lived in the city and these services were ideal for them, would they be heading out to the suburbs or is there something closer in the city for them?

Ms Starick: There are a range of services that are available through outreach from both the CDS and the child and family centres. There is a program called “parents as teachers”, for example, where child and family centre workers and community partners go into people’s homes. That is an option, not just because of transport but also because in many circumstances it is a more effective way of providing services. There are also a range of community services that, whilst they may operate out at the child and family centres, also operate out of other areas in Canberra, including in the inner city.

Ms Stephen-Smith: One of the things that has struck me, in talking to people working in the growing healthy families program, as well as the staff generally at the child development service and the child and family centres, is the amount of effort and success they have had in that outreach and in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, whether that is Gugan Gulwan or Winnunga. One of the things that they do, and Ms Starick may have mentioned this, is to connect into Koori preschools. The idea is to try to ensure that we have multiple pathways for people into the service, multiple touch points where we can connect people with the services that they need, either at a very light touch level or, if they need more intensive support, to be able to transition to that.

It is fair to say that this is ongoing. We are continuing to build these connections and strengthen them. Growing healthy families has been a really important part of resourcing that outreach. As Ms Starick said, embedding that into the practice of the child and family centres will be really important going forward.

Mr De’Ath: I would add, Mr Pettersson, that it is important to realise, having regard to the work of the child and family centres, that while you have asked a question about specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, of course Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access all the programs that come out of the child and family centres as well, and they are many and varied. These provide a really important function in terms of early intervention, prevention, support, capacity building and so on, right across the board. Some quite special work takes place in that space.

They are also critically important, especially in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, in addressing some of the demand drivers that are impacting further into the tertiary parts of the system. I mentioned some organisational alignment work I had carried out recently. As of the beginning of July, the director across these child and family centres and that work will be reporting directly to Dr Collis in the child and youth protection area, so that we build the synergies around the prevention space and the capacity building to reduce some of that demand that is coming on in the tertiary system, to support better life outcomes for Canberrans, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

MR PETTERSSON: You said they are going to report to Dr Collis. Whom do they report to now?

Mr De’Ath: Into our policy area.

Ms Starick: To me.

MR PETTERSSON: So what is the reason for the change?

Mr De'Ath: I want to create quite a dedicated policy and strategy area within the directorate that has a specific focus on that quite specialised work. We certainly see that, over this term of the government, we have a pretty rigorous policy agenda to follow, and that requires a dedicated group of people focused on that. So I have made decisions around that.

In relation to the move across to working with Dr Collis, it is simply, as I described, about the really important relationship between what we design and deliver out of things like child and family centres, in an early intervention, prevention, capacity building and support sense, to reduce the demand drivers further down the system. So there is a strong relationship there between those two pieces of work.

MRS KIKKERT: I have a follow-up question to Michael's. How are families or children referred to your growing family service? Are they referred by GPs, by school principals or schoolteachers?

Ms Starick: It is not dependent on referrals. People can be connected; it could be through their GPs or other health professionals that they are seeing. Often, though, a large number of connections are made through the CFCs through other services that they might have been accessing or where they might have been dropping in for information. It is a hub for advice, assistance, support and connections for families. Often those people may attend for one thing or seek information about one thing and then find out, hear about or be recommended to another group.

MRS KIKKERT: Is the service stretched to its limits? Is there a waiting list for family members to attend the service?

Ms Starick: There are waiting lists in that the groups are generally scheduled for a particular period of time that coordinates with the school term. If somebody presents and there is a group that is running that is already full, they will be scheduled for the next group when it comes up.

MRS KIKKERT: The next cycle.

Ms Starick: Often, in the interim, people connect with some of the community partners that operate out of the CFCs or elsewhere in Canberra or they have an individual session. So the waiting list is not so much about a capacity issue; it is more about when the group that they want to attend is scheduled.

Mr De'Ath: Mrs Kikkert, the question around accessing referral is a very good one. It is a constant challenge for us, a positive challenge, to actually reach the hard to reach or coordinate and wrap around the range of different services and referral pathways that are coming on. This is a really important function of the child and family centres. In particular, I refer to the way that they have developed this outreach approach. We know that some of the most vulnerable people who need some of the greatest levels of support do not necessarily walk into a service or access it through their GP or other

avenues. So we are constantly working on that, to really try to find people and get them supported.

MRS KIKKERT: How are you doing that? How are you reaching out to the most vulnerable, who are not visible to us?

Mr De'Ath: Kate could probably answer in a bit more detail. My observation of what happens when I visit the centres and talk to the staff there is that they are very active in talking to other parts of the system about who is out there and what is happening for them. They are also monitoring people who are dropping off from the contacts and then reaching out and bringing them back in. There are a range of mechanisms. I do not know whether you can add to that, Kate.

Ms Starick: I do not think so. One of the interesting things about the outreach service is the close connections they have with schools and with the regional community services: Woden Community Service and Belconnen Community Service. Often, as Michael said, those networks are as important as anything in terms of providing an appropriate and responsive service to people when they need it. People should not be expected to know the system, but the system needs to know where the appropriate services are and the outreach helps that.

Mr De'Ath: There is another very important initiative related to your question that is worth noting, and Dr Collis may want to say more. We have now forged an agreement with Education around an in-posted staff member, which, given that there are a lot of referrals into the system from the education sector, is about closely monitoring the different cases, emerging cases or emerging issues that may be coming up that require some level of intervention, support or pathway, as opposed to going straight into the tertiary part of the system. Where there is a need to go straight into the tertiary part of the system, it is about helping people with that process.

Dr Collis: I am the Executive Director for Child and Youth Protection Services, and in two weeks time I will be Executive Director for the Children, Youth and Families Service. The new name incorporates the vision for centring the work we do around families, children and young people. This is not a new relationship between me and the child and family centres. Twelve months ago, these early intervention services were reporting to me, so I am quite aware of the continuity regarding the shift to the early intervention service capacity that the child and family centres have to make.

I would like to give an example—probably a nation-leading example—of how the child and family centres have accessed hard-to-access people. I refer to the child-aware local initiative, a jointly run initiative with Families Australia in south Tuggeranong. There were 11 initiatives nation wide. In fact the south Tuggeranong initiative was selected as one of the examples of best practice in this regard. It is a local initiative that the child and family centres engaged in, fundamentally with all the providers of children's services and the schools in south Tuggeranong, which was identified as a particular area at that time with high frequency child concern reporting. The question was: how do you get in and, in a non-stigmatising, universal access way, access vulnerable families and connect them in to support?

One of the significant initiatives that developed out of that was a series of playgroups

that ran out of the schools and local centres that was funded by schools and supported by our child and family centre staff at the time. That had an enormous impact on accessing children who had yet to access children's services and support families who otherwise would have arrived in early education settings without access to community supports. That community development and community building role is not only about getting out and providing direct service—we do that—but it is also about working with our partners to develop the provision of services and the infrastructure for people to interact with us early in that way. So I would like to give that sort of example.

Michael's comment—about how the child and youth protection services are looking at developing collaboration; how we are developing links with early intervention; and how that is characterised through, for example, the education liaison officer, who is working with us to work with schools to better provide information and advice to schools prior to the escalation into our system—is one example of that. We have dedicated staff now in the OneLink service, which is a human services gateway. That dedicated staff are child protection specialists with access to child protection information and records. Their purpose is to provide information and capacity building to community agencies, to provide early support for families, so that they do not have to be drawn into the tertiary system. Of course, if they do, if there are concerns about wellbeing and child safety, that referral can come in in a timely way, with information, and supports can already be in place, rather than having to create supports after the fact. That would be an example of how we access vulnerable families.

Mr De'Ath: This is a really important initiative. We know that schools are a real interface not just on entry into the statutory system but on general support to families in times of issue or crisis. In a former life I was a primary school principal, and one of my constant frustrations was interfacing with the child protection system. So this is a really important initiative to demystify and support people around that, to get better outcomes for Canberrans.

MS CODY: Do you find that that is working?

Mr De'Ath: We are getting exceptionally good feedback about it. I do not know whether you want to comment further, Mark?

Dr Collis: The early feedback is very positive. The pick-up is enormous. At the last count we had something like 70 families in the first 12 weeks of operation being referred in for advice and connection around that. We will do a quick review of the service, with the view that we would invest in this service to a greater extent. One liaison officer across the system is probably not going to be sufficient to meet the requirements of schools. By the same token, if what we think we see happening is happening, that is, we are getting good diversion, good early support, it is taking the pressure off the system downstream. We will be able to invest that effort into this process.

Mr De'Ath: I can tell you I have received an extremely positive email from a school principal in the ACT, who was commending both directorates and government on the initiative, and was already benefiting considerably from it. I do not get a lot of emails

that say what a great job is being done, so that was rather delightful.

MS CODY: Obviously, there are things in place to let schools know about it; school principals can let their staff know that this sort of stuff is around?

Mr De'Ath: Both the Director-General of Education and I have met with the two clusters of school principals in the territory to talk with them directly about this.

THE CHAIR: We will adjourn for 15 minutes for a morning tea break.

Hearing suspended from 11.01 to 11.15 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the middle session of today's hearings. We are continuing with budget statements G, Community Services Directorate. We will start this session looking at output class 3.1, child and youth protection services, and then before lunch we will look at output classes 2.3, community participation; 2.5, services, design and policy accountability; and, 2.6 quality and human services regulation. I will defer my question to Mrs Kikkert.

MRS KIKKERT: The budget estimates that the total out of home care days that will be used in 2017-18 will increase by 13,800 days. At the same time the average investment per out of home care day is set at \$133. If each of these 13,800 additional days is funded at the average cost of \$133, the increased funding needed is less than \$2 million. Instead more than \$8 million has been budgeted. This suggests that much of the growth in out of home care in the ACT will come in residential care placements, which are far more expensive than other arrangements. According to the projections used in developing the budget, what percentage of children and young people in out of home care will reside in residential care in 2017-18?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will hand over to Dr Collis to talk about the arrangements in terms of funding for out of home care because it is important to understand the basis of that funding under the new act together arrangements that do not necessarily differentiate between children and young people who are in foster, kinship or residential care in terms of the amount of funding provided per young person. Then Mr Hubbard will be able to talk about the calculations that you talked about at the beginning of your question which, in part, relate to the fact that we are getting some supplementation for increased demand in this financial year. The increase that was in the budget for next financial year compares to what was in the budget for this financial year but during the course of this financial year we also will receive some supplementation to account for that increased demand. Mark will start with the structural issue.

Dr Collis: Thank you for the question, Mrs Kikkert. Two aspects of the answer relate to the structure of the contracting for out of home care particularly the continuum of care dimension of A step up for our kids. The continuum of care dimension put all care models together unlike any other jurisdiction or unlike what was in existence prior to the step up for our kids program. The purpose behind that was to prevent the sectoralisation of different responses. So residential care would be, as you said, very expensive and there would be one agency that would be providing that. You would have foster care and kinship care being provided by another part of the service sector.

The idea of putting the continuum of care together into one service funding agreement is so that whichever organisation became responsible for the care of a child was responsible no matter what challenges were placed before them, whether it was light touch or there needed to be significant effort to support the child and the placement. The purpose behind that was to allow our sector partners to intervene early into placements to prevent placements breakdown. It also promoted the capability for our sector partners to innovate about more intensive forms of family-based care that they might be able to provide that would prevent the flow into residential care.

Probably the keystone element of the continuum of care is, in fact, in the service funding agreement where we negotiated a flat fee, and the flat fee does not discriminate what type of care a child receives. It is a flat fee per placement. This incentivises the consortium in this case to act early to prevent escalation into the residential care end of the continuum.

MRS KIKKERT: You said there is a flat fee for whatever services a child is provided in the out of home care service. Is that right? So kinship and foster care and out of home care service all have the same amount.

Dr Collis: That is correct.

MRS KIKKERT: I have a different number here, and you will probably want to clarify that for me. I thought it was \$107 per day for foster and kinship care as opposed to residential, which is far more expensive.

Dr Collis: Depending on what the internal cost of the system is; there are subsidy rates and so forth. Clearly the consortium has different rates of what it pays for services provided to it. The government pays one flat fee for a placement.

MRS KIKKERT: And how much is that?

Dr Collis: I am not in a position to say; that is commercial in confidence in the contract. I would have to take advice on that. It clearly has been taken out of the—

MRS KIKKERT: But you do know?

Dr Collis: I do know.

MRS KIKKERT: You just cannot tell us?

Dr Collis: Yes, I cannot go to that number. In relation to whether the system is working and whether we are having more children in residential care before or after A step up, it is not quite 12 months into the full implementation of the scheme. We have fewer children and young people in residential care than we had at the beginning of the scheme. We were about 45 at the transition point. The last time I looked at the numbers, we were about 38. We project—and one of the evaluation outcome indicators is—that we will get fewer and fewer children and young people in the residential care area and that residential care will therefore be able to become more and more supported as a trauma informed service.

MRS KIKKERT: You expect fewer and fewer children going into residential care?

Dr Collis: Going into institutionalised residential care. That is one of the outcomes we are trying to measure.

MRS KIKKERT: So why is it that every year \$8 million will be funded into out of home care services? If you are expecting the numbers to be lower, why is it the same every year?

Dr Collis: The residential care element of the out of home care sector represents about four per cent of all children and young people in residential care. In fact, over the past year that proportion has declined because, even though we have had a demand coming in the front door, we have not had the number of children in residential care increasing; rather, we have had it decreasing. So the cost driver for out of home care is not residential care; it is the number of children and young people who are coming into care in totality.

I will pass on to Ian to provide some information specifically about calculation of the average investment per out of home care day.

Mr Hubbard: In the performance indicator, the average investment per out of home care days is the simple mathematics of the total budget for out of home divided by the number of days used. So for the budget year 2016-17, if you multiply 135 by 260, that tells you what the out of home care budget is for the year. Obviously as we have gone up in the money provided for the increased demand in out of home care there has not quite been a proportional shift in the number of people in out of home care to the budget, so that is why you see that 150 is the total money spent on out of home care in the estimated outcome for 2016-17. It has also gone up proportionally with the number of people in out of home care. But I will get you the exact number of the budget so you can do that. The mathematics is pretty simple.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not sure if this is the case, but there was some delay, I seem to recall, in residential care transitioning into the act together system. As you note, Mrs Kikkert, the directorate was carrying the cost of residential care through a delayed process, so that may also be contributing to a higher than expected outcome. I do not know if that is important.

Mr Hubbard: I think that is right. As you allude to, minister, there was some grandfathering and I think that was worth a little bit over \$2 million. That was to assist people who were already in a funding arrangement with the agency to continue the funding arrangement at that level until we transferred to the flat fee arrangements. There is a bit of that, and there are a couple of other costs associated with workers compensation and things like that which are packed in as overheads and which has pushed that total budget for the year up slightly.

THE CHAIR: I have a follow-up while we are talking about children in out of home care: when it comes to the educational arrangements for those children, who ultimately makes the decision as to what school they attend?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That will depend on the type of care they are in. There will be young people where their carers have enduring parental responsibility where they will be entirely the decision-maker. But for more detail I will pass to Dr Collis?

Dr Collis: Thank you for the question, Mr Wall. The decisions about daily living are made by the care team, which includes the carers and the case workers and the people who sit around that young person. There is a preference in our policy setting to support public schooling for children and young people in out of home care. However, as you will see by the number of people who are in the Catholic or independent school systems, decisions by exception are made. They are usually made for social reasons that might make sense. It may be that the young person was in that school prior to placement and we do not want to move the child. That would typically be the approach we would take.

It could also be that the biological children of the foster family are all attending a school other than a public school and it is deemed inadvisable or inappropriate to have the foster child going to a different school because we are trying to build a family. We must always remember that when we use the term “out of home care”, what we are actually talking about is building families. We would have that as a starting position, and most of the children who come in to out of home care are attending the public school system anyway.

THE CHAIR: What number are attending non-government schools currently?

Dr Collis: Can we take that on notice?

THE CHAIR: That is fine.

Dr Collis: We have had embedded for two years the improving educational outcomes committee for children in out of home care, which Helen Pappas, the senior director, co-chairs with her counterpart in education. We have just signed a memorandum with all sectors—independent, Catholic and public school sectors—on that and that is in order to track the outcomes and achievements and also to act early to put in supports for children in out of home care. We can get that done relatively easily and we now have almost a quarterly download of that information. We can take that on notice.

Mr De’Ath: In summary, Mr Wall, I would say in my role as the statutory parent that the best-interest principle applies. I would take the decision within the directorate around the placement for schooling on any child in the same way that I would my own, probably even with some greater special considerations. It is a very careful process that is worked through where there is any suggestion of a change or a disruption in a child’s schooling because of a placement issue.

MS CODY: I note, Dr Collis, you mentioned already that A step up for our kids has been operating for almost a year, I think you said?

Dr Collis: Yes.

MS CODY: What has been achieved since the strategy was announced?

Dr Collis: Thank you for the question. A step up for our kids is a transformational reform. It has reformed all aspects of the out of home care system. It essentially has four central tenets around reform. The first one is to put in services that will keep children with their birth families and out of the child protection system. It is called strengthening high risk families. The second domain is the continuum of care—and we have talked about that—so that when children do have to live with an alternative family their experience of that is supportive and nurturing and that we move to permanency as quickly as possible in that arrangement. And the third element is better accountability and reporting across the system.

The last element goes right across all those three, and that is that we wanted to ensure that the system—both the out of home care system and all those systems that sit supporting the out of home care system—was in fact a trauma informed system, a system that left children better at the end of the process than when they entered the process and was based on the observation that the outcomes for children in out of home care have been historically very poor life outcomes; exceedingly poor. There had been a prevailing view that by removing children and putting them in the family alone was enough for the child to repair and recover from the trauma that they experienced. Now we know that that is not true, that all children who come into care are in fact impacted by trauma. We have those four elements.

In the first period we undertook a very comprehensive design process; we undertook probably the most comprehensive industry consultation about that design process and we procured the services in a very innovative and collaborative way. The focus of last year was in fact on setting up all the service systems that sit to deliver those four elements. Over the course of last year we commissioned Uniting ACT/NSW—as they were then, now known as Uniting—to deliver a comprehensive, intensive and early intervention support system called uniting children and families program where we can put services into families 24-7 for significant amounts of time—30 or 40 hours a week—to ensure that we can develop some habits for families and we can ensure the safety of the children.

That service is a brand new service in this jurisdiction and in fact in this form it does not exist anywhere in Australia at this particular time. We are very lucky to have that service. It is a service which has engaged very well with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Twenty-five per cent of its operational staff are Aboriginal professionals and, indeed, the clinical service is run by a very talented Aboriginal woman who has been a great asset to the community and to us.

The second element has been transitioning into the new continuum of care with the new consortium ACT Together, led by Barnardos. I will not go through how large that consortium is and what it is. It would be a very extensive time I would need to take to do that. But that has been set up. As the minister alluded to, the last element of that that came into play was the residential care element of the continuum of care. We delayed that. We started the transition of kinship and foster care in February last year and we always planned to start the transition of residential care in July last year. We moved that out to October because we felt that we needed that extra 12 weeks to get that service ready for that particular transition. Currently we have all of those systems, including the advocacy services. We set up the birth family advocacy service, run by Red Cross, which is extremely well utilised and very successful, the carers advocacy

service and the youth engagement service through Cre8. All these services are in place.

We have also made five amendments I believe to the Children and Young People Act to enact the capabilities to get decision-making close to children but also to build a regulatory system that is responsive and independent of child protection. You heard Sally talking earlier about this. She is the human services regulator. She has operated that system and regulates all the organisations. That system is up. That is running and the legislation is in place for that to occur.

To move on to what has been achieved, our challenge now is to get this very complex system, with a lot of fantastic people together, to work in a way that we realise the benefits that we wish to realise. We are seeing some early shoots but it is early days and we will hopefully report in the future through our evaluation framework how we are progressing on that.

MS CODY: You started to allude to it there but how does the government plan to continue to reform ACT out of home care?

Dr Collis: The curious thing about the procurement and the design of step up was that government in a sense did not say, “We are going to buy this service because we know exactly what we want.” The government said, “These are the outcomes. Let’s get the best people in Australia to come to the party and help us design what we want.” There will be innovations that will happen within the service and it is already happening. We are already seeing new ways of putting intensive support into families, into children and young people, who otherwise would have ended up in residential care. We are seeing a few models develop out of that. We are going to see innovation through the way the system has been set up, and incentivised innovation. For example, the flat fee is an incredible incentiviser because it allows the organisations to reinvest in early intervention. It actually incentivises that. It is in everyone’s interest, including the outcomes, to ensure we are there early when things are starting to go wrong in placements and put that support in place nice and early.

