



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

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2017

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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

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.34 am.

Appearances:

Fitzharris, Ms Meegan, Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research

Transport Canberra and City Services

Thomas, Ms Emma, Director-General

Edghill, Mr Duncan, Deputy Director-General, Transport Canberra

Corrigan, Mr Jim, Deputy Director-General, City Services

Flanery, Ms Fleur, Acting Executive Director, Infrastructure, Planning and Operations

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Acting Director, City Presentation

McHugh, Mr Ben, Director, Capital Works

Marshall, Mr Ken, Director, Roads ACT

Trushell, Mr Michael, Director, ACT NOWaste

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, Libraries ACT

Matthews, Mr David, Executive Director, Public Transport Coordination

McGlenn, Mr Ian, Director, Public Transport Operations

ACT Public Cemeteries Authority

Bartos, Mr Stephen, Chair

Horne, Mr Hamish, Chief Executive Officer

THE CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to day 10 of the Select Committee on Estimates 2017-2018 public hearings. Today we are looking at the estimates for the revenue and expenditure proposals for Transport Canberra and City Services in relation to budget statements H. This afternoon the ACT Auditor-General will be joining us.

If a question is taken on notice, can you please clearly state, “I will take that question on notice.” It saves having arguments behind the scenes after the fact. I remind everyone to familiarise themselves with the pink privilege statement in front of you. I ask you to give an indication that you are aware of it and its implications. I am happy to throw to you, minister.

Ms Fitzharris: Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the excellent and important work the ACT government is doing through the Transport Canberra and City Services directorate. It is not even a year old yet, but since its establishment in June last year TCCS has worked towards its mandate to provide Canberrans with an integrated transport network and better city services.

The 2017-18 budget strengthened this commitment by investing in city-shaping infrastructure projects and more community-focused services for all Canberrans. As you will see from the budget statements, TCCS’s priorities take a customer and innovation perspective. These new approaches will enable the directorate to get even better at providing the essential services and infrastructure our growing city needs. Canberrans rely upon these services every day. No other arm of government touches

so many people's lives on a daily basis than the work of TCCS. The budget announcements made to provide Canberra with better suburbs will deliver projects and services the community has asked for and deserves.

Our container deposit scheme will remove used drinking containers from landfills and waterways while providing a valuable revenue source for small groups, community groups and sporting clubs. Participants in the container deposit scheme will receive 10c per container by returning their eligible recyclables to a collection point. The containers will then be taken to a centralised facility for sorting and then sold on to be recycled or reused.

Illegal dumping continues to be an issue for the community, which is why the 2017 budget will fund planning for a kerbside bulky waste pick-up service. This funding will also establish a community program to donate unwanted goods to people in need, including people whose lives have been disrupted by domestic violence or natural disasters.

In April we began a pilot of Canberra's first green bin program, with 6,000 homes registered in Weston Creek and Kambah before the first collection day. We know that green waste is an important issue for many Canberrans, which is why we have committed to making this service available to all ACT households by 2020. Canberrans, as we all know, take great pride in this city and want to see its assets beautified, protected and maintained. We have committed more than \$23 million in this budget to provide better suburbs for Canberra. This funding will pay for better road maintenance, better safety in school zones, better playground and sporting facilities, better weed control and better graffiti prevention.

Over the next two years we will also invest in our town centres, providing \$3 million for the Tuggeranong town centre, \$3 million for Gungahlin town centre and \$2 million for Kambah group centre over the next two years. Later today I will also be announcing the very first statement of intent for better city services, and I look forward to discussing that with the committee and with the community.

In addition, I am pleased to let you know that we have been working with Access Canberra on improvements to how the community can let us know when there may be an issue in their street or suburb that needs addressing. In the near future Minister Ramsay and I will announce some improvements to the fix my street portal. This will include greater interactivity and ease in reporting as well as greater transparency on what has already been reported. Closing the loop when issues are fixed will also be a focus, as well as providing practical information to the community at the suburb level about city services in their area. Not only will this mean greater information for the community but it will also support us in responding to the areas that need it most.