The evaluation framework is going to tell us how we are tracking against what we want to achieve in step up and that will allow us to say where we need to invest more innovation into it. And we have already seen that in terms of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander space. The announcement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander review is an example of us having some work happening but there is more we can do in that place.

Mr De’Ath: If I could just add a comment to that? A very important initiative that I have taken in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in care is to have a very close look at the cohort and work with Aboriginal community leaders and a national body to more deeply understand where we can continue to grow, develop and improve how we get better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families through the system. We will be embarking on that, as you have probably seen in the media releases from the minister, over the next 12 to 24 months; and I think it is a really great example of where we have looked at the reforms so far. As Dr Collis has explained, we want to be able to be adaptable to anything that is coming our way or where we see we are not quite getting on top in the

way we would like and add in the next piece that we need to. This is a very important piece of work and we look forward to what that will deliver for young people in the territory.

MS CODY: I am not sure whether this is a question for you, Dr Collis, or whether it is for you, minister, but you talked about all those services that all the organisations that you have got contracts with or agreements in place with provide. I was just wondering: can you describe how those contracted agencies are delivering quality services and how we can be assured that these services are of the highest quality or of a high quality?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think Dr Collis referred to the ACT Together consortium that is led by Barnardos. That includes a number of organisations within that consortium and then there is the Uniting contract around early intervention. One of the pillars of the step up strategy is around governance and the integrity of the systems. Dr Collis can probably talk in more detail about both those things.

Dr Collis: I have already mentioned the establishment of the human services regulator. I do not think we can underscore how important that was. Prior to the amendment to the Children and Young People Act there was not a capacity for a regulator to in fact engage with organisations in a responsive way. It was either they are suitable or they are not suitable. There was a pretty big bar and it did not allow for compensations. Now we have in the act an independent office which can engage responsibly. We also, at that time, developed a number of standards, and those standards in fact were based on the national out of home care standards. We are the only jurisdiction in Australia to formally notify those standards and are compliant with those standards themselves. That is a real achievement. That is one level of safeguard that we have.

We have safeguards within the contractual structure. There are two major contracts which relate to quality and safeguarding here. We have a contract with Uniting regarding their early intervention services, in which case we determine the reporting schedule, critical incident reporting requirements, what we are going to do by way of overseeing and monitoring and their requirements around being regulated appropriately. We have a contract with Barnardos as the lead agency in the consortium. We do not have an individual contract with the other members of the consortium. We took that decision very directly because we wanted to hold one agency responsible for the performance of that continuum of care and it runs all the way through. We are very lucky to have those two agencies as our partners, I must say. There is a contractual level of safeguard that happens there.

Built into this is a reporting structure that we have required. We have reporting that has to occur on a daily basis, which includes critical incident and movement reports. We have monthly reporting. On a monthly basis we have to have an update of carer status and we have to have a monthly update on basically identifying data around children who come in. We have quarterly reporting which includes the annual review lodgement, therapeutic care plan review dates, transition to independence plans, the name of the school that the child is attending; again, picking up that, as a central tenet, we want our children in out of home care to have a normalised life and not to have that disrupted. We require on a quarterly basis knowledge of our individual learning plans and any child health check that has happened since the previous reporting.

Mr De'Ath: In addition, if that was not enough, the minister has her own ministerial point of reference group overseeing the reform. I chair the child, youth and protection quality assurance and improvement committee which has independent experts from outside the jurisdiction on it who are also monitoring various aspects of work in relation to that system. We have an internal governance mechanism which monitors performance across all elements of the directorate of which this reform and outcome is one and Mark's entire team get to meet with me once a month in order to go through everything. I think there is a pretty strong oversight across these reforms. They are extremely innovative, I can tell you. Some of you are aware that I came out of nearly eight years in the Victorian system. This is nationally leading work. It is work that when I attend national meetings with other directors-general and departmental secretaries they ask for further information about.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Just to touch on that slightly, the ministerial advisory group that the director-general referred to also meets with all of the consortium members regularly. It is quite an intensive process of a two-day meeting once a quarter. They report to me, and it is really from their independent feedback as well as the feedback from the directorate—the group of people with a longstanding interest and expertise in the child protection and tertiary system—that I can say that the early intervention work that Uniting is doing is having a very real impact in keeping children and young people out of the out of home care system.

Mr De'Ath: And we must not forget to mention our really important and independent official visitors who do a great job and also meet with me and the team. We are really very lucky to have those people engaging with the young people directly in the system.

Ms Stephen-Smith: And then we have got the Public Advocate and the Children and Young People Commissioner.

Mr De'Ath: Is there anyone else?

Ms Stephen-Smith: There is a lot of oversight.

MR MILLIGAN: While we are talking about child protection, I am interested to know what funds have been made available that specifically target reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and children in our child protection system.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The Director-General touched earlier on the review that we recently announced. That is obviously a piece of work for which we will be starting soon to look at specific arrangements. That is the continuation of a process. I think it is very important to underscore that there are existing arrangements in place to specifically support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, particularly around connection to kin and culture. There is also a mention in the budget paper of a trial of family group conferencing that we will be commencing this year. We have not sort of formally announced that or talked about that in any detail but that is something that we are currently progressing. Dr Collis might want to expand on it.

Dr Collis: Thank you for the question. Just to finish on the family group conferencing model, there will be a formal announcement that that will be an investment in an organisation led by Aboriginal experts in this field to provide independent support to do family group conferencing prior to having to pull families into the court process. The whole object of family group conferencing is to work with the broader family to see what decision-making can happen there that will keep the children in that family. That is something which we are well advanced with. We have a contract signed as we speak, yesterday afternoon, and we will be implementing it. I look forward to providing details of that soon.

In the broader system, I talked about the brand new services in the strengthening high risk families program and the Uniting children and families program. This is fundamentally about keeping children out of the child protection system or the out of the home care system or returning families as quickly as possible. This service, as I said, is run by Uniting. It is set up with a very strong cultural proficiency basis. Jaanimili—Uniting's Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture—engaged in both selecting staff and even some of the staff working directly in that organisation.

That organisation has at least 25 per cent of its staff Aboriginal. We were told very strongly by the Aboriginal community that when we are working in these really heightened times it is important for Aboriginal families to see Aboriginal people there at that time. With that investment, we have currently over 30 per cent of all of the families that are moving through—I believe 41 families—are engaged with that service as we speak with Aboriginal workers in that specific area. We have in their contract required an Aboriginal focus around that.

The other investment we should not forget about in this space as well is that a couple of years ago we set up Melaleuca Place, which is a trauma recovery centre. It is nation-leading in both its outcomes and its reputation as a multi-disciplinary team to work with families or carers for whom there is potential placement disruption. Again, it is a multidisciplinary service. It has a child psychologist, a clinical psychologist, social workers and a speech pathologist service in that multidisciplinary team.

Currently on their case load, 48 children are Aboriginal children. It has been very well received by the Aboriginal community. They are working with those children. That is the broader investment. I could talk about the investment we make. We have a very effective cultural services team, Aboriginal workers again working with Aboriginal families within child and youth protection services. That would be another investment we made.

MR MILLIGAN: Are you able to give me a figure on how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and children are currently in child protection and whether that figure has been increasing each year? What is the government prepared to do to help support families who are going through this whole process of having their children taken and put into care?

Dr Collis: The number varies from day to day, depending on whether people are being restored but it would be fair to say that around 200 children are in out-of-home care who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander at this particular time.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the figure is that approximately 60 per cent of those are in kinship care. That is an important thing to note. That is part of the child placement principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

MR MILLIGAN: How does that compare with non-Indigenous children in kinship care?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is about half from my recollection.

Dr Collis: For kinship care?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, kinship care. The other thing to mention—Dr Collis touched on this earlier around some of the things that we have implemented as part of A step up—is the birth families advocacy support service that is provided by the Smith Family. It also includes an identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member to strengthen the ability of that service to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander birth families who are coming into contact with the child protection system as well.

Mr De’Ath: I think it is fair to say that none of us around this table is going to disagree that the numbers are way too high. You have been provided with some information this morning and some detail from Dr Collis, the minister and others about the range of different initiatives from child and family centres as to what is happening in the statutory space—references to linkages with education and what providers are doing.

We have a really big emphasis on increasing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce where we can. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working for and with families is always advantageous. That is extremely challenging work for people, particularly in the small community such as we have in Canberra.

There is a whole range of things happening on a range of fronts. In addition to that, I have talked about the review from which we hope we will learn more and be able to respond more. This is a very significant issue for the territory. It is a very significant national issue. I take a degree of comfort as the territory parent that we are really pulling out all the stops we can on all fronts for those things that we have a degree of control over, where we can take some initiative or action, and also behind the scenes work across government and with other partners where we can as well. So there is a lot of effort going in here.

MS CHEYNE: You touched on training and support for carers. Are you able to talk about what is available, the cost of those and, I guess, what is available to whom?

Ms Pappas: Training of foster carers or how carers come to the system is varied, depending on whether you are a kinship carer, a foster carer or, indeed, a residential care worker. In terms of kinship care, the way families both come to the system and then subsequently get training and support is usually when a member of their family, their extended family or somebody they know well, comes into care and our staff have enough information to then go and find those people and talk to them about their

interest in caring for their extended family members.

In that process, our staff provide one-to-one support for those carers in the home. Then we are also looking to develop a partnership with the ANU. We are just in the beginning stages of those conversations about how we can make that support much more trauma informed, because the journey of a kinship carer is very different from the journey of a foster carer. They are extended family members and they have different relationships with those children.

In the context of foster care, they are people who are in our community who are putting their hands up to look to support children who require care, who are coming into care. That is work that ACT Together does or Barnardos leads with their consortium partners. There is a process, again, of one-to-one support but also formal training. It was 10 sessions. Now I think they have consolidated that down to 10 evening sessions over 10 weeks. Now they are looking to consolidate down to weekend workshops; so it is much more intensive and it is a quicker process as well.

Carers come along and they find out about what it is to care for children coming into care. They get some information about trauma and the impact of trauma on behaviour. They get information about how to work with quite a complex service system. Then they are provided with one-to-one support once they come out the end of that. People have to go through that training. Then they have to make some decisions about whether they want to care for kids, because it is very important that people come to this with their eyes wide open and understanding the challenges, but also the success that they can contribute to children.

MS CHEYNE: What does that one-to-one support look like in both those different caring arrangements? Is it just being available 24-7 or 20-7 to talk to people? Is it that they come into the home regularly? What does it look like?

Ms Pappas: Yes, all of that. In the context of kinship care that child and youth protection services manages, we have staff that go into family homes as needed. That could be for some people once a month; for some people that could be three times a week. It really depends on where people are up to and how difficult—

MS CHEYNE: Who makes the assessment of how many times they come into the home?

Ms Pappas: That is by negotiation with the carer, and really it is an individualised response to carers. Some more experienced carers might not need that much support, but somebody who is new to the care system might need more support. It is a combination of somebody in the family home providing that support. There is an after-hours crisis service so that if things are happening outside of the usual business hours we have an after-hours crisis service. The same response is provided by act together through Barnardos to foster carers. There is day-to-day support in the home and then again an after-hours service as needed.

Dr Collis: Can I add to that? I mentioned that the fourth domain was making a therapeutic trauma-informed system. We invested in therapeutic assessors so that as every child comes into care, their trauma needs are very quickly identified. So there is

a brief consultation right at that point in time to actually try to identify the needs. It is true that many of our foster carers are exceedingly experienced and exceedingly knowledgeable. Indeed, we will frequently use some of our emergency foster carers as resources, because they have been to workshops, they really have committed to this as a major part of their life.

But for those who do not, it is important that we work out simple things early. For example, the expression might be about poor toileting for a four-year-old, a breakdown in toileting. Is this going to last forever or is this about the current trauma? That might be something that is concerning. We try to get in early and get that advice. But that is really training targeted specifically at the needs of the child and the carer at the time of coming into care. That is another service that we have actually invested in as part of step up.

MS CHEYNE: Has that ANU partnership come about through ANU approaching the government or the government approaching ANU?

Ms Pappas: The ANU approached us directly looking for a partnership to be able to trial—I am trying to remember what the program is called. But it is specifically about providing an individualised response which has a trauma framework specifically for kinship carers. It is a cohort of carers who do not ordinarily get access to the same level of support and training that foster carers get because of the way they come to the system. The ANU approached us and we are very excited. We are at the early stages of that and we really hope that it comes through so we can work—

MS CHEYNE: So no costs yet?

Ms Pappas: No.

MRS KIKKERT: I have a supplementary question on carers if that is okay, chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes, very quickly. I ask that we try to keep the responses a bit more succinct than they have been. I know it is important ground, but there are still a lot of areas to cover and a number of members keen to ask questions. Mrs Kikkert, a supplementary.

MRS KIKKERT: Thank you. In regard to carers, I have heard many stories where carers are reporting child abuse to CYPS, yet their reports are being ignored. Why is it ignored? Is it due to—

Ms Stephen-Smith: I reject that. I do not think any report—

MRS KIKKERT: It is rejected because the child is eventually placed back where the abuse is happening, so it is being ignored.

Ms Stephen-Smith: All such allegations are clearly examined, but—

MRS KIKKERT: Sorry, what is that? I cannot hear you.

Ms Stephen-Smith: All such allegations are examined in detail, but Dr Collis can talk

more about the process.

MRS KIKKERT: “Not all examinations” have been recorded and reported. Yes, sorry; go on.

Dr Collis: All allegations that are made before us are treated as child concern reports. If the allegation relates to the time while a child is in care, that comes under the scrutiny of the Public Advocate. If people have made allegations—if there are allegations that people have made that they do not know the outcome of—I suggest they talk to the caseworker or they make a child concern report.

MRS KIKKERT: Have there been cases where a child does not have a caseworker?

Dr Collis: I would need to understand the question a bit better. Do you mean in the first instance?

MRS KIKKERT: Are there children in CYPS that do not have a caseworker or a case manager?

Dr Collis: No, there are not children who are in our system who do not have a caseworker. If they have been allocated, they have a case worker. In terms of act together, likewise, there is an obligation for all placements to have a caseworker.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. I am actually going to ask a financial question—one in a fortnight!

Ms Stephen-Smith: Mr Hubbard is still here.

THE CHAIR: It would not be estimates without it.

MS LE COUTEUR: In budget paper 3, page 87 shows a significant investment in out of home care services and child protection, but if you go to budget paper G, on page 14 you will find in fact that the amounts of money are effectively the same. My question is: where is the increased funding going?

Ms Stephen-Smith: This relates in part, Ms Le Couteur, to a bit of the earlier discussion about—

MS LE COUTEUR: Moving overheads?

Ms Stephen-Smith: the fact that we are responding to an increased demand that has also been responded to this year with supplementation of the budget. If you compared the budgeted amount from last year to the budgeted amount from this year, I think I am right in saying that you would see an increase.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: If you compare the actual amount from last year to the actual amount from this year, you are right in not seeing an increase. There are a number of other factors in that, though, which Mr Hubbard can talk about in more detail.

Mr Hubbard: That was a pretty good description. If you turn to page 31 of budget statements G, if we were looking at last year's budget papers and you look up to the top left-hand corner, you have the \$89.626 million? That is the number that was in last year's budget papers as the amount that we thought that we would need to be spending on that output, the child protection service, which is predominantly the care and protection side of things.

As we went through the year, we realised that there was some significant demand pressure on that system. Therefore, working with treasury and other parts of government, we got agreement to have an additional roughly \$10 million. That basically took us up to the estimated outcome of 99. When we went into the budget process itself, we were again successful, in a national budget bid, to say that that is an actual demand pressure, with the exact number of kids. There was a lot of work done in the background to convince our treasury colleagues that that was all genuine and above board, but lo and behold, they really worked well with us. That is why there is hardly any difference between basically the outcome of this year and heading into next year. It is recognition that there is extra demand in the system.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have heard, obviously, about the extra demand in the answers before. One place where there also is extra demand, and I am not sure if there is extra funding for it, is the oversight bodies such as the Public Advocate. Clearly they have got more to oversee.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Obviously it is not in this portfolio. There was some additional funding for the Public Advocate in this budget. I cannot remember, off the top of my head, how much.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that this is not your budget but you might—

Ms Stephen-Smith: The funding may be for the Children & Young People Commissioner, but one or the other.

MS LE COUTEUR: One of the recommendations of the Glanfield report was for both CSD and the Public Advocate to review their resourcing needs. How is that progressing so that we do not have one-off needs for \$10 million?

Ms Stephen-Smith: This budget, which resulted in the increased funding, did come out of it. In the last budget, in 2016-17, there was a sustainability review for the Community Services Directorate that was funded. That was the detailed work that Mr Hubbard referred to, with CSD and treasury working together to try to really understand the budgetary pressures in this space. This additional funding has come specifically out of that work. The budget measure for this year also includes some ongoing work between CSD and treasury to look at how we manage what is essentially a demand driven system in the context of the budget. The first stage of that work has been completed and is reflected in this budget in terms of CSD resourcing. There is now a second stage of that work, to think about how we manage that demand driven system in the budget system. As I said, there is also some additional resourcing for the Public Advocate.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that Bimberi is outside—

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am sorry; on page 73 of BP3, there is a line about the additional funding for the Public Advocate. It is 173,000 in the first year, 150, et cetera.

MS LE COUTEUR: Great. I have just one final one. I appreciate that Bimberi is not part of this output and class, but—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, it is.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is it? Well, I take that all back. I was going to say that with the young people concerned clearly there will be a commonality between them. Do you have any discrete or targeted funding which is specifically aimed at that cohort of young people moving in and out of child protection and Bimberi?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That also relates to the case manager question. Yes, part of the process of bringing child and youth protection services together was to provide a continuity of support for children and young people. Again, Dr Collis can expand on the background to that.

Dr Collis: I will not take too much time but we went to a significant design process in addressing the youth justice blueprint about getting to intervene early. It is true that nearly all young people who end up in Bimberi end up there with a trauma background. It did not make sense to have a child protection system which is attempting to influence the amount of trauma that young children have early in their lives separate from the justice system. So we have a single case management and we have designed our processes and systems to sit together. We probably are the only truly integrated youth justice and child protection system in Australia. There are some others which sit together but our policies, processes and case management systems are in fact, to all intents and purposes, the same.

MR COE: To create a bit of a shock, I will also go to the budget! I note that there is some additional funding for Bimberi in the budget, for about half a million dollars a year. I also note that the number of detainee days is decreasing. In light of that decrease, why are we seeing this increase in funding?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Again, let me just introduce this by saying that the 2016-17 budget included \$100,000 for a review of Bimberi resourcing. I cannot remember exactly how it was described. This has come out of that background work. Fundamentally, what that found was that there is a certain level of capacity that is required to be maintained within the youth justice centre. You are right: the average number of young people in Bimberi at any one time has been falling. But that number does go up and down over time. This is around what we need to do to support a holistic, well-functioning youth justice centre that has the capacity to support the highest number of young people that we would reasonably expect to be here in the system.

MR COE: Has there been surge capacity in the past in terms of staffing?

Ms Stephen-Smith: This is one of the issues that led to the review. Dr Collis can talk

about that.

Dr Collis: Yes, Mr Coe, there has been. We have largely managed surge capacity through the establishment of a fully trained casualised workforce in the past. It is true that for the last two years the numbers at Bimberi have been quite low, but the volatility of numbers is quite high in Bimberi. If you go to in table 19 in budget statements G, on page 18 at the top, you will see that we moved our target significantly upwards in terms of the custody days annually for 2107-18. In the first half of this year, we have had a relative surge in numbers of young people in Bimberi, particularly in relation to offences which are going to attract, and in fact are attracting, significant custodial time. So we are already seeing that volatility play out. The money in the budget gives us a capacity to plan appropriately to deal with such surges.

MR COE: Right, but in the past, what has actually been forgone that this funding is seeking to address?

Mr Hubbard: Thanks for the question, Mr Coe. What we did during this year is a really base costing of Bimberi. There is a bit of a logic mismatch between having low numbers of kids in the facility and the total cost of the facility. One of the things that the base cost study showed was that, similar to, say, a hotel, a hospital or things like that, there are a lot of embedded fixed costs in actually operating a facility like that. We did the base costing based on, depending on the number of kids you have in, what is the cost of the facility, say if you had eight kids, 12 kids, 16 kids et cetera. Then we did a statistical analysis of probability: with the volatility that Dr Collis was talking about, what is the likely number of both staff and facilities open that you would have to have during that year? That is why we did that, based on what we had in the budget and then what we needed as supplementation to run it at the level that was required if kids came in. That is how we derived that number. It was not forgoing anything.

We also had to contend with the fact that as you are running the facility over a number of years, you are faced with cost increases, including salaries and wages, penalties et cetera. Really it was a rebasing exercise that said, "This is how much it does cost you." As the minister said, treasury was one of the many who thought, "I do not get why it would cost that much." That is why we got the funding to do that analysis, and that is what it achieved.

MR COE: With this additional money, what particular people are being employed in order to bring up, in effect, the base load? Is there a particular area? Is it in education? Is it in counselling? What are the particular services that the extra \$500,000 is going to?

Mrs Mitcherson: I have read the privilege statement. I think, as Mr Hubbard alluded to, nothing was forgone. Young people did not go without their education in the services and programs; and obviously it can scale up and scale down, depending on the numbers. There is a level of volatility. At this time last year I think we might have had three young people at one point; today I think we have 17. Within that, we need to comply with other duty of care things in terms of ages and separation and in terms of behaviours and those kinds of things. Each year we were saying that if the numbers were down we did not use so much overtime or so many casual staff but when the numbers go up you need to get supplementation when you do the year-end budget

figures.

What we want to do is stop having supplementation issues and have a baseline funding that gives us a high probability of not needing supplementation on a yearly basis. It is not about forgoing anything; it is about reducing our need for continually having to supplement the budget so we can actually cast it properly going forward.

Mr De'Ath: I think you can see that we have had an emphasis on this budget round in terms of addressing that supplementation issue across a number of fronts. This is one of them.

MR COE: What was the amount of supplementation required this financial year, 2016-17?

Mr Hubbard: It was approximately 700,000. That covers a few different things. As we baselined it, we also did some things around how we could be more efficient and effective in running the centre. It also focused on some elements there as well.

MR COE: Are there any facilities or services in particular that are proven to be more resource intensive than they might have been foreseen to be a year or two or three back?

Mrs Mitcherson: I think the intensity increases, Mr Coe, when the number of young people in custody increases, combined with whether they are on remand, whether they are sentenced, what is the age group. A 12-year-old is not as sophisticated as an 18-year-old in custody so you want to be really careful about placement. And more in custody means that you might bring more staff in or have more separation within units, so an extra unit open.

The thing about the design of Bimberi is that we do have capacity to have small groups, which is what you want for young people. If we do not need an area, we can close off an area, but we need to be able to open up and ramp up very quickly as well. I think intensity increases with the number of children and young people and the mix of those young people who come into custody.

MR COE: What about the facilities and the infrastructure? Is there anything there that is drawing far more by way of resources than you might have anticipated?

Mrs Mitcherson: Having a history of working in institutions, I know that there is a certain set of costs. With the buildings, you need to do upkeep and maintenance and continue to look at works. It is like owning a home: if you do not spend any money on it, it deteriorates.

This year, for example, we are upgrading our radios from analog to digital. Analog radios were pretty robust. They got really hard use, but they do not break very often. But we have no choice about moving to a digital system. There are more ongoing expenses around digital in terms of programming and that.

So fixed costs are there and are not going to go away. But if you have got a large institution, even for those areas that are closed down, you need to check security

systems and cell call systems and do all the work associated with making sure that the buildings and the facilities operate in a way where they are safe and not deteriorating. It is about the fact that if you do not do the good upkeep, buildings do not last.

MR COE: Finally, could you please take on notice what the amount of expenditure was for 2015-16 and 2016-17 for casual staff and overtime. And, if possible, can you extract from the system the number of hours that you have had to take on for casual staff and overtime. And then also can you say what you are expecting or what you are budgeting for for 2017-18.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, we can do that. It is a fair bit of work, but we can do that for sure. It is a fair bit of work.

MR COE: Okay.

Mr Hubbard: I am not sure it is going to tell you too much either, depending on who is available on a particular day for rostering. It is a complex group of staff members. Depending on the pool, and who is available and who is away et cetera, you need to swing casual workers in. There is quite a bit of movement across the weeks about who has been rostered on and who has been rostered off. It is quite a complex staff mix.

MR COE: How do you work out your FTE?

Mr Hubbard: We have a budgeted FTE.

MR COE: Yes. I understand you have a budget, but how do you work out what your FTE has been over the past year if you are not doing—

Mr Hubbard: We can give you that information. We can get that information. It is available.

MR COE: Okay.

THE CHAIR: If you could add that to the list, that would be great.

MR COE: Thank you.

MR PETTERSSON: Can you tell me about the education programs in place at Bimberi? What have you got on offer?

Dr Collis: Thank you for the question, Mr Pettersson. As most people will know, the education program that is offered within Bimberi Youth Justice Centre is undertaken by the Education Directorate. It is, in fact, a school under a special entity under the Education Act called Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre. The programs available through the centre are quite bespoke; they are individualised because there are two very significant factors involved in the education of young people who come into Bimberi, One is that mostly they do not have a very healthy history of engaging in school learning in the past and, secondly, they might arrive at Bimberi with a fair bit of uncertainty about how long they are going to be there.

The Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre has invested in a lot of technology to get some literacy assessments and some career advice very quickly when young people come in and target literacy and numeracy capability when they are in there. All young people will have some level of literacy and numeracy screening. If they have been in a school prior to coming to Bimberi, which is a very rare event, then we will access that information.

The school program operates a fairly generic school program under the education and training directorate. It has a year 10 certificate which is awarded from a school—I will have to take on notice the school that actually authorises it—because we are not particularly interested in giving kids a certificate which says, “You graduated from Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre”, albeit that it is a fantastic place to graduate from. The certificate is authorised and regulated through a secondary school and includes many of the same subjects. We have a woodwork/metalwork program and a very good art program which is extremely popular. You will see in exhibitions that the quality of some the artwork that comes out of Bimberi is of a professional standard. We also have a music program.

We also have the capability for young people to graduate from year 12. Very recently we actually achieved that for the first time. It is quite difficult to meet all the requirements given that the average sentence length is in months, but we were able to undertake that. It is important to understand that we also provide education at the CIT, so young people will go on leave to CIT to do particular modules. And, of course, there are self-development educational opportunities that sit side by side with the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre and are run by the centre.

MR PETTERSSON: Every student has an individualised program. How does that work? I picture a classroom environment, but how does that work if everyone is getting a different program? Is it more one-on-one tutelage?

Dr Collis: It is a combination of one-on-one tutoring for those who need special tutoring and small group work in terms of other school-based subjects they are doing. There is also some self-study online work that young people will engage in.

MR PETTERSSON: How many hours per week would you expect a student to be going through?

Dr Collis: We would expect roughly the same number of hours as if they were in school generally. It starts at 9.30 and finishes at 2.30 so there is a capability for undertaking individual tutoring outside and so forth. It is five days a week. They follow the school term and when there are school holidays there is a recreational program and potentially a training program. We have vocational training programs which have led people into employment through, for instance, bricklaying. Our barbeque area has been rebuilt about three times as a consequence of needing to have a real-life project. We run a lot of those programs outside of school term as well so that the young people are kept very busy. It is an expectation that everyone goes to school, regardless of age. Of course, the Education Act requires attendance to 17, and it is rare that we have problems with young people not wanting to go to school. We are very lucky with the staff and the quality of the program.

Mr De'Ath: I have to say, endorsing that final comment, these are very special people doing fantastic work out there. They really are to be held in a very high regard. They are deeply committed to the kids, who, as you would appreciate, are not always the easiest to work with; that is why they are there. But it truly is quite remarkable work.

MR PETTERSSON: One of the things you mentioned, I had never heard it before—going off to CIT. How does that work? Do they get transport from the centre to CIT?

Dr Collis: Bimberi operates around safety first, so there is a classification meeting every day where professionals and staff of Bimberi get together and determine the classification of young people. Bimberi's environment is arranged around low classification to high classification. We try as much as we can during the time a young person is at the centre to move them to a classification where we can start engaging them in activities outside of Bimberi by way of preparation. We have enormous success in terms of getting young people to behave pro-socially within the confines of Bimberi. Our challenge is to ensure that those opportunities are converted into the community.

We have young people who have undertaken apprenticeships outside. Usually once the decision is made for someone to have leave, whether it be personal or educational or recreational leave, there will be an assessment of the security risk of that. For some young people it will mean having a youth worker with them all the time. For other young people it means they are picked up at the front by a person who is offering the employment and going off with them and coming back at the end of the day. But the decision is made very carefully on the basis of the security of the young person and the motivation of the young person.

We have had in the past a young person at the highest classification who needed bereavement leave, and we had three youth workers accompany that young person. This goes to the staffing mix on that day. We had to bring in people to ensure that that young person had access to the family at that very important time.

MR PETTERSSON: I am in awe. Thank you.

MS CODY: You were talking about the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre. They obviously have people who come in and train the young people. Do other educators come in and do training in Bimberi?

Dr Collis: Yes. There is a vocational education committee that runs with the school council that runs Bimberi and they are continually looking at where other training opportunities are available. In addition to the educational and attainment kind of courses, there are some really important other courses like the yarning program run by Relationships Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men come in and run an identity course that is meeting spiritual identity needs. Curiously enough, it is seen very positively by non-Indigenous young people. They like to go and have been accepted into the yarning at different times. It is based on kin; it is based upon knowing your identity, and that has been very important. But we have other opportunities; as I said, other registered training organisations come in and do training programs as well.

THE CHAIR: For the benefit of committee members, we should also consider looking at output classes 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6 at the same time. Mrs Kikkert, a substantive question.

MRS KIKKERT: This new output subclass includes the legislative review of the working with vulnerable people act. The ACT Children and Young People Commissioner recently raised concerns in the *Canberra Times* about the limitations of the system. What specific issues are being considered in this review? The *Canberra Times* has also reported that the scheme will be expanded at a cost of \$1.6 million. What will this planned expansion include?

Mrs Mitcherson: I am involved with the review. In terms of the budget itself, that is managed by Access Canberra, so that is probably not a question we should appropriately answer in terms of the budget expansion. Their work involves registration. At the moment, for a working with vulnerable people card—I hope I have got this right as I am speaking on behalf of Access Canberra—it is a renewal every three years. We are coming up to the next renewal, so the cost would be in the initial assessment of someone putting their card in for the first time. A small percentage of those go on to a fuller assessment, as I understand, and then you have the renewal process as well on top of that. They are just starting the renewal process now for the first three years as well as the new one. As I say, the budget output is Access Canberra and they could more appropriately answer the dollars around that. It would be about the cost of assessing and reassessing people who have cards.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The budget measure that relates to Access Canberra is on page 78 of budget paper 3. That was a specific budget measure.

Mrs Mitcherson: In terms of the review itself, it is appropriate to review the legislation after a few years when it is first operational because there is always some tinkering you might do as well as unexpected outcomes. We are also looking at preparing ourselves for the outcome of the royal commission nationally in terms of what sort of recommendations might come out there in the next 12 to 18 months and setting ourselves up in relation to that.

All jurisdictions run a kind of scheme. They do not necessarily talk to each other and there are issues around IT and those sorts of things. We are looking at those kinds of issues in the review as well. It is appropriate to look at legislation after the first couple of years. There are also some other big questions around the royal commission and talking interstate and issues around privacy and those kinds of things as well.

Ms Starick: It is also important to note that we are looking at the working with vulnerable people check in the context of a whole network of safeguards that exist in the ACT, including the soon-to-be-introduced reportable conduct. We have talked about the role of the Human Services Registrar, the Children and Young People Commissioner and the Ombudsman as well as the registration process that occurs under the NDIS in the ACT here and the suitable entity registration that occurs here as well.

MS CODY: The review of the WWVP legislation is fantastic. I agree it is always good to review legislation after a little while. However, you mentioned that Access

Canberra handles the budgeting shift, and that is fine. I am not sure whether this sits with you or not so I apologise if not: are there educational sides of the WWVP? Do we provide training for organisations so they understand how the legislation works across not-for-profit organisations and sporting facilities and those sorts of things?

Mrs Mitcherson: The question is probably more appropriate for Access Canberra, though I understand that at the time it was first promulgated a lot of work was done with community organisations. I would think they would have a process to engage and visit and provide that sort of information in terms of who should have one, who should not have one and different points. I recall that there was a lot of work early on with organisations and what it meant for their employers. It was a staged process in terms of the time line when different obligations set in for different workers. I think that process would continue and Access Canberra would run that.

Ms Starick: There is a rolling program of education as well as compliance that Access Canberra undertakes.

MRS KIKKERT: The 2004 Vardon report and the 2016 Glanfield inquiry both recommended that decisions made by CYPS regarding a child's placement or care plans be subject to external scrutiny or review. One of the reform initiatives listed under the accountability indicators is the child protection quality assurance and improvement committee. I can find no references to this committee in previous budget statements. Is this committee new, and what role will it play in providing for external review for all CYPS decisions?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Mrs Kikkert, as you know, this topic was the subject of debate on a motion that you put forward in the Assembly and I will be making a statement on the way the government has responded to all of the recommendations in the Glanfield review that relate to the oversight of child protection.

Specifically on the child and youth protection quality assurance and improvement committee, it was specifically a measure in last year's budget. The safer families package included \$2.47 million for CSD to implement that committee and also a case investigation team. As I said in my speech in relation to your motion, both of those things are now in place and the CYPQAI committee is chaired by Mr De'Ath; he might want to talk more about that.

Mr De'Ath: I made reference to this earlier, Mrs Kikkert, in answer to one of the previous questions. This is the committee that has a range of independent experts from other jurisdictions on it. The committee has a work plan and oversees a range of pieces of work within the child youth protection space. I would say it is a pretty high powered group and it is a true benefit having people who are experts, both academic and in practice, from other jurisdictions overseeing our work. It is that committee also that will be overseeing, in part, the review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in care as well.

THE CHAIR: The committee will suspend for lunch.

Hearing suspended from 12.44 to 2.13 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the afternoon session of today's estimates hearings. We are continuing with the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. In this session we are looking at output class 2.3. Minister, are the officials for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs here as well?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Indeed, yes.

THE CHAIR: In the interests of trying to give members a chance to ask questions where they want to, is there any issue if we try to do all of 2.3 concurrently?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Not from my perspective; no, I do not think so. Everyone is here.

THE CHAIR: That will free up a little more time for questioning. Was there a further opening statement?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No.

THE CHAIR: Officials joining us post the lunch break, please make sure that you are familiar with the pink privilege statement and indicate that you are aware of its implications. Minister, I will kick off with a question relating to youth underemployment. The territory continues to have a considerably higher youth unemployment rate than it does an adult unemployment rate. I am curious to get an idea of what, if any, budget measures are in there to specifically address youth unemployment or underemployment in the territory.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The territory would not be unique in having a youth unemployment rate higher than the general unemployment standard state of affairs across the country, I think. Certainly in my portfolio there is not a specific budget measure that is addressing youth unemployment. However, there are a range of measures in the skills portfolio, not just in the budget but more broadly, that the government has taken to support young people in their training and to support them into employment. Of course, employment policy is largely the responsibility of the federal government, but I do acknowledge that we have got a jobs pathway initiative specifically for refugees, asylum seekers and new arrivals. Many of those people who are seeking employment will be young refugees, asylum seekers and new arrivals.

We know that that is a specific issue in the refugee community and also in some communities of newly arrived migrants. In fact, I was talking to some members of the South Sudanese community this morning at the Refugee Week breakfast about this very issue and the need to support young people and not so young people to connect with employers and to build employer understanding of the skills and qualifications of refugees and migrants, whether they are qualifications that they bring from their own country that are then recognised here—and that is part of the work of the office of multicultural affairs—or whether they are skills and qualifications that they have gained here.

We know that there is discrimination in the employment market, from blind studies that are done where exactly the same CV turns up with two different names and people with an Anglo-Saxon name are more likely to get an interview than people

with an unfamiliar to name to that employer. There is work going on in that space. I do not know if anyone else can answer in terms of youth employment. The other thing I would just touch on is that the Youth Advisory Council has been doing some work on employment, particularly the insecure employment of young people and their treatment in the workplace. Ms Khan, are you the right person?

Ms Khan: I note the privilege statement. The minister is right. There is some work happening with the Youth Advisory Council in the area of employment. Specifically the advisory group is a new advisory council. They have only recently organised their work plan, and one of the priority areas within that work plan is focusing on a range of issues related to youth and youth employment. I could go through some of the objectives or the priority areas within the work plan that focus on employment.

We have, firstly, an objective to raise youth knowledge of rights in the workplace in relation to remuneration, employment and security of work. There are a range of actions under that priority, as there are under a number of other priorities. There is one to assist and facilitate an increase in employment opportunities for young people in the ACT by increasing workplace skills. Some of the work and some of the discussions and consultations they are undertaking in relation to that in particular are looking at the community, schools and organisations hosting workplace skills sessions, targeting and increasing young people's employability, including things like skills in the responsible service of alcohol, till counting, customer service, stocktaking, management and other professional development courses.

There is another priority here about promoting a positive culture in relation to youth employment in the ACT, specifically looking at recommending the idea of a youth-friendly employer certification scheme that can assist and identify employers that pay award or above award wages, that promote training and development and that foster safe and secure workplaces. There is a really rich work plan there that the Youth Advisory Council have in place.

THE CHAIR: Is the work that the Youth Advisory Council is doing in this space with guidance from the minister or the department or is it a self-initiated topic?

Ms Khan: No. Certainly it is under the auspices of the minister. The council works with the minister and the minister's directions around—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, but the council does set its own priorities. They advise me of what their priorities are going to be for their coming term, that work plan. Certainly I met with the previous members. There was a rolling new membership of the Youth Advisory Council, as we can imagine. People age out and people leave Canberra when they finish their studies or go off to university or whatever. So it is refreshed on a regular basis. I did meet with them shortly after I became minister, and they ran me through some of their work plan then. They have refreshed that, but they have been doing some ongoing work around employment. Really, they give me their strategy, and then they report back to me on what they have been doing.

THE CHAIR: So it is initiated by the advisory council, not suggested from your office?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is their priorities. That is right, yes.

MRS KIKKERT: Just to carry on with youth unemployment, as reported by the *Canberra Times*, the most recent Rate Canberra survey of more than 2,000 people aged between 12 and 25 showed that 21 per cent of them felt that lack of employment was their most worrying issue. This is exactly the same percentage of responders who said that they were experiencing mental health issues. Why has the government chosen to increase attention to mental health issues amongst young people whilst ignoring the problem of youth unemployment?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I absolutely reject that we are ignoring the problem of youth unemployment.

MRS KIKKERT: Do you have any budget allocated to youth unemployment?

Ms Stephen-Smith: As I said in response to Mr Wall's question—

MRS KIKKERT: So you are ignoring it, if there is no money going towards youth unemployment?

Ms Stephen-Smith: As I said in response to Mr Wall's question, support for employment generally is a commonwealth responsibility. We do occasionally put in some extra resources where we have a—

MRS KIKKERT: Was mental health for youth supported by the ACT or the federal government?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Mental health is a joint responsibility, and we have a specific responsibility around community mental health.

MRS KIKKERT: So how have you contributed to youth employment?

THE CHAIR: Mrs Kikkert, give the minister a chance, please.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Sorry, what was your follow-up question?

MRS KIKKERT: My follow-up question is: how have you contributed to youth employment?

Ms Stephen-Smith: There are a number of measures. As I said, you would need to talk to the skills portfolio about the skills investments that they are making. Clearly, the more we are able to support our young people in their skills, education and training, the better prepared they will be to get work and to also start their own businesses. The government also has a range of measures in place in the economic development portfolio around, for example, growing the tourism industry, supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, and engaging with our universities to support university students to become entrepreneurs and start their own businesses. We also have a range of measures that we talked about yesterday in the work safety and IR space around ensuring that young people are treated fairly in their workplaces, that they are not subject to workplace safety risks and that they are aware of their rights in

the workplace. All of those measures are in place.

In an environment where the ACT economy has been performing extremely well, where we have had a record number of tourists in the last year, where we are growing the tourism economy, where we have seen the incredible growth in exports from the ACT in trade and where we have seen again a reduction in the overall unemployment rate in the ACT, I think it is a bit of a stretch to suggest that this is a government that is not interested in creating employment and is not interested in jobs, whether for our young people or for anybody else.

We have one of the most highly educated and highly trained workforces in the country. We have enormous investment in our skills and education and in engaging young people who would otherwise fall out of the education system, and all of that is about ensuring that young people are engaged in our community, including engaged in employment.

MRS KIKKERT: That is correct. However, it has been shown that the youth unemployment percentage has risen here in Canberra. All those things are great, but obviously there is something there that is wrong. What will you do about it?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We are constantly working to improve our skills, our education and our training systems and to give our young people the best opportunity to both create jobs and to get jobs. If you have a specific recommendation on what more we could be doing in that space, please, we will take that on board. We are always happy to listen to suggestions, but to suggest that we are not doing anything in this space is completely ridiculous.