Better livability for Canberrans is also a priority of our government. We are working hard to ensure people of all ages and abilities can move more freely around the city, regardless of their personal circumstances or where they live. I recently attended the International Association of Public Transport 2017 global public transport summit in Montreal and participated in a subsequent study tour in the US and Canada. I will be presenting an extensive report on the summit and study to the Assembly in the next sittings. However, I can let the committee know that the summit theme was "lead the

transition". This was chosen because it reflects the evolution of the public transport sector and urban mobility internationally.

The ACT government recognises these rapid changes and knows we cannot afford to let them occur without our involvement. That is why, in the 2017-18 budget, we are leading the transition and working to deliver a truly integrated public transport network for Canberra. It is worth highlighting that almost all of the North American cities we visited had light rail at the heart of their public transport networks.

The construction of Canberra's own light rail network is the most significant transport project this city has ever embarked upon, and, as can be seen by all Canberrans, construction of stage 1 from Gungahlin is now well underway, with completion in sight for late 2018. TCCS is also moving ahead with light rail stage 2 to Woden. Since our re-election we have invested \$3.5 million in early planning for stage 2 and a further \$16.5 million is provided in this year's budget to carry out detailed scoping and route planning on the city to Woden corridor.

TCCS has received extensive feedback through the community-wide engagement process on stage 2 of light rail, and, as well as face-to-face meetings across the city, more than 4½ thousand people visited the your say website as part of the opening engagement. A summary of the consultation outcomes will be provided to the community in the coming months, which will help guide the final decision regarding the route and alignment between Civic and Woden.

The existing ACTION rapid bus services, the blue and red rapid, carry the highest number of passengers on the ACT's bus network, with more than five million boardings so far in 2016-17. This budget establishes two new rapid routes, linking Woden to the city via Manuka and Barton, and Belconnen to Gungahlin. The signalisation of the Barton Highway intersection with Gundaroo Drive has reduced congestion, particularly during peak periods, which will also help the new black rapid to travel more freely.

This reduction in congestion has occurred at the same time as its use has significantly increased, suggesting that drivers are now choosing this route rather than trying to avoid it. Modelling was projected at approximately 42,000 vehicles per day. However, as it is operating so efficiently now, in February we saw increased traffic volumes of nearly 44,000 vehicles per day.

The 2017-18 budget provides \$54 million to upgrade, build and plan for better roads to move Canberrans more freely around our city. Over three years this funding will equate to up to 150,000 square metres more of resurfaced roads each year and, most importantly, this work will improve the safety performance of roads in the ACT.

In addition, protecting the safety of young Canberrans is an important initiative of TCCS and the ACT government. The government will spend around \$3.2 million to implement a range of safety measures at 20 schools across the territory to improve road safety and encourage walking and cycling to school. Encouraging more children to ride or walk to school has many benefits, including better health, both physical and mental, reduced congestion, increased safety and more active communities. As was noted in the Health hearing the other day, the ACT is the only jurisdiction around the

country bucking the trend in increasing the number of kids walking and cycling to school, whereas in every other jurisdiction the number is on the decline.

Thanks to our ongoing investment in active travel, the ACT has one of the highest participation rates of active travel amongst the major Australian cities. Projects like park and pedal, an Australian first which has revolutionised the way many people make their way to work and home each day, is a terrific example of this government's commitment to active travel and the health and wellbeing of all Canberrans. This budget allocates \$4 million over four years to enhance Canberra's community path networks in identified high priority areas. These upgrades will include pedestrian refuges, pram and wheelchair crossings, cycleways and age-friendly walking and cycling improvements.

For cyclists in Canberra's north and north-west, nearly \$5 million has been allocated to pay for the Belconnen bikeway design and construction. The bikeway will link the University of Canberra, Radford College, CIT Bruce campus and the GIO Stadium with Belconnen town centre and surrounding suburbs.

These are just some of the great initiatives in this budget that provide Canberrans with a better city and provide better community-focused city services. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today, and I look forward to your questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. For the benefit of committee members, I remind you that in this session we are looking at output class 2.2, library services, 2.3, waste and recycling, 2.4, city maintenance and services, and 2.5, Capital Linen Service.

Ms Fitzharris: Everybody is here to answer the committee's questions, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Minister, I will kick off with a question. Budget statements H shows that there has been a substantial increase in the amount of waste per capita into landfill, from what was 700 kilos to now a tonne. Why have we seen such an increase, and a failure to meet the target for waste diversion?

Ms Fitzharris: I take it you are looking at the figure on page 15, which shows a particular increase?

THE CHAIR: Yes, page 15, and on page 22 there are the accountability indicators.

Ms Fitzharris: I will hand over to Jim Corrigan to speak in some more detail about that, but the principal reason for that, as I understand it, is the increase to landfill as a result of the Mr Fluffy scheme. That is a significant one-off increase to the amount of waste going to landfill. It obviously had a major impact across the city. One aspect that has not been so broadly publicly discussed is the impact on the ACT's landfill, and that is the principal reason for that increase.

Significant work has been underway over the last couple of years, through the waste feasibility study, and the introduction last year of legislation in the Assembly, which was passed, with a new scheme coming into effect on 1 July—in a couple of days. The outcomes of the full waste feasibility study will be presented to the government in the second half of this year. I will hand over to Mr Corrigan to talk in more detail.

Mr Corrigan: The minister is correct. While the target through our waste strategy is to get to 90 per cent resource recovery by 2025, we have been hovering at 72 or 73 per cent for some years. There is a dip at the moment because of the amount of Mr Fluffy waste going into west Belconnen.

The other part of your question was about the increase in domestic waste. We are constantly working with our various sectors. Overall, about a million tonnes of waste is generated in the ACT a year. About 40 per cent is domestic, 40 per cent is commercial-industrial and the rest is demolition waste and things like that. The figure there for domestic waste is 40 per cent. We are constantly working with people, through education, on how to recover more resources.

It does fluctuate, but, as the minister says, we are working in a number of areas in the whole waste system in the ACT. The waste feasibility work that has been going on for a couple of years now is starting to come to a conclusion, so we can brief government and say, “Moving forward, what steps and investments can be made to start going beyond 73 per cent to 75 per cent, 80 per cent and 85 per cent, to start to get to those targets?”

THE CHAIR: Mr Corrigan, are you able to remove the impact of Mr Fluffy from those figures and inform the committee how we are tracking in real terms?

Mr Corrigan: Yes, Mr Wall. Approximately, we would be at around 73 per cent resource recovery. I might ask Mr Trushell to join us at the table. It is approximately 73 per cent, if you take out the Mr Fluffy waste.

THE CHAIR: What does that then equate to on a weight per capita basis?

Mr Corrigan: We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mr Trushell, did you have anything to add?

Mr Trushell: We are still in the process of finalising the actual figures for 2016-17, but if I can refer back to the previous financial year, if we remove Mr Fluffy, the resource recovery rate would have been 74 per cent. On a per capita basis, that turned out to be 0.54 tonnes per head of population, which, going back over about seven years, was actually below the average.

THE CHAIR: All of the Mr Fluffy waste has gone to west Belconnen?

Mr Corrigan: Correct.

Mr Trushell: Can I clarify that?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Trushell: As part of the removal process, the asbestos remover takes out the loose-fill material initially. That is separately handled and taken to the asbestos pit at Mugga Lane, and treated in an appropriate way there. With the residual material,

which is obviously the bulk, they apply a glue over the material, and that is the material that is taken to west Belconnen. Essentially, it has been, in effect, decontaminated prior to going to west Belconnen.

THE CHAIR: Capacity at Mugga: how is the current cell performing capacity-wise? What is the life expectation of that at the moment?

Mr Trushell: We are about to complete the next stage, which will come online next month. That will provide capacity through to 2020, conservatively.

THE CHAIR: Through until 2020?

Mr Trushell: As I say, conservatively. It could well be a bit better than that, depending on the compaction rate.

THE CHAIR: What further capacity is there for additional expansion at the Mugga site beyond that 2020 date?

Mr Trushell: Area 5 has massive potential. A conservative estimate of up to 10 million cubic metres can be constructed up there. As I say, that is conservative. There is a lot of further work that we need to do, a lot of geotech-type work, to determine the degree of rock material. It essentially comes down to a question of cost of developing the landfill cells, depending on how far down you want to go. In the budget papers the government has funded the next cells of area 5 and, conservatively, that will take us through to 2023.