MRS KIKKERT: Speak to the Youth Coalition.

MR COE: But are there any specific projects or programs targeting youth unemployment?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Not new programs or projects in this budget, and I—

MR COE: What about ongoing, though?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not the minister responsible for employment, but—

MRS KIKKERT: But you are responsible for the youth.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Ongoing, there are a range, as I said, such as growing jobs in the tourism industry. There is an entire section in the CMTEDD part of the budget papers that is called more and better jobs. Yes, there are things that we are doing about creating jobs in this economy.

MR COE: And are they targeted towards youth unemployment?

Ms Stephen-Smith: On growing our creative capital, government will invest significant new resources in the arts across the territory. We know that creative—

MR COE: But given youth unemployment is increasing, though, is there a need for some form of intervention or some program or project to try to tackle that issue?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We have a range of programs and projects, and I think the Youth Advisory Council, if they come back with specific measures looking at the engagement of young people in the workforce and what more we can do about that, we will take that seriously. We do, of course, provide a range of scholarships and grants for young people to engage in the community, including through employment and working with employers.

We have currently got the youth interACT scholarships providing funding for individual young people and for organisations that work with young people to open up learning, sporting, personal and career development opportunities for those young people. We have a range of measures that already exist. We do not have anything specifically targeted at youth unemployment in this particular budget, but there are a range of ongoing measures.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you tell me a bit more about the scholarships? How many are active in the ACT at the moment?

Ms Stephen-Smith: In the last financial year there were 34 youth interACT scholarships approved. I was just thinking about something I had recorded the other day. We are about to open a new round of those scholarships, and we will be announcing that in the next couple of weeks. Ms Khan can provide more information about what they have supported.

Ms Khan: Yes, certainly. The youth scholarships provide funding of up to \$500 for individual young people and up to \$1,500 for groups of young people to attend learning, sporting, personal and career development opportunities.

MR PETTERSSON: Are those scholarships separate from the grants?

Ms Khan: Yes.

MR PETTERSSON: What is the difference between the grants and the scholarships?

Ms Khan: The grants are called the youth interACT grants, and they provide funding for young people to organise projects, events and activities to benefit young people in the community.

MR PETTERSSON: How many grants are there?

Ms Khan: In the 2016-17 year we received a total of 39 grant applications, out of which 19 provided funding for a range of activities, such as *Youth Community Photography Pasting*, an art exhibition by students from the Canberra College. This is a project for young people to express themselves artistically. I do not have any other examples, but that is a separate grant program from the scholarships program.

MR PETTERSSON: Going back to the scholarships, do you have any examples of things that the scholarships are being used for? You mentioned photography with the

grants.

Ms Khan: I do not have one on hand.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am trying to remember what the list was in my script. There was a project that involved people getting together to do a workshop about making art out of recycled material. There was a social inclusion project for LGBTIQ young people. There was a project sharing Pacific island culture. So there are a wide variety of projects that are supported under that program. As I said, they range across sporting, personal, cultural and career development opportunities.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a supplementary, Ms Cody?

MS CODY: Yes. I am not sure whether it sits under your portfolio, so I might ask Minister Fitzharris—

Ms Stephen-Smith: About women in trades?

MS CODY: Not about women in trades but about supporting youth access to trades. I know that the government has done a lot of work on that, but I am not sure that that sits with you.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, the skills portfolio does not sit with me, but I was going to say I was probably wrong when I said there was no measure. There is some funding in the budget to deliver a dedicated strategy to address the low proportion of women in male-dominated traditional trades, as well as assisting mature-age workers to upskill. Of course, many of those women who are going into the trades are going to be young women, and, as I say, it is part of that ongoing commitment to young people.

Ms Starick: Could I add that there are also other grants that target young people, to assist with employment or to continue training through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants program. There is the kickstart my career program, which supports young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at risk of leaving school by developing appropriate learning options. There are also grants in the women's portfolio for return to work, as well as a scholarship program that runs through the participation grants.

MS CODY: I want to talk about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement. I believe it was signed in 2015. I note that in the 2016-17 financial year a number of initiatives were tied to the agreement. What initiatives will be added in the 2017-18 budget that will assist in the implementation of this agreement?

Mr De'Ath: The overarching statement I would make on this is about the development of the outcomes framework that goes with that agreement. It is very important, as we move towards it—and we are nearly there; Robyn Forester will provide further details—that we have a set of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes that we are all collectively working towards. That is a significant piece of work. I chair a subcommittee of the strategic board, which is all of the directors-general and the Head of Service. That is our most significant deliverable that we want to achieve in the coming months so that everybody is clear on the

requirements of each individual directorate to improve these outcomes.

Ms Forester: I note the privilege statement. The agreement has a number of initiatives that are tied to the agreement. It is something that we are very proud of because we are one of the few jurisdictions that has developed an agreement, in consultation with our elected body—again, the only jurisdiction that has a democratically elected body—as well as the community. There are a number of initiatives right across government, not just within the Community Services Directorate but right across all directorates. It provides a really good opportunity for directorates to pool their resources and their intel to deliver culturally appropriate and specific programs to community.

There are a number of those in there, including the ones that were mentioned a moment ago. Kickstart my career is a great program which is looking at trying to keep kids in school, and giving them additional activities to connect them to culture and country as well. That is being run out of one of the directorates that have responsibility for land management and so forth. That is a really good program. Funding was provided in the previous budget, to be passed through a number of years. We do not actually have specific new moneys in this budget but we have ongoing funding from the previous budget.

There are a lot of other programs that work towards providing support for ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants in career development and mentoring. We have other programs that are looking at assisting in the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, as well as within the arts fields. There are a number of ongoing projects that have received multi-year funding from previous budgets, but there are no specific moneys in this new—

Ms Stephen-Smith: One thing I would touch on that is new in this budget is a seed funding program for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisations—new and emerging organisations. That is \$25,000 a year, and it is meeting a commitment that the previous minister made to that funding. That has been tied into the agreement in the sense that it is one of the objectives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement to foster and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisations and to ensure that we are getting solutions closer to the community.

We are looking at how best to implement that. I mentioned in my opening statement that we want to make sure that this relatively small grants program is used to best effect by ensuring that organisations that are supported through it are embedded in an ecosystem of support and that we can be confident that they will be sustainable. Not all start-ups succeed and we cannot guarantee that everything will be ongoing, but we want to give organisations that we support through that grants program the best opportunity of success.

I would also note that a number of other investments have been guided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement objectives of stronger families and connected communities. Those include things like the ongoing investment in growing healthy families that we spoke about this morning, the \$12 million that we have committed to developing a new health facility in partnership with Winnunga

Nimmityjah, which sits in the health portfolio.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the arts grants program includes a specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts element of that. Minister Rattenbury recently announced at Winnunga Nimmityjah the Yarrabi Bamirr justice reinvestment trial. That is very much in the space of the stronger families and connected communities objective. It goes back to some of the other things we were talking about this morning, in terms of early intervention and strength-based approaches to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It is really about working with the family in the context of their community, understanding what it is that they need to be able to support themselves and to succeed, and what support we need to put around them to ensure that they can move forward to a positive future, whether it is in the context of the child protection space or in the context of the justice space, rather than going down that path.

You would be aware also that there has been investment in the scoping and design of a drug and alcohol court, which sits in Minister Ramsay's portfolio. There has been new investment in the expanded through-care program, in Minister Rattenbury's portfolio, to improve outcomes for offenders transitioning back into the community. That has particular relevance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, given the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community. There is a definite focus, in that extended through-care program, on ensuring that it is culturally appropriate. I refer also to starting the implementation of the recommendations of the Moss review, in that context. Finally, there is some additional money for community legal centres. Minister Ramsay made an announcement on that either this morning or yesterday, and gave some more detail on that.

Mr De'Ath: The minister and I attended the first ministerial Aboriginal roundtable in Perth last Friday, the first time in seven years that that has been held. That was an outstanding meeting. There was quite a lot of interest from ministers around the country in relation to the agreement, where we were heading with that, for an outcomes framework, capacity building of Aboriginal organisations and the initiatives that we are taking here—and, in particular, the concept of an elected body, which is unique to the territory. It is interesting to note where we sit in relation to where other jurisdictions are with their work in this area.

MS CODY: Ms Forester, you talked about reconnecting with family and those sorts of initiatives. Is that part of the agreement—to ensure that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to get back to country and understand where they are from?

Ms Forester: Yes. Stronger families is the key focus for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement and, as part of the stronger families focus, there are a number of initiatives. One of those initiatives is connection. It is also about identity and community and connection to country. In particular, what is happening with kickstart my career is that it is providing an opportunity for young people to reconnect to community. For some of them, it may not necessarily be their community or country that they are reconnecting to, but they are getting that opportunity to learn a lot more about culture. That is really what the agreement is about. It is about

strengthening families, connecting families and doing things more collaboratively, both from the government's perspective and from the community's perspective.

It is also about providing the opportunity for all ACT government directorates to work in partnership, which is something that had been lacking in previous years, prior to the commencement of the development of the agreement. It provides that opportunity for all directorates to be on the same page when they start to look at what they can do to support the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Mr De'Ath: Cultural identity and connecting the community are two of the seven focus areas in the agreement.

MR MILLIGAN: Where to start? I know we have 30 minutes and I have a lot of questions here; so I might roll a couple into one. We have already discussed the next agreement being worked on at the moment. When will that be completed? How will you measure the success of that agreement? Within that agreement, will you be including any of the measures that the ACT government signed on to back in 2008 with COAG in closing the gap for the Indigenous community, including, and not limited to, increasing—

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will have to start writing this down, Mr Milligan.

MR MILLIGAN: Sorry—increasing Indigenous employment in the public service to three per cent? I noticed in the previous agreement that you committed to two per cent. First, the agreement: when is it to be completed? Second, how will you measure that success? What are you including in this agreement that has been agreed with COAG?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Just to say, yes, you are right. Obviously, the current agreement is 2015-18. As you know, the elected body is currently in caretaker mode. The elections will take place in early July. We will be getting a new elected body. Something I am going to be talking to them about early on is recognising that we will need to refresh the agreement—either refresh or replace the agreement.

As you would be aware, significant work is going on. Victoria, South Australia and other states are now looking at a treaty. This is obviously a more intensive agreement-making process than we undertook in relation to the current agreement. I want to have a conversation with the new elected body about the form of any new agreement with them beyond the 2018 period, how we have a broader conversation with the community about that or whether that is potentially not the community's priority.

There are a number of members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT who you may notice tweet me regularly about a treaty. I think what we have not really established is the extent to which that conversation is a priority for the local community. What we want to be driven by is what the priority is for the local community.

In terms of how we measure, how we evaluate, Mr De'Ath touched on the development and almost finalisation of the outcomes framework. I am certainly conscious that is now 2017. This was a 2015-18 agreement. We are almost at the point

of having an outcomes framework. I think that will be a very valuable tool. One of the things I am keen to ensure is that, in talking to the community about refreshing or replacing the agreement, we do not throw out everything that has come before, that we build on what has been happening to date—that outcomes framework—and that we are able to continue to use that.

Obviously, one of the things we need to do in measuring our progress is to have a baseline. If we keep changing the way we are measuring things, we never really get a good handle on that. I will hand over to Michael in a moment to talk about the outcomes framework a little more. I guess that also relates to your question about the COAG targets.

You are probably aware that COAG recently considered a draft refresh of the closing the gap framework as well. That is proposing to move away from a more deficit gap-focused approach to more of a strength-based approach. It is about a broad definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and looking at how we can take a strength-based approach to our national dialogue on these matters.

I think that is still a conversation. COAG has referred that to Indigenous affairs ministers. I am not sure if those letters have formally come through yet, but that is what we were getting at the meeting last week. We will be asked to have a look at the draft COAG closing the gap refresh that they have proposed and to comment on that. I would say that there is no suggestion that the ACT is, has been or was intending to walk away from any closing the gap targets.

In fact, as I think I mentioned in the Assembly, we have always supported the inclusion, for example, of justice targets in closing the gap, or at least in recent times we have. I cannot speak for forever back in time. When conversations have been had about expanding the range of targets, we have been interested in conversations as well. Sorry; I am conscious of your previous request to keep answers short and I know I have failed in that regard.

Mr De'Ath: I will supplement a few things. I think the approach that we are trying to take more and more is to keep things moving. It is very easy in government, and it is particularly easy in this space, always to be delaying something, waiting for the next thing that is being announced, that is being developed and so on. The minister's comments in relation to the outcomes framework are quite right. I think we always suffered from: "There is something coming; there is something coming; do we develop this?"

The decision is that we are going to develop it. We are going to get moving. We are going to get people united around these outcomes. We have got already, I think, something like 67 initiatives being monitored under the agreement anyway. So there is a huge amount of activity taking place in relation to this. When we get a new agreement we will adapt an outcomes framework from there.

I think you made reference to representation or the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, staff and so on. I can speak for our directorate, with the information I have been provided with. We actually have four per cent of the CSD workforce. But it is only part of the story. Remember that government does a

significant amount of contracting. It was part of the discussions in Perth last week: what sorts of targets are jurisdictions setting around that?

While I cannot give the figures off the top of my head, with one of our significant contracts through the housing area, for example, the provider has exponentially exceeded the target for having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed with them in that contract. What we have to look at is: what are they employed to do and what sorts of skill levels, seniority levels and so on are people being employed at? We need to understand that and then move on to: “How do we now not just get representation but actually lift that in the areas where people are able to contribute and participate?”

MS ORR: I want to go back to the grants program that you were referring to and get a better idea of what is in that. Who is applying for it? Is it for-profits, not-for-profits? What do you expect to come out of it?

Ms Forester: Are you referring to the sorts of organisations or the sorts of groups that we are looking for with the seed funding?

MS ORR: Yes.

Ms Forester: The purpose of the seed funding is to provide some financial support for start-ups, for community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. They are not businesses. They are community-controlled organisations. It is the opportunity for people to come forward with ideas and concepts and work towards the development of them. As you will be aware, the ACT does suffer from low numbers of community-controlled Aboriginal organisations. We do want to assist the community where we can to stand up and make viable other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

MS ORR: Do you have a sense of some of the things that the community might be bringing forward in approaching this, or is it a bit of a wait and see approach?

Ms Forester: It will be a bit of a wait and see approach. We do know that there is a group of women who are keen to look at what they can do as far as the women and children’s space goes. Legal services are always something being talked about in this particular area. We also know that there are some people who are very interested in building support networks for business—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business operators. But, really, we will not know what is out there or what people are thinking about until we receive applications.

Ms Stephen-Smith: If I can build on that, one of the things I have been talking to the directorate about is the fact that the original intention of this program clearly was described as being around organisations—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled organisations—that were registered with ORIC. I cannot remember what the acronym stands for.

Ms Forester: ORIC is the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations and the act is the CATSI Act, which is the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act.

Ms Stephen-Smith: One of the things that has come up is that a number of organisations do not think it is necessarily appropriate for what they do or for their structure to register with ORIC. One of the other things I think that has come up is the potential to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled social entrepreneurs. We are still having this conversation around not-for-profit and for-profit—what are we doing with this money to make the best use of it? I think ultimately it is about empowering the community, for the ideas to come from them about what is going to be most useful.

We have been having conversations, for example, with the people who ran the CBR Innovation Network Indigenous business yarning circle last year about lessons learned around that, around supporting Aboriginal businesses, but also what we learned about start-up needs in that space. I think we are still in a conversation about exactly where we are going to land on who is going to be supported by this. But I think Ms Forester is exactly right. It is about what comes out from the community, about empowering the community and ensuring that, as much as we can, we support organisations that are going to be able to deliver services owned by the community.

THE CHAIR: Mr Milligan, one supplementary and then we will go to Ms Le Couteur for a substantive.

MR MILLIGAN: I will be two minutes. I am quite surprised to get another question. In relation to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprise development, I notice that in the 2016-17 budget there was \$200,000 allocated over two years but now that has actually reduced to just \$100,000 over four years, which is equivalent to \$25,000 a year. What do you actually expect to achieve for \$25,000 a year?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Anything that was in the 2016-17 budget is still in existence. We have not taken that away to reduce—so we are offsetting—

MR MILLIGAN: But that budget was for two years and being completed at the end of 2018. But now that \$100,000 is going over four years; so it is actually reducing it from \$50,000 a year to \$25,000 and spreading it over four years.

Ms Forester: Mr Milligan, it is a separate bucket of money. It is not the same bucket that you are referring to. The \$100,000—the \$25,000 over four years—is the seed funding that you are referring to. The other program is still in existence and run out of CMTEDD.

MR MILLIGAN: You have two separate programs, both with \$100,000 in each?

Ms Forester: Yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: One of the things that we are doing with this \$25,000—I exactly take your point—is actually talking to the people in CMTEDD who manage that to ensure that we get the biggest bang for our buck out of these combined efforts.

MR MILLIGAN: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. I thought I would move to multicultural, given that it has not been starring. The problem is that this is too much for this afternoon. You have an initiative of more support for a refugees and new migrants initiative. What organisations are you working with to provide English language programs?

Mr De'Ath: We are just finding the list, I think.

Ms Stephen-Smith: While Azra is finding the list, I will say that one of the things that have really become clear to me is the number of organisations that work in a complementary way in supporting refugees and asylum seekers and new migrants. There is the migrant and refugee support service. Companion House obviously provides a very important support for refugees and asylum seekers. There are volunteer organisations like Canberra Refugee Support. And then, of course, there is Multicultural Youth Services, which provides a lot of support for young people. So it is about working across those services and combining those. I had some compliments for OMA yesterday about the way in which they work to bring those organisations together and make sure that they are collaborating and complementing one another.

Ms Khan: Sorry, I do not seem to have a list of those organisations.

Ms Starick: With the current ones, I think the minister spoke about MARSS.

Ms Khan: Yes.

Ms Starick: And Multicultural Youth Services, which is currently providing services. This is new funding, so we will be, I guess, working with the community and organisations on where we allocate those funds.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that it is youth funding, can I put in a plug for a scheme that is happening in Victoria, which is translating your standard rental rules into community languages. I can particularly speak to this. I am a landlord through MARSS, and it is quite confronting having tenants who have zero English. It is just the simplest things. It is a difficulty that I think people do not appreciate. Victoria is doing it; we could do it too. Also—you may give me the same answer—there is going to be a job-brokering service, as I understand. How will this be accessed and managed?

Ms Starick: There has been a trial that has been occurring through Multicultural Youth Services. That has provided us with some good information as to how we will progress the next iteration, if you like, that is being funded under this budget submission.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you going to be looking specifically at the people with expertise in working with refugees and also expertise working with people who have suffered some trauma, as we talked about this morning with the children involved and child protection services? Most of the refugees have been involved in some sort of trauma in their past life. That could be a fairly specialised area.

Ms Khan: I totally agree with you. This particular cohort we are talking about—refugees and asylum seekers—are obviously going to need particular supports and

understanding of the trauma and the situation they have encountered. Clearly, the organisations and the expertise that we will bring in to develop this program will bring that skill set with them and inform the development of the program.

MS LE COUTEUR: How will you find them? Will it be a tender process? Will this be one of the selection criteria? How is this going to happen?

Ms Khan: There will be an open tender process to select the broker that we are talking about.

Mrs Mitcherson: But I think it is fair to say that the criteria will be informed by what the needs of the client group are. You would want someone who might win that brokerage money to have expertise, for example, in working with clients from trauma backgrounds, particularly in large communities or communities that have come straight out of war—

MS LE COUTEUR: War zones.

Mrs Mitcherson: Yes, or who have been in camps for many years or, as young children, witnessed a whole a lot of stuff. Absolutely.

MS ORR: On the support that you are providing to immigrants, refugees and so forth, in the context of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the announcement it made regarding applications from 1 October for illegal maritime arrivals, I just wanted to know what the ACT government is doing for these people. Is it supporting them to apply for temporary protection visas or safe haven enterprise visas?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I understand that there is some work going on in that space. In May 2016 Yvette Berry, who was then the minister, wrote to the commonwealth Minister for Immigration and Border Protection requesting that the ACT be included in the safe haven enterprise visa, or SHEV, scheme. In October 2016 the ACT formally joined that scheme. The ACT is the only whole jurisdiction to be part of the scheme, and we are very pleased to do that. Obviously, it provides hope and certainty for asylum seekers who have chosen to make Canberra home and who have established networks of support here, who may otherwise be required to leave to access opportunities.

I think that is one demonstration of our commitment to refugees and asylum seekers—to asylum seekers in this case. The most recent figures we have from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection show that about 134 SHEV applications have been lodged in the ACT and five temporary protection visas. I do not know if there is more we could say about the support.