THE CHAIR: I am not familiar with where that is on the site. Is that going to require similar works to the existing cell, where older cells had to be shifted and moved or—

Mr Trushell: No. Stage 5 is a completely new area. We progressively move north, up the hill. It is essentially a rectangular area, in simple terms; we are constructing south to north.

THE CHAIR: I know that the works last time required quite a substantial movement of an old cell to create this new one.

Mr Trushell: No. In 2014, when we ran out of landfill space, prior to the first cell in area 5 coming online, due to the rate at which area 4 had been filled, there was a part of it which did not match the original design profile. In order to be able to safely fill into that area we dug up about 100,000 tonnes of old waste and moved it down there. That yielded an additional 100,000 tonnes, which was part of the original design. We were able to do that at an average of \$2.50 a cubic metre to yield that space. It allowed us to close the west Belconnen emergency landfill much sooner and save a substantial amount of money, when you consider that it is normally about \$50 a cubic metre to construct. That was a one-off. It was unrelated to construction of new areas.

Ms Fitzharris: Are you worried, Mr Wall, about the impact on your electorate of that particular movement of waste?

THE CHAIR: I am not even going to say there is a conflict of interest here; there is a

lot of self-interest. I am one of those lucky people that can stand at their front door and see the tip face. If you have line of sight, obviously, the nose picks it up quite regularly when it is in the air—not just me but neighbouring residents in Fadden, Macarthur et cetera. It is a recurring issue. It came up yesterday in the planning hearing. It continues now.

Ms Fitzharris: I think the movement of that waste was a one-off, and Mr Trushell has explained why it was particularly needed. The \$25 million investment in this year's budget is significant. There has been an interesting community discussion on waste, with the ABC's series on waste. I have had a real spike in correspondence and people talking about waste and how much waste we all individually generate. We have seen cafes now saying they will no longer have coffee cups available and getting the community behind them in reducing the amount of waste.

That is exactly why the waste feasibility study was started a couple of years ago. It has been a significant program of work, looking at all the streams of waste that the ACT generates, both at a residential level and at a commercial level. There is no doubt that, as the city grows, so does the amount of both commercial and domestic waste that we generate. There are a range of initiatives that the government has underway to address that at a community level, at a residential level and at a commercial level.

There is also some real innovation happening in this sector, as I understand it, which has a lot of potential both to minimise waste and to better recycle waste. The key message that has come through, particularly through *War on Waste*, is that we all play a role in reducing the amount of waste we produce in the first place. There will also be some actions out of the waste feasibility study that go to that.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple of further questions. There has been an increase in the kerbside waste collection per bin on what was budgeted. I think \$19.50 was the target. At point (f), "annual cost of kerbside domestic waste collection services", it was forecast at \$19.50 per bin and it is up to \$19.79. Note 6 says it is due to additional multi-unit developments. What impact has that had and has there been a change to the way multi-unit collections operate?

Mr Trushell: It is part of the growth in the volume and also the level of servicing to meet the demand.

THE CHAIR: I am going to need a deeper explanation of that. My understanding is that, if you have six bins parked out the front of a multi-unit development, it would make it more efficient to collect them all from one spot, in a shorter time frame, with less distance to travel, than—

Mr Trushell: Multi-unit developments are, on average, more expensive to service than single-unit developments. With the growth of the city, the proportion of households that are based in multi-unit developments means the average cost goes up.

THE CHAIR: Why are they more expensive?

Mr Trushell: It is the nature of the service. Kerbside, you move through pretty quickly. It is much slower going into multi-unit developments.

MS LE COUTEUR: You are talking about the very large ones where you are going to a specific waste enclosure rather than the small multi-unit developments where everyone still has their own bin? Is that the problem?

Mr Trushell: I am talking at an aggregate level. The actual cost has not gone up compared to the actual historical, anyway. It was more against the projection.

THE CHAIR: But the projection is what all the funding and budgeting arrangements were structured around.

Mr Trushell: It is not a significant increase in the actual cost over previous years. However, it is simply the change of profile. It is the combination of all those sorts of factors that has required additional servicing. On average, it is more expensive than picking up a side-lift bin from a house, a single-unit development.

THE CHAIR: For large multi-unit developments where it is a hopper-type arrangement, is that funded out of rates or is it at the body corporate's expense to have that serviced?

Mr Trushell: There is no hypothecation of the funding we get against rates or other revenue sources.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is not the question, though.

THE CHAIR: I am not asking about that. It was a straight question: who pays for the waste collection service in large multi-unit developments? Is it the rates?

Mr Trushell: It is GPO funded.

Ms Fitzharris: It is funded by the budget. It is funded by the government.

THE CHAIR: It is a government service? Okay.

Ms Fitzharris: There is an allocation per multi-unit complex for the number of bins that you may get. Occasionally I receive correspondence from owner-occupiers or people in multi-unit complexes that would like more, above the set allocation. That may be something that the body corporate takes on. But all waste services to all residents are funded by the ACT government.

THE CHAIR: But the extra allocation is normally in respect of recycling bins?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, usually.

THE CHAIR: Because the recycling is normally the traditional wheelie bin but the garbage collection is in a hopper, a mass vessel, I think over eight units generally is the threshold?

Mr Corrigan: Yes. We have a code to guide the proponents, the designers of multi-unit schemes. The threshold is around the 10 mark. As Mr Trushell described it,

the more kerbside pick-up we can get, it means it is a more efficient service. As Mr Trushell alluded to, we have had an increase in multi-unit schemes larger than 10—the high rises. That is where the hopper solutions come in and make the change.

With the waste feasibility work, part of that is also looking at the code, at how we can create even more efficiencies for multi-units going forward. There is a bit more work to be done. We need to brief government, of course, on the outcomes there. We are looking at whether we can increase multi-unit developments—so a higher number of multi-unit developments—so that we can make wheelie bins work, because it is a more efficient way of doing it. We are doing some work in that regard. We are also working with industry on some of the really large schemes—the 400-plus unit proposals—to see whether tailored solutions could be put in place. There are way more efficient ways of managing waste in those schemes.

It is not only about managing waste and recycling, in managing waste, but it is about getting higher loads of recovery in recycling. We are even looking at the green waste options there. There is a lot more work to be done there. That is really pretty good work. I was outlining before the government's target of getting to 80 per cent or 85 per cent resource recovery. If we can get big inroads with multi-unit developments, we will start to see those percentages increase there as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked about the waste feasibility study and you said it was going to finish in the second half of this year. Is there going to be some public consultation process at the end of this?

Ms Fitzharris: There has been an extensive consultation process throughout. There are two reference groups—one industry reference group and one community reference group—who have been intimately involved in that over the last two years. In a sense that has been the ongoing consultation around the waste feasibility study. At this stage I am looking to have the main outcomes of that study with me over the next couple of months. Community consultation is part of our thinking on a whole range of things. Just to confirm, there has been extensive consultation with reference groups over the last couple of years.

MS LE COUTEUR: But, to be clear, there are no plans for more consultation on this, from what you have said?

Ms Fitzharris: I have not ruled that out yet. I have not seen the final result. As to whether it is something that would require extensive community consultation again, it is certainly the case that there is the possibility of more consultation on some of the initiatives out of the scheme, but what that exactly looks like now I cannot tell you.

MR COE: On the bin issue, would you please let me know: are SITA collecting the hoppers as well?

Mr Trushell: For residential use.

MR COE: And that is all part of the same contract or is it a separate contract?

Mr Trushell: No, it is the same contract.

MR COE: At what point does a multi-unit complex get a hopper as opposed to just a rubbish bin and a recycling bin per unit?

Mr Corrigan: That has a code to guide designers and architects and the like. It is around that threshold of 10 to 12. Once you get more units than that, that is when, currently, you generally go from wheelie bins to solutions hoppers and things like that. Largely a lot of that is driven by the space on the street to put the wheelie bins out. That is what I was alluding to before. We are looking at doing some more work to see whether there are other solutions possible so that we could increase that number.