Ms Starick: The office for multicultural affairs and the organisations that they work with have very good networks in and links into the multicultural community which are in themselves a very good support structure for refugees and asylum seekers here in the ACT. They have been using those connections to ensure that information about this announcement reaches those people that need it. There are also services such as Legal Aid that are working with asylum seekers and refugees to work through what

these changes mean.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I guess the bottom line is that there is a very proactive outreach process through the non-government organisations and through OMA and Legal Aid to try to ensure that we do reach all of those people who are subject to that deadline and support them to apply.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I briefly continue with multicultural? I want to ask about the high fees for the conference rooms in the Theo Notaras centre. I understand that in the past these were generally available free, or at least sometimes available free, to multicultural organisations, but it now appears that they always have to pay for them. Has there been a change of policy here? What is the reason for this?

Ms Khan: I can answer that question. There has not actually been a change to the booking fees. The fee structure has pretty much been in place for some time. What we have found is that we are getting increasing requests for facilities. In those instances, obviously there is not the capacity. In those instances, you will find that people will not be able to book a date when they are in need of a facility. The booking fees have at times been waived—

MS LE COUTEUR: That is the question. I am specifically being asked by organisations who said that in the past they did not pay and they now are being asked to pay.

Ms Khan: There have been exceptions and there has been some waiver of the booking fees. However, that is not the standard policy. It is often the case that on a case-by-case basis decisions are taken to waive due to a range of hardship reasons. But on the whole, the policy is that there is a booking fee structure. The facility is available for anyone to book, and we have generally very happy and satisfied clients, both tenants and community organisations, that are, on the whole, serviced exceptionally well.

MS LE COUTEUR: How do you reduce the amount of revenue forgone in terms of waivers? Has that changed over the last few years?

Ms Khan: Absolutely it has. Over the last two years, I think, we have seen a decline in the revenue generated from booking of the Theo Notaras centre.

MS LE COUTEUR: You have seen a decline in the revenue?

Ms Khan: Of the booking of the multicultural function room.

MS LE COUTEUR: I thought you just told me that there were increasing numbers of bookings. Sorry; I have utterly got lost then.

Ms Khan: What I meant to say is that there has been, over a period of time, a waiving of the fees; and as a result of that, there has been a decline in the revenue generated.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you are waiving more fees now than you used to?

Ms Khan: No. I am saying that in the past there was an increase in waiving of the fees. We are now trying to basically continue with the arrangements that are in place: that is, follow the booking arrangements, which really require a payment.

MS LE COUTEUR: Right.

Mr De'Ath: I think it is a case where there has been support given to people to help them get up and get going, and various arrangements. But there has been a policy in place. It is now actually about properly implementing that policy. We did have a reduction in revenue. We need to get back to proper implementation of the policy.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you are basically now doing fewer waivers? You said the policy has not changed but in practice there are fewer waivers than there were? That is what I think you are saying.

Ms Khan: That is correct.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

Mr De'Ath: That obviously comes with a bit of angst as we implement the policy.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, and some of our correspondents are those people who have angst.

Mr De'Ath: As well as we try and manage that, it does come with a bit of angst.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

MS ORR: Just on the question of funding, a lot of multicultural groups and organisations in my electorate are coming to me and asking where they can get funding from. I was just wondering what funding opportunities there are for community-based groups, beyond fee waivers for the Theo Notaras centre. And where are you going to promote these opportunities in encouraging these organisations to apply? How can I best point them in the right direction?

Ms Khan: There is a whole range of grants available to multicultural communities. In particular, there is a participation grant. That is an annual grant of up to \$260,000, which is a significant grant. It is a case of applying for that grant when it is advertised. We did promote that grant extensively through the networks that we have, through our own newsletters. If there are new community organisations that have popped up and are not aware of these grants, we certainly would be happy to get them on our list.

MS ORR: That is an annual one, and quite large. I am thinking a bit more of something like—you used the words before—seed funding.

Ms Khan: Seed funding?

MS ORR: Just small ones. A lot of the groups that come to me just want to have a small event within the community.

Ms Khan: The participation grant really promotes all kinds of activities under that grant. Any kind of requirement can be applied for under that grant.

Ms Starick: For example, the Vietnamese Catholic community received a grant for \$2,000 to celebrate the Vietnamese New Year as part of the mid-autumn festival. That is an example of a small grant.

MS ORR: That sounds good. This is an annual, once-a-year thing. Are there opportunities outside of this grants program? Let us just say that you missed the deadline on that one and you still want to run your event. Is there something else that they can apply for?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The multicultural community organisations can also apply for the community, sport and infrastructure grants program. The timing of some of these grants programs is somewhat different. Mostly they are annual grants rounds, I think. But I think both the community support and infrastructure grants and the participation (digital community) grants programs are still open. Or have they just closed?

Ms Khan: Just closed.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Just closed. But the multicultural grants will open shortly. There is a kind of staggered series of various grants rounds. For example, the South Sudanese Australian community association received \$10,000 towards their minibus out of the community support and infrastructure grants program rather than the multicultural grants program. So there are opportunities across the portfolio and I guess also in other portfolios. If it is a multicultural sporting organisation, there might be opportunities in the sports and recreation grants programs as well.

MRS KIKKERT: The 2017-18 budget commits nearly \$1.4 million over four years to new programs, one of them being an expansion of current English language programs for new migrants. How many new migrants are being served by the current programs? How many additional new migrants are expected to be served by this expansion of the current programs? Recognising that helping new migrants to enter the workforce is the goal of these programs, what is the current success rate?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The new programs build on, as we were talking about earlier in relation to English language, existing programs. Hopefully someone can fill you in on the numbers of those. I think the same should be said for the employment program, which I know Ms Starick said earlier is going to build on a pilot. She can probably talk about the success rate of that. I should also say that there are other programs like WESP, which stands for work experience and support program. That is a very successful program, and one of the joyful jobs I have in the portfolio is going to the graduation ceremony for that program. It is work experience in the ACT public sector. A very high proportion of the people who go through that work experience support program get into permanent employment through that. I will hand over to Ms Starick and Ms Khan.

Ms Khan: This is a new election commitment and a new program, as it were. I am not sure we can do a comparison between it and a previous range of programs that have been in place directly. What this commitment is going to do is expand the English

language program to a wider group and make it more accessible and cover the refugee and asylum seeker cohort as well as new migrants.

MRS KIKKERT: So how many new migrants will that new expansion cover?

Ms Khan: I guess we have not got those numbers yet, and we are still in the early stages of developing the program. I will probably be better able to provide you with numbers as we develop the program fully. In terms of the second component of the program, which is the support for employment for refugees and asylum seekers, again we do not have the exact number of people that we are going to be targeting, but we will be able to estimate those numbers once we look at the cohort and then develop the program and set some targets and some indicators around how we will measure the success of the program.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Kate, I do not know if you can talk about how many people went through the pilot?

Ms Starick: I thought I had that information, but I would like to take it on notice.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you please tell me how the ACT government is celebrating World Refugee Day?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thank you for your question. Tuesday, 20 June was World Refugee Day. I was very fortunate to participate in the Canberra refugee support scholarship presentations, where 53 refugees and asylum seekers received scholarships to continue their education. That is not a government-funded program; that is a program that is entirely community driven and is a really great example, I think, of the capacity of the Canberra community to open up not only their hearts and homes but also their wallets to support refugees and asylum seekers in our community.

It was really amazing to see the variety of backgrounds, to hear the stories of people's backgrounds and some of the things that they had been through to get to Australia and then their aspirations for the future. We had people aspiring to be anything from nurses and plumbers to a heart surgeon or an engineer, all kinds of aspirations and contributions that are going to be made by these people we have welcomed into our community.

This morning we had a breakfast. The ACT government hosted a World Refugee Day breakfast, where we had representatives of a range of community organisations that support refugees and asylum seekers and, indeed, refugees and asylum seekers themselves. Mustafa Ehsan spoke at that event. He was the young Canberra citizen of the year, a young man who arrived in 2012 at the age of 16 as an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker who has been supported by a range of organisations but, in particular, Companion House.

Going back to Ms Le Couteur's point about the trauma that refugees and asylum seekers experience, he talked a little this morning about his journey to get to Australia, which was a very dangerous and harrowing one. He is learning English. His English is getting better all the time, and he is absolutely committed. He has completed year 12.

He is supporting, largely through soccer, other refugees and asylum seekers who have arrived in Canberra and is really building a community and building social capital, if you like, and networks to ensure that new arrivals can feel at home in the Canberra community and have a way to connect with one another.

I went to another Multicultural Youth Services event—and Mrs Kikkert was there—the national cane ball championships, which is another demonstration of sport as a way to build community and to make people feel included that goes beyond being able to speak the language.

As I said this morning, hearing these stories and meeting these people really brings home to you the degree to which they share our values and contribute to our community. It makes me very cross when that commitment is questioned simply because of their lack of English language skills. I think we have decades of experience of new arrivals contributing enormously to this country without necessarily being fluent English speakers, certainly without being better English speakers than some Australians who have lived here their whole lives. I think Refugee Week is a really good opportunity to reflect on that.

We were hosting today a refugee welcome zone forum with, I think it was, 50 local government organisations that are also refugee welcome zones to talk about what more we can do to build on our commitment as a refugee welcome zone. There is a lot going on this week. Get involved and think about whether there is some volunteering that can be done. I encourage everyone in the community to think about whether there is something they can do to contribute.

MR PETTERSSON: You mentioned refugee welcome zones. Then you said you are looking at ways to expand them. Can you expand on that? What are you looking at?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am going to be interested to see what comes out of this forum today. Obviously the \$1.4 million commitment to increasing job readiness and connectedness and English language is a part of that commitment. Our signing up to the safe haven enterprise visa scheme was also reflective of that commitment to be a refugee welcome zone. And our support for things like Refugee Week is also a signal of that commitment and the way that we engage our refugee and asylum seeker and new migrant communities in the broader celebration of multicultural Canberra. But one of the things we are interested to get out of the forum is some learning from local governments about what they have been doing to give effect to their commitments.

MR PETTERSSON: You just mentioned something I have never heard of, the safe haven enterprise visa. Can someone shed some light on it for me?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Obviously it is a federal government scheme. They are in charge of visas. I am probably better to hand over to the experts about exactly how it works.

Ms Khan: SHEV, which is the safe haven enterprise visa, is a temporary protection visa that remains valid for five years and has a dual aim of providing protection and encouraging enterprise through earning and learning, while strengthening the potential of regional Australia. What it basically does is provide an opportunity for people who have been classified by the commonwealth as illegal maritime arrivals to settle in

regional communities, to seek employment and to gain access to study opportunities that increase their skills in English proficiency.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I guess part of the reason that the ACT applied to be a SHEV zone was that unauthorised arrivals, asylum seekers, in our community would not be forced to uproot and move to another regional area that was a SHEV area in order to gain employment. This is about supporting the people who have already created networks in our community to be able to stay here and work.

MR PETTERSSON: I suspect I might have missed this earlier, but how many people in the ACT are on that visa arrangement?

Ms Stephen-Smith: One hundred and thirty four applications had been lodged as of 1 March.

MRS KIKKERT: The 2017-18 budget for community participation will see a decrease over 2016-17 mainly because of the reclassification of overhead resources. Will these two new programs be funded through cuts to other programs and services in community participation and, if so, what will be cut and by how much?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will ask Mr Hubbard to come up. He spoke earlier—I am not sure if you were here or not—about the restructure of output class 2, which has gone from having, I think, three sub outputs to six. If you go to page 12 of statement G, output classes 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 have gone from having no budget in 2016-17 to having a budget in 2017-18. That reflects the restructure and that is not mirrored exactly because the overall budget for the output has increased, I understand, but the other outputs have reduced slightly as a result of that.

Mr Hubbard: Is that okay, the answer? The minister has given you a really good answer there.

MRS KIKKERT: If you want to add something, that is fine.

Mr Hubbard: If you turn to page 11 of the papers you will see that, as the minister quite rightly pointed out, the overall funding in that output has gone—this is the money that comes in through the budget—from \$55.6 million up to \$59 million. In fact, in that output there are quite a few of the new initiatives that have actually been funded. There has not been a decrease where we have saved money to fund new initiatives. I think that was the point of your question. That has not happened.

To reiterate what the minister said, we have expanded the break-up of that output to give some focus to a few new ones. Again, on page 12, if you look, we have actually highlighted and put a focus on the office of disability and we have also pulled out some emphasis on service design and policy and accountability, because we wanted to give more focus, as the minister pointed out, to solid policy development across a range of human services. To reflect our moving out of service delivery in disability and therapy and going more to quality assessments and regulation of the human services sector, we have pulled out output 2.6. As you can see, last year there was no budget for those three outputs and, in fact, there is a budget for them this time. There has not been a decrease. In fact, there is an increase. And the new initiatives are fully

funded with new budget money.

MS ORR: I have a really quick substantive. It can always be a yes/no answer. I really enjoy the Multicultural Festival each year, like the rest of Canberra, because they all tend to turn up to that same space on that weekend. I want to check that everything is on track and progressing well for next year's festival, because I am looking forward to it.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The dates for next year's festival have been announced already.

MS ORR: So it is all on track?

Mr De'Ath: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We will wrap up there and suspend for 15 minutes. We will resume at 3.40 with the Minister for Veterans and Seniors.

Hearing suspended from 3.25 to 3.42 pm.

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

De'Ath, Mr Michael, Director-General

Starick, Ms Kate, Acting Executive Director, Strategy, Participation and Early Intervention

Khan, Ms Azra, Acting Director, Community Participation Group

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Senior Director, Finance and Budget, Corporate Services

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to this afternoon session, and we welcome the Minister for Veterans and Seniors. We will be looking at output class 2.3. Minister, I invite you to start with an opening statement.

Mr Ramsay: Thank you, chair. Firstly I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak about my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Veterans and Seniors. I am proud to say that this government continues to build an age-friendly community that supports and values people of all ages, especially seniors, and one that holds in honour those who have served our country as part of the defence forces and supports both them and their families.

Seniors are a significant asset to our community. We know that too often they are talked about or written about in negative terms and we hear about the increase in cost of care or the burdens of old age or a lack of capacity. However, research proves that, far from being a drain on our community, older people are, indeed, net contributors to the economy through their engagement with their communities and their families.

We need to ensure that we are harnessing the rich diversity and often unacknowledged wealth of experience that seniors bring and contribute to our communities. We need to continue to build a city where seniors are included as an integral part of our city or we will miss the opportunity of fully engaging one of the largest and most educated generations of social innovators in our nation's history. One way the government is doing this is by investing in age-friendly suburb upgrades. These have occurred in Ainslie and Weston, with Kaleen and Monash next on the list, with upgrades due to begin next year.

Since being given the privilege of becoming minister for seniors, I have been working with the ministerial advisory council on the ageing, which continues to provide a direct link with older ACT residents and the ACT government. That council has had a key role in developing the ACT active ageing framework 2015-18, which clearly outlines the ACT government's priorities in this area. In the last few weeks I have appointed a new ministerial advisory council on the ageing for 2017-19, and I am looking forward to working with them to further the interests of older Canberrans in the ACT.

Fundamental to our work to uphold the rights of older members of our community is a resolute commitment to address elder abuse. Sadly, elder abuse is more common than

many of us would realise. It takes many forms, including physical, financial, psychological, social and sexual abuse and neglect. Elder abuse often goes unreported and even unrecognised, and it has a devastating impact on older people and their families. This will be one of the first issues that I ask the newly appointed ministerial advisory council on the ageing to investigate and I will ask that they report back with suggestions for how the government can further build on protections that are currently in place.

The government has also been providing funding through the ACT participation grants to numerous organisations to promote social connectedness and active ageing in the ACT. It also has extended the flexible bus trial, which now includes the inner north, and is providing free bus travel to seniors card holders in off-peak periods. This is helping to ensure our senior Canberrans are able to get around the city to remain connected and also helping to ease the cost of living pressures.

The government remains committed to assisting mature aged workers remaining in the workforce, should they wish to. This year's budget includes funding of a million dollars over four years to assist in the development of initiatives to upskill and reskill workers, including targeted help for older Canberrans.

The government also has a strong commitment to honouring and supporting those in our community who have served our country in the Australian Defence Force. It is certainly a privilege to be named as minister for veterans. I will continue to work to ensure that the ACT is a place that is not only welcoming for our veterans but also supportive of them and their families.

In the 2016-17 ACT participation grants program the government provided a number of grants to groups who help our veterans specifically to remain connected to and active participants in the community and to prevent social isolation. The ACT government has also commenced investing in ways to assist veterans to transition to new employment and into volunteering opportunities both within the ACT government and more broadly across the ACT.

We will continue to work with our colleagues in organisations such as Soldier On, the RSL and the numerous other ex-service organisations in the ACT in order to meet this and other challenges that are faced by younger veterans, and we look forward to making further announcements regarding this in the future. We will continue to engage the commonwealth in relation to key issues for veterans of all ages, including options for employment, for housing and for mental health supports.

Earlier this year I expanded the veterans advisory council to ensure that I am able to be advised from a broad range of sources on issues affecting veterans in the ACT. This newly expanded council will be appointed later this year and will provide a vital link between veterans in the ACT and the ACT government so that we can continue to develop the ACT's policy in this particularly important space.

I thank the committee for allowing me to make this opening statement. I look forward to the questions and the conversations that will ensue about how the government is working together to enrich the lives of seniors and veterans in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I will defer my question to Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, you would be aware that on 14 February Ms Cody, a member of the ACT Labor government, made a number of statements regarding veterans, describing the Sussex Inlet RSL as “a disgrace to Australia”, the RSL more generally as having a long history of “disgraceful behaviour” and again the Sussex Inlet RSL as people who either are racists or who “stand by racists”. The RSL issued this statement:

It is this type of unfounded criticism of a national body, spoken in generalisations, which has completed over 100 years of assisting the veteran family and community that makes the veterans very angry.

In the communication that I have had with veterans, veterans groups and in particular the RSL, there is no doubt that there is a lot of anger. Do you stand by the comments of the Labor member Ms Cody that the RSL has a long history of disgraceful behaviour or will you take this opportunity to refute those claims and to apologise and outline what you are doing to repair the damage that has been done?

Mr Ramsay: I start by saying how disappointed I am that this is the first question. We have half an hour to discuss matters of importance and of priority in relation to the budget and the way we can continue to improve the lives of veterans and seniors. To be taken into this conversation that has been attempted over and over again is not only disappointing but disrespectful to our veterans and seniors, given the limited amount of time that is available in this committee.

MR HANSON: I thought calling them racists would be a little bit more disrespectful potentially.

Mr Ramsay: There is a statement that if the only tool that you have in your kit is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail. It seems to me as if we are hearing again from someone who has one tool in the kit. Here is where I stand with it: my understanding is that subsequent to her adjournment speech Ms Cody spoke with the RSL. I am told both by Ms Cody and by the RSL themselves that those conversations were friendly, positive and productive. I further point out that the Sussex Inlet RSL Club is owned and operated independently; it is not actually part of the RSL and neither the national body nor the New South Wales branch has any role in its operations.

Over the last few months I have met on more than one occasion with the federal minister for veterans, Minister Dan Tehan, and we have had some particularly productive conversations in relation to a range of veterans’ matters in working on how the ACT and the commonwealth can continue to work closely together. Those are the important issues that I would have hoped we would be spending our half an hour on today—issues of employment, issues of mental health, issues of homelessness, issues of ways that we can connect and continue with services.

One of the things that happened in the first conversation with Minister Tehan is that as we were speaking with each other he said how good it was to be able to work cooperatively and how important it was that the area of veterans was not made party

political and that we need to go beyond that. I am really disappointed that we are not able to do that today.

MR HANSON: I think, minister, calling the Sussex Inlet RSL Club members racist and talking about the RSL as an organisation that has a long history of disgraceful behaviour was not very respectful. Could I ask you to get to the point of my question, which is: do you agree with Ms Cody's statement or will you take this opportunity to condemn it or to apologise? A lot of veterans I have spoken to are very disappointed that subsequent to her comments they have heard nothing from either the Chief Minister or you to refute those comments and repair the damage that has been done. I am asking: do you condone her comments, do you condemn those comments and will you now apologise?

Mr Ramsay: I hear the hammer hitting the nail again. Still it is that one tool.

MR HANSON: Yes or no?

Mr Ramsay: Can I say—

MR HANSON: You are refusing to condemn those comments?

Mr Ramsay: Let me talk about the relationship I have with the RSL.

MR HANSON: Are you refusing to condemn the comments?