MR COE: If you are in a multi-unit complex, who is actually managing the hopper? Is it the body corporate or is it SITA?

Ms Fitzharris: What do you mean by managing?

MR COE: For instance, there is an issue with the collection or there is some management issue with the rubbish. Is a resident calling up SITA or are they calling up the body corporate?

Mr Trushell: I think they are perhaps two different issues. If a resident of a body corporate rings SITA and says they have got a problem with the collection, SITA will address that as a customer service issue. In terms of representing that development then, that has to be done through the body corporate. Normally their strata manager will do that on their behalf.

MR COE: If it is an apartment complex and there is no prospect of having wheelie bins, does the government make a contribution to the waste collection fee for that apartment building? For a small complex the government will provide a hopper and that will, in effect, get collected. But if we are talking about a 300 or 400-apartment complex that has a series of hoppers is the government actually providing those hoppers in that circumstance or is that purely a commercial relationship between the body corporate and a waste collection service?

Mr Trushell: The territory provides those hoppers as part of the service. It is a domestic service. It is provided to both single unit developments and multi-unit developments. It is just the way that you deliver the service that has to be customised to the particular circumstances.

MR COE: Does that mean that every apartment building in Canberra has got SITA bins?

Mr Trushell: To the best of my knowledge, yes. The only exception to that is if a multi-unit is developed in a way in which it is not safe or possible for SITA, or SUEZ, to get its vehicles in there and we are unable to provide the service. I cannot give you any examples of that, but we need to physically be able to get into the building.

MR COE: But you would have been given approval for that, would you? I know that is one of the stumbling blocks for a lot of developments. Approval should have been given in that circumstance.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, it should have been.

Mr Trushell: It could be an older development. We have the development control code, but from a customer service perspective my team are very flexible about working with the strata manager to ensure that we are providing an optimal service. Essentially, we have got to get the rubbish and we work flexibly with them. There have been a number of innovations, including the size of hoppers, the type of hopper lid and things like that. All this occurs in response to feedback from residents and from strata managers. The team works very, very closely with the strata managers to ensure that we are providing an appropriate service.

MR COE: Given that they are quite different services and they are quite different according to the scale, would it make sense to have two separate contracts for hoppers and kerbside collection?

Mr Trushell: The contract we have at the moment was signed in 2013 and runs for a decade. We work with what we have got at the moment. We constantly review that. As Mr Corrigan mentioned, we are looking to the development control code to improve that because that is also a driver of all this. It is quite normal in, say, New South Wales local government to have a single contract for the two services, but it is certainly something that we would always look at as part of future innovations in service delivery.

MS LE COUTEUR: Just looking at multi-unit responsibilities, the body corporate will be responsible for in some way getting the rubbish to one central point and then the government contractor is responsible for picking up from that point. Is that how it breaks into two?

Mr Trushell: Technically, yes. However, once again, SUEZ and my team work with the strata managers to optimise that.

Mr Doszpot: Minister, in budget statements H, on page 2, you have a section called 2017-18 priorities. A lot of the questions which have already been asked related to consultation, hire reviews and service delivery. A customer perspective is listed here. It is all very, very good. Can you explain the process for deciding on the priorities? Especially from the customer's perspective, how do you arrive at these priorities?

Ms Fitzharris: It is a directorate-drafted document. I can hand over to the director-general to talk about the development of priorities. Clearly the government sets broad priorities for a whole range of ongoing issues. Most notable now are the priorities we took to the last election and the ministerial statement that I made subsequent to the government being formed late last year. I can certainly talk about the process and hand over to Ms Thomas to talk about that.

Ms Thomas: Thank you for your question, Mr Doszpot. We have initiated in the directorate a very strong focus on customer experience and customer perspective. Part of that process was to establish a specific group within my directorate to start looking for all the ways that we can take customer feedback so that we can help to better inform the government on what the customer is saying about the services that we

provide.

We started by looking at different elements of feedback, whether they come in the form of ministerials, whether they come in the form of questions or queries to fix my street—a number of different sources—and questions through Access Canberra. We are working with those groups to try to understand where the main level of query exists. That is only a first step, because just looking at that alone will not get us everything.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I just—

THE CHAIR: No. We are going to move on, Mr Doszpot, sorry. That was extremely gracious too. That was not a supplementary on waste.