Mr Ramsay: Let me talk about the views that I have of the RSL and the positive working relationship. My government colleagues and I have nothing but respect and admiration for the dedication and the commitment of organisations such as the RSL, Soldier On, Legacy and the many organisations that I and the government are working with very positively and closely. I will continue to work with those organisations. I will continue to demonstrate the respect. I will continue to dedicate—

MR HANSON: You will not condemn those comments or apologise?

Mr Ramsay: —a significant amount of my diary time to working with those groups. I am not—

MR HANSON: You will let them stand? You will let those comments stand?

Mr Ramsay: What I am letting stand is the good record of the government that we have in this, and I am really keen—

MR HANSON: But what about the good record of the RSL?

Mr Ramsay: to see us being able to move beyond—

MR HANSON: What about the good record of the RSL?

Mr Ramsay: this so that the hammer can be put back in the toolbox and we can move on to more important things.

MS CODY: Minister, speaking of the good things the government is doing, I note that on page 3 of budget statements G you talk about support for veterans, particularly those transitioning out of the defence forces, and linking veterans with opportunities and advocacy. Could you expand on that for me? That is a really important initiative.

Mr Ramsay: Sure. Firstly, there are some key statistics that we have in relation to that. I am very happy to flesh those statistics out. There are some really important things that we are doing. Given that the average age of people separating from the Defence Force is quite young, there is a mound of expertise and skill sets available for the broader community and for the support of those people. I refer to some of the statistics, if we are able to pick those up as well.

Mr De'Ath: We will pass to Ms Starick to give you those numbers.

Ms Starick: Thanks for the question. We have information on separating servicemen and women from the Australian Defence Force. From their postcodes at the time that they separated, there were 1,031 people who separated and were at that time residing in the ACT. Of those, there were 851 men and 180 women. That is what we know at the point that they separated. Of course, we do not have information on men or women who separated in other jurisdictions and subsequently moved to the ACT or on those who were residing here at the time they separated and then moved away.

Of those 1,031 people, nearly half were engaged in the Australian Defence Force for up to 15 years, so for a large proportion of their career. There were about 11½ per cent who were in the Australian Defence Force for up to five years. Most of that 50 per cent were in the Defence Force for between six and 15 years.

Interestingly, once people enter our community, there is patchy data about the services that veterans access. In 2016 the housing ministers met to discuss concerns about homelessness amongst the returned veterans population. There was limited data available on the number of veterans exiting the Defence Force and sleeping rough or being homeless. DVA has engaged the University of New South Wales and the University of Adelaide to do some research on that issue, and we expect to have that research by the end of 2017.

The other area on which there is a lack of data is veterans' engagement with corrections services. Nationally, we have written to the corrections minister's areas of responsibility to see if we can collect that information. Often, when you collect data, the information that you are provided with is prompted by the information that you want to collect. So we will look at that. In the health sector there is information that is collected when there are reimbursements attached to that. So we do have some information, although it is not comprehensive.

When we get back to, as the minister spoke about, the skills that exiting veterans have, about 14 per cent of exiting veterans have experienced warfare. About 20 per cent have skills in engineering and signals areas and also intelligence-based roles. If we break this down again, we also have people exiting the Defence Force with skills in information technology, engineering and trades, such as firefighters, police, mechanics and communications technicians. It would appear that there are a range of

skills that are very translatable into civilian and other careers in the ACT.

Mr Ramsay: Some of that highlights that there are some great possibilities and openings, with the number of people as well as the great skill sets of people who are separating from the Defence Force. Trying to ensure that there are good pathways into employment is one of the key things, and that is a key driver.

There are a couple of areas. Firstly, looking at what is happening in relation to the ACT public service, one of the areas that I am keen to develop further is learning from people who are separating from the Defence Force and have been employed in the ACT public service: how that transition has moved, what their experience is and what the things are that they have picked up along the way that are helpful for us to learn.

One of the first pieces of work that I have been asking for from the ministerial advisory council on veterans is to look at how we can plumb that information a little bit further, specifically in relation to the public service. We might then be able to look at what it is that we can do further in relation to employment within the public service for people who are separating from the Defence Force. How can we make that pathway a positive and easy one? I think there is a body of work and potential action with respect to how the ACT public service can develop that role.

In addition, one of the other areas that we have been working on already is liaising with a number of service organisations and with others—with individuals, with industry—about broader possibilities. It was a very positive part of a conversation that I had with Minister Tehan quite recently about the potential for the ACT to access something in relation to the Prime Minister's veterans employment program, and seeing how we may be able to help.

With the skill sets that are there, how can we work with that high level of experience and skills? How can we pick up that sense of the veterans and their families being able to, in one sense, be utilised for the benefit of the ACT community, while at the same time enabling the ACT community to be utilised for the benefit of veterans and their families? There is a lot of really good work that is happening on that at the moment—some very exciting work. I look forward over the next few months to making some further announcements on that.

MS CODY: I note Ms Starick mentioned the transferrable skills of people being discharged from the defence forces. What is currently happening in that space? Is that not currently occurring? Are people that are, say, mechanics in the defence forces discharging and not looking for work as mechanics in the private sector?

Ms Starick: Often they are. For many of the careers and the skill sets that I discussed, it is very easy to see how they translate into careers in the general population, but there are other skill sets where exiting veterans may not immediately be able to see how they can apply what they have to other general roles, particularly some of the more specialist skills. It may be that they just need some career assistance on exiting, looking particularly at growth industries where those skills may be quite sought after.

Mr Ramsay: One of the other areas in relation to being able to harness those skills in moving forward is providing assistance even with some of the simple things, like

employment skills, employment interviews and the applications process, which can be a pretty foreign concept in the Defence Force, where development is on a different basis. It is about being able to work out how we can pick up some of those important skills, and whether there are areas of training and education, either more in policy or more in specific skills, that can be added and developed as well.

MS CODY: I note that part of the—

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Chair, I have a supplementary on—

THE CHAIR: Let Ms Cody finish her line of questioning, Mr Doszpot, and I will give you a chance to ask your supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MS CODY: In the original discussion about the dot point in the budget paper, you suggested there was an advocacy role as part of this initiative. Can you expand on that side a little bit more?

Ms Starick: Yes, there is. Part of the role of the ACT government, and our role, is to negotiate with and to contact the Australian government when their policy initiatives impact on the population in the ACT. We take on that role in a range of our portfolio areas, including the veterans area.

MS CODY: I have a final question. I noticed in your opening statement and in subsequent questioning you suggested that we are doing a lot for veterans. I note that this is one dot point in the budget papers. Can you expand on what else we are doing for veterans in the ACT, in this budget or in previous budgets?

Ms Starick: Certainly. This is a new portfolio area of responsibility for us, but even in the period of time that we have had it, we have had a grant round that we opened recently for seniors and veterans. That grant round was held earlier this year. From that grant round \$80,000 was available for seniors and veterans, with a maximum of \$10,000 each. We had 23 applications for that grant round, and we provided funding through that grant round. That was the first time that we have had this grant round open to veterans, so we did not get a large proportion of applications at this point going to veterans.

Ms Khan: We had four successful applications that received funding for various activities. The Royal Society for the Blind received funding for iPhone communications solutions for seniors and veterans. The project will provide clients aged 55 years and over who are blind or vision impaired, including veterans, with training in the use of iPhones and iPhone applications, including social media. They were granted \$6,276.

Another grant was for an organisation called the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women Association. They received a grant of \$2,000 for a bus trip to Batemans Bay to encourage members to interact with other members with this particular condition through a range of activities and to seek to reduce the social isolation of members and carers.

The fourth grant that was provided for a veteran-specific purpose was to the Canberra Model Railway Club. They received \$3,157 for a project which involved construction and exhibits at community venues of a new, portable and lightweight model railway layout that four children at a time can operate that will provide member veterans and seniors with opportunities for engagement, involvement, inclusion and project satisfaction in a men's shed-like environment.

MR HANSON: Is that only open for veterans?

Ms Khan: This particular grant round was open for seniors and included veterans as well.

MR HANSON: So this is for seniors; not specifically for veterans?

Ms Khan: No.

Ms Starick: I think Ms Khan was going through the veteran-specific funding grants; is that correct?

Ms Khan: That is right.

MR HANSON: But that was not specific to veterans, was it?

Ms Starick: No, these are specific—

MR HANSON: So there are no specific grants?

Mr Ramsay: There were not separate rounds for veterans as opposed to seniors. There was one grant round, but with the particular projects that are coming in, some of the projects were specifically flagged for seniors and some of the projects were—

MR HANSON: What is the total budget for veteran-specific initiatives in the ACT? Rather than those that are lumped in with others, for projects that are identified specifically for veterans, what is the total annual budget?

Mr Ramsay: Mr Hubbard, what is the total budget for veterans?

Mr Hubbard: I will have a look. I am not sure that I have split it out to that detail.

MR HANSON: Surely, if we have a minister for veterans' affairs, you know what his budget is?

Mr Hubbard: You will remember that with community development we did not split down below that output level because it also contained the office for women, multicultural affairs—

Mr Hanson: Sure. If you do not have the answer, maybe you could take it on notice and come back to us with what is the annual budget in the ACT for veteran-specific initiatives—not those which are broader based, that everyone can participate in, but

specific veterans initiatives, and what is that budget?

Mr Hubbard: We will take that on notice.

Mr Ramsay: We will get you a number, Mr Hanson.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, has the government done any analysis on the impact of the massively increasing house and land rates on seniors, particularly those exiting from the defence forces, those on fixed incomes and those on standard pensions?

Mr De'Ath: We will take that on notice, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Furthermore, I refer to the older Canberrans brochure that you have put out. It looks at the actively ageing framework. It sets out a shared vision that all senior Canberrans live an active, healthy and rewarding life. It gives different indicators of \$7.1 million for a mental health package, \$1 million in skills and training assistance, and \$136,000 to fund a scoping study to guide major investment in broadening the current hospital-in-the-home program service. In each of these categories I would like to know what percentage of the \$7.1 million is for seniors. For example, I would like to know what percentage of the \$1 million for skills and training is for seniors. Likewise for the third category as well.

Mr Ramsay: Do they need to be taken on notice, Mr Hubbard, as they were previously?

Mr Hubbard: Definitely.

THE CHAIR: Not a problem.

Ms Starick: Going to your previous question, Mr Doszpot, we will take on notice—

THE CHAIR: Again, quickly, please at this stage. We are running very short on time.

Ms Starick: Thank you. We will take on notice the question about the analysis, but there are some initiatives regarding concessions that are accessible to households—the energy and utility concession and the water and sewerage rebate. They will be combined into one concession on 1 July. The ACT government also offers a rates deferral program for older Canberrans who are on fixed incomes. The program allows eligible residents to defer their rates payments until such time as their property is sold. This can help people who own property assets but who have a fixed or limited income.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. That is commendable, but my concern, and the concern of a lot of these people that I have mentioned in these different categories, is that some of them are paying up to 30 per cent of the annual pension that they get in rates. I am wondering how the government is addressing this issue, which is growing year on year.

Mr Ramsay: I think one of the specific ways is the review of the way that the concessions are operating. It was done 12 months ago. It worked closely with a number of community sector organisations, including COTA and others. One of the

things coming out of that that was implemented was the refinement of the way those concessions operate. But also included, as others have mentioned, was the deferral scheme that operates so that it is not necessary to be eating into income year by year. Eligible older residents are able to defer.

MR DOSZPOT: That is another form of death tax in a way.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, further questions on this are best referred to the Treasurer. This issue was explored there. Ms Le Couteur, did you want to ask a quick question of this minister or can we go to the next session?

MS LE COUTEUR: This could, I think, could be really quick. It just requires a yes/no answer. Are there more older persons assemblies planned?

Ms Starick: Not at this point, but I think it would be something that the newly appointed MACA—

MS LE COUTEUR: Ministerial advisory council, I know, yes.

Mr Ramsay: Ministerial advisory council on ageing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay; not as in Maccas.

Mr Ramsay: No.

MRS JONES: Because Caroline is not in favour of Maccas.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is right.

Mr Ramsay: One of the key responsibilities of both of the advisory councils is engaging with the broader community—how is it that those consultations will occur? The best form of that consultation will be one of those matters for the incoming ministerial advisory council.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will suspend for a minute or two while we change directorate and minister. Thank you very much, minister.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, 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

Community Services Directorate

De'Ath, Mr Michael, Director-General

Starick, Ms Kate, Acting Executive Director, Strategy, Participation and Early Intervention

Moore, Ms Nicole, Senior Manager, Performance and Accountability

Khan, Ms Azra, Acting Director, Community Participation Group

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services ACT

Duggan, Mr Frank, Senior Director and Chief Operating Officer, Housing ACT

THE CHAIR: We have had a quick directorate-minister shuffle. We welcome now Minister Berry, Minister for Women. Then we will continue with her in her capacity as the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. As most of the officials have not changed, I do not think there are further housekeeping requirements. Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement if you have one.

Ms Berry: Thank you, chair. I think we have hit the ground running this year with achievements that support women and gender equality, particularly with regard to the gender pay gap and female representation in leadership positions. But I am heartened to see the progress that we have made as well for women and girls in the ACT, particularly when it comes to sport and active living.

The ACT public service has a gender pay gap of only 3.6 per cent compared with 16 per cent nationally. The ACT as a whole has a gender pay gap of 11.5 per cent. Even though this remains a gap, it is among the best of all the states and territories. In terms of board representation, the ACT is leading other states and territories, with women making up 48 per cent of the membership on boards and committees where the ACT can influence these appointments. However, despite this progress, we acknowledge the continuing challenges that face women in our community.

In March this year I launched the first action plan of the ACT women's plan 2016-26, which provides a number of practical actions that are being undertaken by all ACT government directorates. We also continue to deliver other ACT government initiatives that provide opportunities and recognition for women, such as the ACT Women of the Year Awards, a range of grants and scholarship programs, and the services that are delivered through the women's information service.

We have also committed our support to work to eliminate domestic and family violence and sexual assault through the safer families work and with the additional funding this year to co-design and pilot the family safety hub. This will be discussed later in a separate session, I understand. I have also asked the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women to work with the government and a range of directorates to ensure that the actions contained in the plan are delivered across the government and that we continue to see progress for women all across the ACT. Chair, I am happy to take

questions on the office for women.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Mr Coe has asked that his question be deferred to Mrs Jones. Mrs Jones, are you are ready to go?

MRS JONES: Thank you. Minister, the social inclusion statement, which is part of the budget, puts a certain focus on gender equality. I want to ask specifically how the office for women was consulted in the development of the 2017-18 budget. In particular, was the office for women consulted by ACT Policing, the ACT Emergency Services Agency, corrections or any other directorates directly in relation to the development of their own budget plans and policies?

Ms Starick: Information and proposals that go to government include an assessment of the triple bottom line, in which the impact on different groups is part of the assessment, including the impact on women. But in terms of whether the office for women was consulted, no.

MRS JONES: Okay. Is that something that you would like to see in future budget preparations?

Ms Berry: I might be able to assist a bit more, Mrs Jones, in respect of the work that has been occurring with the ministerial advisory council on women and the implementation of the action plan. The action plan was developed by the ministerial advisory council, developing programs across each directorate, but it keeps an eye on and has sight of what is happening with gender equity across the government. The first part of their plan is the health and wellbeing action, which is being implemented by the ministerial advisory council on women. They are working out how government directorates report back to them, and then through that process we will be able to provide—

MRS JONES: That will come back to the office for women.

Ms Berry: better reports, because the office for women provides secretarial support for the ministerial advisory council.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Berry: As a minister with responsibility for a number of different portfolios, it is easier for me to know that I have implemented a policy, some strategies in sport that help women's and girls' participation in sport. We encourage women and girls to take up science, technology, engineering and math classes in education. I know, for example, that the ESA have developed a strategy. That is great; they have an eye on what is happening in gender equity within emergency services.

What the ministerial advisory council's work will go towards is encouraging directorates to do that, to have sight overall of the work that they do that takes into account all the different kinds of roles that women play and how they can contribute to the development of policies and plans across government.

MRS JONES: Yes. You have obviously alluded to the improvement in the policies

and procedures of ESA that have been developed with regard to the provision of portaloos for women firies and other firies when they are out on the ground—where it is safe to do so, of course. Have you had any reportage back through this process or any initial conversations that seem promising around vocational opportunities for women at the AMC or locks on breastfeeding doors in ACT government departments?

Ms Berry: I understand this is a question that you ask during committee hearings and in the Assembly. I have not been updated on the progress of those particular issues that you have raised, but I do understand that it might be a question, regarding the AMC, for another minister.

MRS JONES: I certainly will raise it there as well, yes. But if there are things that can be done to strengthen the reporting from departments back to the office for women, I would encourage that. You do not have a thousand staff, but you want to see these outcomes achieved.

Ms Berry: That will be in the implementation of the action plan on the women's plan, through the ministerial advisory council on women. They take that role very seriously and want to work with directorates on how they can report on the strategies that they are implementing across government to encourage gender equity across each of the directorates.

MRS JONES: Indeed. Thank you.

Ms Starick: Ms Jones, if I could—

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I ask a supplementary on that—

Ms Starick: Sorry, I will take your other question about the engagement of the office for women on notice, just to check.

MRS JONES: Yes, absolutely. Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Just a quick supplementary on gender analysis. Are you considering doing a detailed gender analysis of the budget, such as the one the national foundation for women did for the federal budget, which was a bit of an eye-opener?

Ms Berry: I have spoken to Marie Coleman, who conducted that work last year on the federal budget. I had a good long chat with her about the work that she had done in that respect. It is not something that I have considered, but we could consider it for future budgets.

MR PETTERSSON: I was wondering if you could tell me a bit more about the million dollars that is being spent to develop a strategy to get more women into male-dominated trades?

Ms Berry: I can tell you a bit, but it is really in the higher education portfolio area. It sort of crosses over into women in any case, because it is women that we are talking about, but we are also working on a broader strategy around science, technology,

engineering and maths and encouraging more young women and girls to take up study in those kinds of areas, and opening up the opportunities for young women and girls in employment in areas that use all of those kinds of educational tools.

When I was a kid, which was not so long ago—I am only in my mid-thirties—when I used to think of science I would think of somebody wearing corduroy pants and doing some experiments with beakers and things like that. If you thought of maths, you thought of a particular teacher at the front of the class scrawling equations on a chalkboard. That has all changed now. Maths is used in every kind of occupation, all across the world. It is about understanding—with science, technology and engineering as well—that all the different kinds of job opportunities that come from studying in all of those areas are broad and varied and are not always the traditional kinds of male trades that we would have seen previously. That has changed a lot, and the way that those courses are delivered now covers off a whole different cohort of occupations.

When we talk to young women and girls who want to study or are looking at studying in those areas, sometimes they will ask—I have certainly had it asked of me—“Where are the jobs?” Pretty much every job uses information from any of those courses, in any kind of job that you could go into. I know it is something for you; you are a bit of a maths expert yourself, Mr Pettersson.

MR PETTERSSON: Not as good as I wish I was.

MRS JONES: He is good at counting votes.

MR PETTERSSON: I wish I was better at that as well. You mentioned that there was a focus on STEM as well. What are the barriers that you think women in Canberra are facing to get into these trades? I know we are spending money. What are we hoping to overcome?

Ms Berry: When I have had conversations with young women and girls in the portfolios that I am responsible for, particularly in sport and recreation, and asked about the kinds of barriers that they face in participating in sport, they are fairly obvious things like having a friend to go and do the sport with, making sure that the facilities are family friendly, and making sure that where they go and play sport is safe and well lit. There are some fairly simple solutions to making it easier for women and girls to participate.

The same would apply for occupations women would not normally go and work in. It is about asking: “What are the barriers and how can we encourage more women and girls to take up those occupations?” In some respects, it is also about role models, actually seeing girls in those occupations and seeing that it is possible for people to be able to participate in that way. Minister Meegan Fitzharris has been doing a lot of work with the women in trades association. I met with them the other week. We want to work together on how we can encourage more women and girls, but using the women and girls that are already working in those trades to mentor and support others who might want to take up those occupations.

MR PETTERSSON: Continuing on that, in more of a white-collar sense, is that where something like the ACT women’s register comes in, providing these role

models through people who are successful in the corporate or government world?

Ms Berry: Yes. The women's register is a register for women who might be interested in taking up positions on boards that the ACT government has responsibility for. That register is controlled or managed by the office for women. But I think that there is a refresh required for the register. I have started conversations with the business chamber and the Australian institute of directors, looking at ways we can encourage more women to apply to have their name on the register and also encourage more than just the government—community services, and private businesses and others—to check in on the register if they are looking at improving gender equity on boards, to go to the register and look for women who might have the skills, qualifications or experience that they might need to improve gender equity on boards.

In the ACT, as I said, we have pretty good representation on the boards that we have responsibility for, but we want to open that register up for more women and look at the sorts of ways that we can support more women if they need it so that they can get experience and qualifications if that is what is required. We want to open that register up to more than just the ACT government for use.

MR PETTERSSON: If there was someone listening and watching, what would you say to them about the women's register? Would you say that there are a wide range of candidates on there? Are there a large number of candidates there?

Ms Berry: I am not exactly sure of the actual number, but I am certainly working on improving the number of women on that register, working towards broadening it to more than just the ACT government and working out ways that we can encourage more women to enrol on the register. Do we have a number?

Ms Moore: I do not have a number, but I can say that it is quite a diverse group of women. We have been working over the years to get more diversity on that register. One of the things that we have been trying to do is focus on women, but also women from different backgrounds and with different skill sets. We find with the office for women that we get contacted by other directorates. When they have board vacancies and they are trying to increase their gender balance, we are able to look at the register, not just at names but at what kinds of skill sets would match the appointment that they are looking for.

MR PETTERSSON: Thank you.

MS CODY: I have a supplementary, but I am not sure if it is here or not.

THE CHAIR: We will go the supplementary, and then we will go to Mrs Jones for a substantive.

Ms Berry: I will tell you.

MS CODY: Mr Pettersson was talking to you about STEM. I know that we are focusing on getting more women involved, which is fantastic. Are we looking at that from a school perspective as well?

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS CODY: Is that better asked about in education?

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS CODY: Thank you.

MRS JONES: In relation to strategic indicator 5 on page 7 of book G, it is stated that the proportion of ACT women who feel safe by themselves in public places during the day and night is X per cent. We are hitting 93 per cent during the day but only 38 per cent at night. Given that the statistic for night-time is 38 per cent of women feeling safe, which leaves 60-odd per cent of women essentially reporting that they do not feel safe after hours, I was surprised to see that the estimated target does not increase across the forward estimates. Why are we not trying to improve that number? I think the general public would be surprised to find that the government thinks it is acceptable that over 60 per cent of women do not feel safe after dark in Canberra.

Mr De'Ath: Nicole, would you like to take that question?

Ms Moore: I can talk to that a bit. The numbers for safety at night for males and females are lower than during the day. It is about comparability with males and females generally. I do not have the figure for males.

MRS JONES: Maybe you could take that on notice.

Ms Moore: Yes. In terms of our capacity to make changes in that item, it is very difficult for us to do so, because it is about safety generally.

MRS JONES: Most policy areas are difficult, I think.

Ms Moore: It is. This is a policing survey, as well. One of the things that we have flagged for this year is to look at this measure in particular to see what we can do to make a more meaningful measure going forward, if we can. That will be looking at whether there is a possibility for change—

MRS JONES: Am I understanding correctly that because the measure is fairly static, what you are trying to do is work out a new way of defining it rather than improving it?

Ms Moore: No; we are trying to look at whether it is a meaningful measure going forward, and—

MRS JONES: Are you suggesting that it is not meaningful? I would suggest that if you have done a survey and that is your number, that means something.

Ms Moore: It certainly means a lot. What I am suggesting is that it might not be something that this directorate can directly impact. Obviously, we have a role to play, particularly in women's safety portfolios.

MRS JONES: I think you underestimate the minister.

Mr De'Ath: As in many portfolios that CSD carries, it has an oversight role, so it does not necessarily have and control all of the levers for change. This is clearly a big one. There is work that the directorate is undertaking and will continue to undertake with other parts of government to look at how to improve that figure. Then, hopefully, over time we can put a different figure in there. But we are not at this stage in direct control of being able to guarantee—

MRS JONES: I put it to you that 38 per cent as a static figure is a disgrace.

Ms Berry: I think it goes back to what I was talking about earlier. The directorate are having a look at their different policies and how they implement strategies across the government, and having a site for how gender equity is affected by the implementation of those policies. For example, through Transport Canberra and the work that they are doing in setting up the rail line, having a look at how women feel, whether they feel safe catching public transport and whether there is enough lighting. In sport, is there enough lighting? Are there facilities within the change rooms that are female friendly and safe?

MRS JONES: That is right.

Ms Berry: There is all that kind of work that is happening across government, which should contribute to women feeling safer at night.

MRS JONES: I would hope that in future budgets we are aiming higher than that, even if it is through a different statistic. Even though, obviously, you do not directly control how much lighting goes where, that has not stopped you from reporting on any other aspect of how women are doing in the territory, and you do not directly control that either. I would just encourage you not to sit back on this one. If we cannot go around at night-time feeling safe, what the heck use is this place?

Ms Berry: Absolutely, and that is the work, through the women's action plan, that the ministerial advisory council on women is working on. The next priority area is housing and homelessness and safety.

MRS JONES: Safety, yes.

Ms Berry: The ministerial advisory council has responsibility for the implementation of the action plan and each of the actions coming from that.

MRS JONES: So there is a lot of work to do, basically.

Ms Berry: There is a lot of work to do; there is no question about that. But we have a plan, it is being implemented and the ministerial advisory council will work with directorates on how they can report back.

MRS JONES: I understand you are getting a women's safety map reported to you by the end of July. What are the plans to use the women's safety map that the Women's

Centre for Health Matters has been supported to produce?

Ms Starick: Can we take that on notice?

MRS JONES: Yes, but just to fill you in, the Women's Centre for Health Matters is producing, on a government grant, I believe, the women's safety map to inform future initiatives addressing women's safety. I am surprised if you do not know about it, but thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I just follow up with—

THE CHAIR: I will come to you in a minute. Minister, I am curious about strategic objective 5, which is the proportion of women who feel safe during the day and night. It does not necessarily reflect an outcome that is within the directorate's purview to influence. Why would it continue to be included in the budget—

Mr De'Ath: Can I clarify that? It is not about it not being within our purview to influence. What I was commenting on was that we do not control all the levers. It does not mean we do not go out and influence and work with other parts of government to change that. That is a critical function that we carry out in the course of our work.

Ms Berry: Just before you go on, Chair, I think we can provide some clarity on the work that is happening with the women's centre for health.

MRS JONES: The map?

Ms Moore: The women's safety map was a project, you are right, that was funded as a grant. That project is about getting women to report places where they feel unsafe. The result will be a women's safety map.

MRS JONES: I understand Woden is a fairly significant problem in that map.

Ms Moore: Yes. What we need to get back to you on, the question on notice, is not about the project, because we know about the project, but what we are going to be doing with the project next, and that is what we need to—

MRS JONES: Yes, and what the plan has been from the beginning, because presumably you give out these grants for a specific outcome focus, I hope.

Ms Moore: Certainly, and they have achieved the outcome in producing the map, but we would like to use it further. That would be the next step.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was going to make the suggestion that maybe this accountability indicator be moved into some other directorates as well, because I think we can probably all agree that it is beyond the power of CSD to do it by themselves. This is a whole-of-government issue.

MRS JONES: Yes, but a large amount of what is in CSD is outside their directorate control.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. It should be an objective of the ACT government that the residents of ACT, be they male or female, feel safe outside. I am not sure it is an objective. My suggestion would be maybe you could put this into some other directorates. I am not quite sure how much more time we have. I was going to ask you some more questions that went behind this. In particular, you have mentioned the application of women's safety assessments for ACT-funded events. Have you done many, and what—

MRS JONES: The multicultural event does that.

MS LE COUTEUR: I know. And what impact did they have? It is one thing to do an assessment—that is no doubt worthy—but the important thing is that they make the changes.

Ms Berry: I think there were a number of changes that were made in the assessments that occurred previously for the Multicultural Festival in particular. But did you want to talk about some of the changes, some of the things that were implemented as a result of that assessment?

Ms Khan: Yes, certainly.

Mr De'Ath: If I could, referring to your earlier point, remembering that the action plan is an across-government piece of work—all directorates are required to contribute to it and report on it—and it is in its relative infancy, you could go and put everything in everybody's plan, but actually there is an overarching element to the plan.

MS LE COUTEUR: In that case you do take responsibility for it?

Mr De'Ath: We take responsibility for monitoring and reporting and influencing.

MRS JONES: And banging a few desks?

Mr De'Ath: We are also collaborative and cooperative. We do not need to do that.

Ms Khan: Coming back to the safety assessment that was done at the Multicultural Festival this year, key areas that we looked at as part of that audit included the lighting level, clear signage, navigation of the area, the emergency contact point, the ability to audit calls for help, security, police presence, strategies to deal with unsafe behaviour, entrapment sites, appearance and vandalism. On the audit findings, basically we are still looking at addressing them for the next festival.

MS LE COUTEUR: How many other events were audited? Was that the only one or were there other events?

Ms Khan: I will have to take that on notice.

Ms Berry: I think in a question that you—

MRS JONES: CBR events.

Ms Berry: That is right. It was a question that Ms Le Couteur asked during an Assembly sitting about whether or not other events were being audited. I think we were looking at whether for events—CBR events or VisitCanberra or whoever it is that is organising the different events in the ACT—we can use that audit across things like Enlighten and balloon festivals and other events that are supported by the ACT government.

MRS JONES: Can I clarify what Ms Khan said. Was vandalism one of the things that were looked at—graffiti in the area and that type of thing?

Ms Khan: I am sorry, I read the 2010 audit. That was the 2010 list of things.

MRS JONES: In 2010 the thought was that, if the place does not look clean and tidy, that can give an impression of unsafety?

Ms Khan: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: If that was the 2010 report, does that imply there has not been a report since then?

Ms Khan: No. I actually flipped over to 2010. In fact, the 2017 audit results did not have vandalism as one of those items.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, committee and minister. We will move to housing, output class 1.1 of Housing ACT, in budget statements G.

Mr De'Ath: We will just change officials.

THE CHAIR: The committee is now dealing with housing and suburban development. Minister, do you have an opening statement?

Ms Berry: I do, thank you, chair. Last week's budget puts in train a majority of the commitments that were made during the election campaign and as part of the parliamentary agreement. These include the continuation of the public housing renewal program, which is \$50 million in the next two years; \$350,000 for a system-wide approach for the assessment and referral of people who have experienced trauma, which includes the purchase, development and implementation of an accredited training program for support workers; visibility and planning work for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons housing, as well as a second Common Ground; research and planning for tenants with high and complex needs, to make sure they are getting the right support when they need it; and the funding for a housing summit which will occur later on this year.

I want to particularly point out the \$6.3 million item which will provide the ACT's matched funding for the continuation of the national partnership agreement on homelessness, although we expect that that agreement will be rolled into the national affordable housing agreement. Confirmation of ongoing federal funding came after several years of advocacy from our local housing and homelessness sector and from

me, as well as from other state and territory ministers.

We know how important this funding is, and I am relieved that we find ourselves in a position where we are able to negotiate a new agreement with secure funding on the table rather than having cuts as a threat hanging over our heads. That is positive news for negotiations across the country for national affordable housing agreements and how we can implement them and make a difference in housing affordability and provision across the country.

A theme through the government's work, moving ahead, is the development of a new housing strategy, which I talked about earlier—another commitment that was made during the election. The government's advisory group has met a number of times to give some early direction to this work, and early preparations for the summit are already underway.

I spoke last week with representatives of the sector, and it has been great to see people engage with a different kind of policy process. The government understands that there is always more work to do in this area, and so we are happy to be scrutinised by the community and by the Assembly in this regard. But I think this budget takes a really positive step for our housing agenda and the broader goals of equity and inclusion. I am happy to take questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister.

MS ORR: In your statement you noted that a lot of this budget is focused on election commitments, and I have some questions on that. You mentioned in your statement Common Ground 2 and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons home. Can you run me through the process the government will go through with the funding provided for feasibility of these two commitments?

Ms Berry: One of the strengths of the government's \$30 million investment in the original Common Ground was the demonstrated evidence of what can be achieved when government, the business sector and the wider community work together. Similarly for Common Ground 2, which is an election commitment, the government will once again seek to undertake some feasibility work on the best possible way forward. We want to make sure we involve all of the community and private businesses that were involved in the first Common Ground and see how we can draw on our experiences from the first Common Ground and make even better the second Common Ground.

The same will be the case for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons housing, which was completed in Kambah in the last year and in which people are now residing happily. It has been a very successful building project. Again, we want to make sure we involve the community—of course, the elected body, once its elections are completed—and the broader community in how we can build on the knowledge we learned from the new homes for older persons in Kambah and how we can make an even better older persons housing product.

MS ORR: Will the new older persons housing be modelled on the existing Kambah one?

Ms Berry: Yes. We are doing a little bit of work to check in with the original housing development to see if it delivered the outcomes that were originally planned for that housing and whether it is meeting the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and if there are ways we can improve on the work that we did.

MS ORR: Will the second Common Ground be largely modelled on the original Common Ground model?

Ms Berry: Yes. I have had a couple of conversations with Common Ground, the board, Northside Community Service and Argyle, who are directly responsible for providing services and support for the community housing and public housing residents in Common Ground, about the kinds of improvements we could make to a second Common Ground. There are lots of different ideas about how it could be improved. Because we have experience now in the development of this first one in the ACT, we can draw on all of those experiences and have a look at what is working really well in the original Common Ground. We are much more experienced now and the Common Ground board are much more experienced in how they engage with the private and community sectors and getting them involved in the development itself—the bricks and mortar—but also in how they support the people now residing in Common Ground 1. But it has been a success story.

Ms Gilding: To reiterate what the minister was saying, we are undertaking an evaluation of Common Ground 2 because we need to understand the tenant experience and whether it is meeting their needs and delivering the outcomes we expect. Also we are looking at location, cost efficiencies and, as the minister was saying, learnings from the management model that we have in Canberra. Likewise, there are Common Grounds around Australia that have also had evaluations done and certainly we would pick up those findings and recommendations in our work going forward.

MS ORR: You also mentioned that it is about working with the community sector and so forth. What has been the response to the budget from the community sector for what we are delivering?

Ms Berry: It has been very positive. From the moment work commenced on Common Ground 1—and I acknowledge the work of former board member Liz Dawson, who had a lot to do with lobbying and continuous campaigning to encourage as many people to be involved in the original Common Ground—the next question was, “That’s great. When’s Common Ground 2 going to be built?” So we have committed to that and we will build a second Common Ground.

One of the successes, which will come through in the evaluation that Housing ACT will do of the original Common Ground, is the opportunity for employment for some of the residents who live in Common Ground, through the support of private businesses like Bunnings and IKEA. They had job opportunities for some of the individuals that were living in Common Ground. Maybe we need to find some more innovative names for Common Ground 1 and Common Ground 2, and that could be a project that we do with some of the residents. It has been a success story, but always there is room for improvement. We want to work out the best way to meet the needs

of the residents and our community.

MR MILLIGAN: You may be able to correct me if I am wrong, but during the election last year Labor promised to spend \$4.4 million on culturally appropriate Indigenous aged-care housing. Is the government still committed to that promise?

Ms Berry: The government has made a commitment to a second older persons home for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons, which was a commitment that was made during the election and which now forms part of the ACT government's agreement.

MR COE: Is there actually a plan for that expenditure? What is the rough schedule?

Ms Berry: The initial start to that project will be some consultation work with the community about making sure that the housing to be developed best suits the community's needs. Those conversations happen with the elected body, the broader community and an evaluation and conversation with the residents currently living in the older persons housing out at Kambah.

MR COE: But do you have an idea of what that funding profile will look like?

Ms Berry: I guess we will have to—

Ms Gilding: Perhaps I can step through where we are at at the moment. There has been \$250,000 allocated for this financial year for that initial planning and feasibility work to happen. We need to actually identify a site. We will look for options and then work with the elected body on that location, making sure that it is culturally sensitive and close to locations, services and amenities that are needed for that. We will then do the range of planning studies needed: environmental assessments, an analysis of in-ground services, infrastructure, traffic, public transport and, of course, as I said before, local services and support. We are still at that early stage in terms of identifying the site. Once we can identify a site and do those studies, we can then move into the design phase and then funding for construction in the outyears.

MR COE: Does that look like a 2019 or 2020 delivery date?

Ms Gilding: Again, it is early days. We need to find the site first, and once that has happened we will have far more certainty around the time frame.

Ms Berry: But the success of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons housing at this point is due to the conversations with the elected body and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure that the development was culturally sensitive and met the needs of the residents living there. All the way through the development of the project—the selection of the site, the design of the dwellings—it was all done in very close conversation with the elected body and the broader community to make sure it met the needs of the future residents who are now living there. We will have a look at how that went, see if it is working well with the community and make an assessment on what a future design would look like, with the community involved every step of the way.

MS CODY: Minister, you mentioned in response to Ms Orr's question on Common Ground that some of the tenants had gained employment. Can you expand on the sorts of things that are working for tenants transitioning from homelessness or crisis accommodation into mainstream housing and how we are assisting through employment and other ways?

Ms Gilding: The Common Ground model out at Gungahlin provides 20 social public housing places and also 20 affordable housing places. With the 20 social housing places, a tenant would pay 25 per cent of their income. If they are transitioning from homelessness, that is probably some sort of commonwealth or statutory pension. The other part of that is the affordable housing component. The current Common Ground is supported by NRAS incentives, so they would pay, I think, 74.9 per cent of income.

In terms of the outcomes we have seen so far for the Common Ground cohort—we have got 20 folk there—off the top of my head I think we have nine folk who are undertaking some sort of formal training and another three to four have secured employment. In terms of the longitudinal study of those tenants, I would have to find some more information, but they have certainly transitioned from homelessness and are sustaining their tenancies. One of the things we look for is living skills, being able to maintain a property and pay rent on time, and certainly the Common Ground model has fantastic outcomes in that sense.

THE CHAIR: Ms Gilding, I have a question of clarification. You mentioned that the figure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons scoping study and preparation works was \$250,000 this year.

Ms Berry: That includes—

THE CHAIR: There is \$350,000, and it is also mixed in with Common Ground.

Ms Gilding: Correct.

THE CHAIR: What is the breakdown of those two projects? It is \$250,000 and \$100,000?

Ms Gilding: Correct.

MS ORR: As a supplementary to Ms Cody's supplementary to my supplementary about the support for people, you spoke about Common Ground for people moving into employment. At page 36, is strategic indicator 3 going to the broader community? It is not just focusing on Common Ground, I take it? I think there was a question in my half-finished sentences.

MS CODY: There was. I was trying to pick up on that.

Ms Gilding: This particular indicator is taken from our administrative dataset. We call it the SHIP database, the specialist homelessness information platform. Basically our providers all input data on a monthly basis as part of their reporting under their contracts. We have 28 providers who provide specialist homelessness services. There is a breakdown as a result of the clients' information prior to supports, their first entry

in terms of the service, and then that outcome at the end of that support period. That is the outcome that you are seeing there. On a national basis we actually do exceptionally well in the before and after outcomes on those support periods in terms of employment, sustaining housing and training goals. We are quite outstanding in that.

MS ORR: So what is it that we are doing that gets those outcomes?

Ms Gilding: In the homelessness sector we had a fundamental redesign or co-design process back in 2014-15. The federal government reduced funding to the sector quite significantly and the cohort got together to redesign the services to ensure that they could deliver to people who needed the most, but also to achieve the outcomes. As part of that process one of the things they looked at was the difference between when they provided support periods and accommodation needs.

If you look across that \$20 million of funding across those 28 service providers at any given time, we have 314 accommodation places and over 900 support periods. That support might look like health support, connecting people with their health needs, financial counselling, living skills, employment opportunities, looking for training skills, basic living skills, help with parenting. Whatever the client actually presented with, there was flexibility then within those contracts for that support to be provided.

One of the critical things about separating the accommodation from the support period was that support could then be provided in a tenure-neutral position. It did not have to be coupled with the accommodation. When somebody calls up OneLink or gets in contact with the specialist housing services provider, they are often actually in accommodation. What we find is that if we can provide support at that point in time we can help them sustain that tenancy in the private sector or wherever they may be, which ultimately prevents homelessness.

MR PARTON: This is a broader housing nuts and bolts question. Can I ask the minister and officials: when a tenant vacates a public housing residence, what inspections and actions do you undertake?

Ms Berry: Just a general vacation? They have left? They have just abandoned it?

MR PARTON: I guess I am talking about a general vacation to start with, yes, just an end of tenancy.

Ms Berry: There could be lots of different circumstances, I guess. That is what I am getting at.

MR PARTON: Would you like me to get to a specific—

Mr Duggan: I have read the privilege statement. No. I do not think we have got to default to specific individuals. When a tenant leaves one of our properties we do a full inspection of the property and we examine the property as to—

MR PARTON: Who does?

Mr Duggan: We do, Housing ACT. We do that with Spotless, our provider in that area. We examine the condition of the house. We make notes of the condition of the house and agree whether the house was left in the condition in which we had actually given it over to the tenant.

MR PARTON: What you are telling me is that those inspections include someone from Housing ACT and someone from Spotless—

Mr Duggan: Normally Housing ACT and Spotless, because the tenants are often still in situ and if they are in situ we go through the process of them leaving our property and we discuss with the tenant plus with Spotless what we feel is a fair assessment of the condition of the house that is being vacated.

MR PARTON: So who is responsible for the cost of cleaning and repairs? Obviously there will be all sorts of conditions of houses at the end of tenancies. But when it comes to just age and fair wear and tear, who is responsible for the cost of cleaning and repairs at the end of tenancy?

Mr Duggan: Fair wear and tear is our cost, because that is a normal provision of any landlord. Over a period you accept that there is fair wear and tear. With any product that you have provided to someone, where there is a tenant responsible for maintenance, it is a tenant's responsibility and we will then pursue those costs with the tenant.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would that be the case in a deceased estate, if one of your tenants has died? I have heard of a fairly unfriendly clean-up event.

MR PARTON: And so have I.

Mr Duggan: When a member of the community dies, it is our undertaking to be sensitive about those issues with the estate, namely the family members who are there. We are very careful in those circumstances. If there is a particular issue, I apologise if that is the level of it. But we are very sensitive about that. Often when there is a death there are family members who are still resident in that property potentially. We really work very closely with them on their tenancy and the ongoing use of that property. Where we feel there is a high degree of discretion, we apply it. If there are any costs associated with the death of a person, I think there is a very low uptake of us ever pursuing anything in that space.

Mr De'Ath: I would say that if there is a particular issue that you are concerned about, we are very happy to take that offline and have a discussion with you about that. I will always be concerned about any further introspection of a particular case at risk of identifying, as Mr Duggan referred to earlier.

MR PARTON: And certainly we are not in the business of doing that. But I believe that Ms Le Couteur and I are talking about completely different issues.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sure we are talking about different ones.

Mr De'Ath: I am not suggesting for a moment—

MR PARTON: Can I ask: I know it is a very, very specific request and it is not one that you will know off the top of your head, but I would love to see a figure for the average cost of an end-of-tenancy clean-up when it comes to a deceased estate. That is what I would love to see.

Mr Duggan: We would provide that figure to the people, and we are often requested to do it, and that is negotiable. Based on circumstance, we always do that. But I can certainly have a look at that. I reiterate what the director-general said. If there is a particular case and there is a concern, I would prefer to hear of it outside of this and actually try to resolve it.

Mr De'Ath: Sorry, Mr Parton, were you talking about the average cost over a number of tenancies or were you talking about a specific tenancy?

MR PARTON: No, I mean over a period of time.

Mr De'Ath: Average cost over a period of time?

MR PARTON: That is what I am talking about.

Mr De'Ath: Would we be able to provide that?

Mr Duggan: Yes, we should be able to lift that.

Mr De'Ath: We will take that on notice.

Ms Berry: And as we take that on notice, if you are asking specifically about estates where the resident is deceased, that average figure might be a little odd. We might have to have some explaining points—

MR PARTON: Odd because it is a small number?

Ms Berry: Yes.

MR PARTON: We get that. And we might trade notes, Ms Le Couteur and I, after this too.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is not the same case, absolutely not.

Ms Berry: But if you do have an individual that is in a situation where they need some more information or where we can provide them with more information, then please put them in touch with either my office or Housing ACT so that we can work with them.

MR PARTON: I know that one of those involved is watching this stream. She will be pleased to hear that.

THE CHAIR: I will pass my question to Mr Parton to have a second crack.

MR PARTON: Again, this starts off as quite a broad question, probably way too broad. I want to know how complaints against public housing tenants are managed, broadly speaking. I am talking about complaints that come from other public housing tenants and also from people who are home owners or private renters. I guess I am talking about what are the rights of those who are affected by tenant behaviours and actions that have brought on complaints.

Ms Gilding: Perhaps I might start with an overview. I think what you are talking about is antisocial behaviour.

MR PARTON: Pretty much, yes.

Ms Gilding: In general, if we have a look at the overall number of houses in the ACT, I want to set a bit of context here because sometimes I feel public housing tenants get a bad rap. If we have a look at the number of houses in Canberra, which is about 164,300—

THE CHAIR: Not to put a fine point on it.

Ms Gilding: Not to put a fine point on it. I have 420 tenancies that have had an antisocial complaint against them this year. As a percentage of the overall stock in Canberra, it is zero point zero something.

MR PARTON: When you say you have had a complaint against them, do you mean a complaint through the ACAT process or a complaint through the directorate?

Ms Gilding: It is the number of tenancies, so it could be either. In terms of the ACAT, it would be much, much lower. That would be the number of issues that have come to Housing ACT's attention where we have received a complaint—it might be a complaint from another tenant; it might be a complaint from a neighbour—and we have needed to take some action, provide some help, provide some support, provide some assistance to do that. Even though they are a small percentage of the overall Canberra community in terms of that complaint number, we expect our tenants, just like private renters, to abide by their tenancy agreements under the Residential Tenancies Act, which is the same for private renters as it is for public tenants.

We believe that everybody deserves the right to enjoy their home in peace and quiet. I think that is the language that is used in the actual legislation. But we understand that because we have a vulnerable cohort—in terms of our allocations, 97 per cent of our stock is allocated to those who have complex and high needs—we will have behaviours that we do need to support. I might just pass to Frank to explain how our housing managers work with tenancies and some of the things we have done to provide more intensive support where it is needed.

Mr Duggan: If the complaint is of a serious nature, obviously, as any other landlord would, we would encourage people to refer it to the police. If it is a criminal matter, that is the best line of approach that should be taken. However, a lot of disputes are between neighbours and adjoining neighbours. We undertake to visit the property. We will talk with the person who has made the complaint. Then we will talk to the people who are the recipients of the complaint. We will try to do some immediate dispute

resolution between the parties. Failing that, if it becomes more intense and people are a bit more difficult to engage, we use the conflict resolution centre, which is located here in Civic. We engage them to work with both parties. That has had some very good outcomes.

If we cannot resolve it, we continue to visit and we put that matter into our intensive support team. They have a lower caseload of tenants that they work with. They will do a lot of immediate visits and follow-ups. If that still remains a problem or an issue, we will start to think about a legal pathway and we will issue a notice to remedy, asking them to be of better behaviour and set some conditions. Failing that, we will approach the ACAT. Then we will actually go into ACAT and follow the processes before the ACAT, which could be, in the most extreme case, eviction because of that behaviour. But as a model litigant, too, we have to produce the right evidence before the ACAT, so it is a very protracted process.

MR PARTON: It is a long process.

Mr Duggan: Yes.

MR PARTON: I have spoken to people who are not necessarily in public housing but are close by, in particular in a couple of instances where they have gone to the police and people have been charged and sent to jail. They have gone through that process of doing what was suggested to them, but upon their return the exact same thing happens. When you have got situations where clearly there has been criminal antisocial behaviour and where people are clearly being intimidated—I have spoken to a couple who were too frightened to go to ACAT because they know that that process is going to take a period of time and they have to live there—I do not know, Mr Duggan or Minister Berry, what advice you give to people in that situation, because clearly they are not able to live a peaceful life.

Mr Duggan: The advice we give is that we are bound by the Residential Tenancies Act and we do pursue these issues with a lot of vigour. We bring those before the ACAT and then it is a decision of the ACAT as to the outcomes. If there is a period of incarceration and that period of incarceration goes over six months, we have another process that we initiate to get that property returned to our use because it is no longer being used by the person who is incarcerated.

MR MILLIGAN: Thank you, Mr Parton, for the lead-in on public housing. My question is: is there a financial policy for providing housing for the Indigenous community, not managed care housing, and how many houses are currently allocated for Indigenous housing?

Mr Duggan: I can give the figure for the tenancies at the moment. We have over 900 tenancies that are being used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. That includes about 2,000 people living within those tenancies. We also have a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on our priority waiting list at the moment.

MR MILLIGAN: Is there any policy towards adding more housing for the Indigenous community? If you have already got Indigenous people on the waiting list,

are there any plans to look at providing more housing so that you can cater for them?

Ms Gilding: If I understand your question, you are talking about having Indigenous housing specifically managed by—

MR MILLIGAN: By Housing ACT.

Ms Gilding: We have mainstream housing and mainstream stock. In terms of our allocations policy, we have an assessment process that, as part of that process, allocates the needs category in terms of standard, high and priority. One of the things that we take into consideration as part of that priority allocation are the cultural needs of the particular applicant. In that respect, certainly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants would have priority across that whole stock. I guess in some sense you would want them to be able to access the mainstream stock. There is far more of that than if there were just small priority parts carved off for them, if that makes sense.

MR MILLIGAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Cody, a substantive question.

MS CODY: I guess it leads on a bit, but I will take it as a substantive.

THE CHAIR: It is all housing, so it is going to be a continuing thing.

MS CODY: I was just looking at page 38, table 32, the accountability indicators, output 1.1. I am wondering what proportion of our housing allocations are for people with the greatest needs.

Ms Berry: We talked about that earlier. We are very targeted in the provision of housing in the ACT, to ensure that housing goes to those people who have some of the most complex needs, and often a number of complex needs. We are at 97 per cent in the ACT. Do you want to describe what that looks like?

Ms Gilding: Thank you, minister. In terms of those in need, we bring two things into that criterion. There is an affordability and an eligibility criterion, in that you are generally on some sort of statutory income or commonwealth pension. Then there are the other eligibility criteria of how long you have lived in the ACT, how old you are et cetera. Then we also, as part of that assessment process, have an interview process where we undertake to understand a person's particular situation and the complexity of their situation. They often have compounding life challenges, such as a risk of homelessness, ill health or a physical disability.

More often than not, we are finding that we are dealing with trauma and traumatic experiences. There is an initiative in this budget to make sure that we can provide trauma-informed services. Those are the folk that get priority, and that is what that 97 or 98 per cent is actually targeted at. When we compare that with the national figures, they are more around 75 per cent in terms of targeting. We are the most highly targeted public housing jurisdiction in Australia.

MS CODY: There are a couple of points I want to ask about there. You mentioned

that there are a whole bunch of different criteria, and you mentioned age. So age does play a factor?

Ms Gilding: Yes. Certainly you need to be 16 years or older to be a public housing tenant.

MS CODY: So it is not necessarily people over 65?

Ms Gilding: No, not at all. In fact, our oldest tenant is 101.

MS CODY: Excellent. Well done. And gender and race? None of that has any—

Ms Gilding: Absolutely not.

MS CODY: Good; I am just checking.

Ms Gilding: If you are in a vulnerable cohort, that would come into that second part of the assessment that we would absolutely take into consideration. If you are a woman with family, with children who are at risk, absolutely, we would be bringing that into the assessment.

MS CODY: But it would not be just because you are a woman.

Ms Gilding: No.

Ms Berry: No, but if you were a victim of domestic and family violence, you would get priority.

Ms Gilding: Absolutely.

Ms Berry: That is a requirement under the national partnership agreement on housing and continues to be a priority for the Australian government through its current agreements and through the work of housing ministers across the country, ensuring that that focus on women and children who have experienced or are experiencing domestic and family violence remains and that housing and support for those families remains a priority across the country. That was certainly what the Prime Minister announced during the domestic and family violence summit which was held late last year. There was agreement from all state and territory first ministers and women's ministers, all working together to make sure that the focus remains that way.

MS CODY: I am wondering how satisfied the tenants are with the quality of services, particularly from this perspective.

Ms Berry: We have very high satisfaction rates. We do, each year, a satisfaction survey. Around 80 or 85 per cent of tenants are satisfied with their housing provision and the services that are provided as part of that. Is there anything else that we can say on that?

Ms Gilding: Yes. The satisfaction surveys are done every year. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare does one in one year, and we do the next one the year

after. In the year gone by, we sent out about 2,000 surveys and we got about 600 of them back, about 30 per cent back. There is a series of questions asked of public housing tenants about their satisfaction, and I think that is at the 80 per cent level. Then, if you look down, we do a similar thing on the satisfaction level with the provision of community housing, and that is sitting at 85 per cent.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary with regard to the priority list and being housed within 90 days. To what extent do you triage applicants for housing?

Ms Gilding: In terms of being housed within 90 days, that is the percentage. That is how that particular figure is worked out, to show over that 90-day period how many people were housed that had the highest needs. I just want to clarify that.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Gilding: Determining that, as I said before, is a two-step process. First there is the application; that collects your eligibility criteria. The second—

THE CHAIR: Yes, I follow that. What categories are they broken up into, to be more specific?

Ms Gilding: Yes, sure. In the assessments of the needs categories, it is standard, high and priority. The priority needs you are looking at are considered in conjunction. To be in the priority needs category, you are at risk of homelessness; you might have mental health or medical issues; it might be disability, including frail aged; it might be women and children escaping domestic violence, as the minister said; it might be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who perhaps are facing complex issues and even facing discrimination in the private rental market; or it might be children at risk, including their parents and carers. When you bring those things together, they are considered to be in the priority category.

That is a recommendation that is made by Housing. With regard to the process to actually get on the priority housing list, we have a multidisciplinary panel that comes together and meets once a week or fortnightly, depending on the number of applications that need to be considered. That panel brings together community partners, service providers who work with vulnerable cohorts, and often our specialist homelessness providers. They consider the applications and they make a decision. It is based on an instrument under our legislation, whether or not that person should be recommended for that priority category. If you are in the priority category, it means you will be above the others on the waiting list who have standard and high needs.

THE CHAIR: What sorts of numbers are currently on the waiting list for priority, high and standard? I am happy if that is taken on notice.

Ms Gilding: I can answer that for you right now. In terms of standard, you are looking at between 800 and 900. In terms of high needs, it is about 800. In terms of priority, it is 41. We are sitting on about 1,750 people on the waiting list overall.

THE CHAIR: For those that are on the standard and high waiting lists, what is the average time that someone would spend on that list waiting for the first offer of a

property?

Ms Gilding: If you are on standard and high needs, you are probably going to be waiting around two or 2½ years. But there are factors involved in that. There are two things that come into play. The first is who is ahead of you on the priority list. If you are on the priority list, you are more than likely to be housed within 61 days. That is the average, but that can happen sooner; it depends on what stock comes through in the vacancy process. In 2015-16 I think we had another 561 new tenancies that were created. That is the stock that is being vacated. That then can be allocated to those folk on the priority needs waiting list. And if none of the stock is suitable for those priority needs—obviously, if you need physical access and stock comes up with stairs, it is not a property match—it will go to the next person on that priority list. It might be that it then gets down to high needs.

Ms Berry: It is important also to acknowledge that whilst it is often described as a waiting list, it is not as though you join a queue and get in line. Each of these people who are assessed in each of those categories is supported by different homelessness service providers or other providers to support them with often a number of different complex needs that they have. They are not just sitting waiting. They are being supported by different organisations to, if we possibly can, help them into private rental accommodation that might be suitable or find alternative accommodations for them. We also support them with some of the other complex needs that they might have or things that are going on in their lives.

As Ms Gilding said with regard to those people who have applications for priority housing, sometimes the time for people waiting for accommodation on that list can be pushed out because of the needs of individuals or families on that list. It might be that a particularly large family needs a very large home; there might not be one immediately available, and it takes a bit of time to purchase or build a five or six-bedroom house for a particularly large family. It could be somebody who has different abilities who needs a home that is accessible and meets their needs. There might not be one around straightaway; we might have to build, purchase or get one that becomes available for that person's need. In addition to that 1,700, the other definition that it is important to keep separate is rough sleeping, which is very different to 1,700. We have around 30.

Ms Gilding: From the last census data, that is correct. We had 29 rough sleepers. Obviously that was five years ago. I was out with night patrol about a fortnight ago and asked the workers about their sense of what was actually happening on the streets at the moment here in Canberra. Obviously, we have had population growth in that time, and I suspect that we will see an increase in the next census data, possibly to be sitting around between 35 and 40 rough sleepers.

THE CHAIR: I would like to ask a contrasting question. How many Housing tenants currently are paying what is considered full market rent?

Ms Gilding: Ninety-five per cent of tenants are on a rebate, so five per cent. That is there at "(d) percentage of housing tenants receiving a rebate". In terms of our accountability indicators, the percentage of public housing tenants receiving a rebate is 95 per cent, so five per cent would be on market rent.

MS LE COUTEUR: I imagine you did not watch the hearings on Friday, but just in case you did not, the YWCA's Frances Cummins—we have not got a transcript for it yet, so we are relying on my notes—talked about being in her office, being the only person there at the Y, when someone came in who said she had nowhere to sleep. She rang OneLink on that woman's behalf and she was told quite clearly that the woman should sleep in her car. The woman did not have a car. I understand that someone—I am not quite sure if it was Frances or the YWCA—paid for motel accommodation for this woman. My question is: how many people are like this, who contact OneLink and there simply is not accommodation?

Ms Berry: A person might find themselves in a situation where they might have left a violent relationship or be in a situation where they might have travelled into Canberra and be in their car at different times of the day, so at a moment in time they might be accommodating themselves in a car. But there is always brokerage, through Housing ACT, for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, as well as OneLink, to provide temporary accommodation until more permanent accommodation or a resolution can occur.

MS LE COUTEUR: So there will always be something if you are from domestic violence, but not—

Ms Berry: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: No?

Ms Berry: No; crisis accommodation if you are—

Ms Gilding: There is a high demand—absolutely right—for crisis accommodation. Our message would be for women and children in situations that are unsafe to please connect with services and make sure you have a safety plan. It is a suboptimal solution to be in your car, particularly in the Canberra winter.

MS LE COUTEUR: Absolutely.

Ms Gilding: Absolutely. Prevention, obviously, is much preferred. In terms of OneLink, I do know of four scenarios where there were women and children who were at risk of sleeping in their car. I do not have the evidence that they may or may not have, but we had one family that had driven, I think, from Wollongong. We encouraged them to drive back to where their support services, their community services and their family supports were. I understand that that family has now returned to Wollongong. There was another family who we assisted who were able to get into private rental accommodation. There was another one where we have been able to accommodate the family in public housing and another one where we accommodated them in crisis support services.

So where we do not immediately have accommodation available, and we do have high demand for that accommodation, we try to work with the family to find out what are their other options. Most of the time people do have somewhere else they can stay; they do have a roof that they can access rather than their cars. We connect them with

DVCS; DVCS have brokerage for hotels. Where we have a person that is imminently in crisis, we also provide brokerage.

THE CHAIR: Members—sorry, Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: I was just going to say that I wish we had a bit more time. I have a couple of points. OneLink presumably has some statistics on this. People ring up. Could you please publish the statistics as to the people who are ringing up and they are simply not able to—

Ms Gilding: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Secondly, domestic violence is not the only thing. From what I have been hearing anecdotally, domestic violence is getting priority treatment and people who are homeless not because of domestic violence, particularly just older, frail women, are not getting as much in services. I appreciate that there is a shortage all round, but it seems that—I am not begrudging the efforts on domestic violence; I am not trying to say that—there is more than domestic violence.

Ms Gilding: If I could perhaps respond to that. With older women and those seeking support, often we find they fall into three categories. Often it is just that it is an affordability issue. Sometimes it is affordability and they need short-term support. Then a third category is that we need that longer term supported accommodation.

In terms of our statistics, I am happy to go back and have a look again. I know the sector is saying, “We are seeing an increase in older women.” I got that question the other day. Certainly the trends are that we have been stable. I have not seen an uptick compared to the national level. We have about three per cent older women, currently, in our data that comes through our administrative datasets, that are accessing those homelessness services. I am curious to find the evidence that the sector is talking about. Obviously, older women again are another vulnerable cohort, a cohort that has significant affordability issues in terms of their ability to pay into superannuation and their job history and work history.

THE CHAIR: Mr De’Ath, do you have something to add?

Mr De’Ath: Thank you; just one comment. Ms Gilding is going to experience homelessness for herself tonight in the CEO sleep-out, so there is still time to support her if you wish. How can they do that, Louise?

THE CHAIR: A shameless comment!

Ms Gilding: Jump on CEO Sleepout Canberra and look for Louise Gilding. I am moving up the leader board. Mark Parton, I believe, is also sleeping out tonight.

MR PARTON: I am. You have raised five times more than me.

Ms Gilding: It is the passion.

THE CHAIR: We will adjourn today’s hearings. On behalf of the committee, I thank

Minister Stephen-Smith, Minister Berry and Minister Ramsay, as well as the cast of officials that have been before us today. The secretary will provide a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing when it becomes available. If there are any questions that have been taken on notice, can they please be returned to the committee secretary within five working days, day one being tomorrow.

The committee adjourned at 5.37 pm.