MR DOSZPOT: It is a supplementary on the prioritisation of just about every question that has been asked. I am trying to understand how the priorities are decided. I thank you for your answer. I think that has been very reflective, but—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Steve, we have got to move on. Ms Cody has a substantive question.

MS CODY: Thank you. Minister, I want to change tack a little and talk about library services. I have lots of questions about library services. It is quite an interesting topic. I would like to start with the announcement of some upgrades to Woden Library that happened just before the budget was drawn down. I was wondering if you could expand on that.

Ms Fitzharris: I will ask Ms Little to talk in some more detail about that, but you will know that currently at the Woden Library there is the Heritage Library, which we need to make sure is secure. That will be moving to new premises and therefore will provide us with the opportunity to both open up the existing space at Woden Library and also do a bit of a refresh at Woden Library. Ms Little can talk about how library services are changing but also the role that physical libraries play in the community and their different roles throughout different parts of the city.

We are particularly excited to be able to both secure the Heritage Library and provide additional space, particularly for residents in your electorate and in the region, to access services at Woden Library. Every time I go to my local library I see a real mix of people. I know Mr Pettersson recently was reading to young kids on national storytelling day, I think it was, at Gungahlin Library. It is a real mix. They are really important community hubs that we are looking to expand out of Woden. I will hand over to Ms Little.

Ms Little: Yes, we are very excited about the changes that will be happening over the next couple of years. The Heritage Library is full to capacity and we desperately needed some more space. We obviously need space which is air-conditioned and all those sorts of things. We are moving the collection, hopefully, to Fyshwick, to a site that has got plenty of parking and all the things that people need when they want to come and research. Then we are turning that space upstairs back into community use.

We have already taken back the space that has been vacated by Access Canberra, and that has been created as a very flexible open space. I am not sure whether anybody went to the Harry Potter event on Monday night, but we had a great event there where the community came together and celebrated the anniversary of the first Harry Potter book. There is a big open space now that the community can use and there will be more flexible spaces created.

One of the things that we are very keen to look at is, first of all, how to support people's technology needs. We are looking in that new space at having a technology hub that will be available to the community but also to others, such as CIT. We are also just exploring, in the early days, how we might use space to support small businesses and start-up companies that we know come and use the library for their ideas and for their research and that sort of stuff. We want to give them a space that is a little more their space. They are interesting things that we are looking at as part of that development.

MS CODY: It sounds very exciting. I cannot wait to come and have a look. I know from some of the statistics in the accountability indicators on page 22 of budget statements H we had an increase in the estimated outcome for 2016-17 in the percentage of population who are registered library members. That is fantastic. Do you put that down to any one particular initiative?

Ms Little: We would like to say fabulous collections and fabulous staff, but of course Canberra is a highly literate, well-read community and those numbers reflect that. We are delighted that we are one of the leaders in the country in library membership. Library membership across the country is now about 50 per cent, and we are well in advance of that. We know that we have got a community that look to us. We also have a community that like to participate in our programs and activities. They will generally come in to a Harry Potter event or an author talk or something and will often join the library.

I think it is a symptom of the community we live in but also the work that we put in to being more than just books in and books out. We are a place, as the minister said, where people come. They can come to a community space. They are not forced to spend money. They can participate in a program; they can talk to other people. They can, like the knitters club, just come together at several of our libraries each week and they knit and solve the problems of the world. We are a really safe place that people can come to and be part of a community. I think all of those things are reflected in that number.

Ms Fitzharris: And you do not have to be quiet anymore.

Ms Little: No, you do not have to be quiet. There are quiet spaces. There are places to go that are quiet in each of our branches, but we do encourage people to come and just participate, be part of the community, chat over issues, solve the problems of the world if you are the knitters.

MS CODY: I note, minister, you were talking in answer to the first part of my question about Mr Pettersson going along to read at story time. I know when my boys were little, quite a number of years ago, I used to take them along to the Tuggeranong

Library to story time. We still do that in the libraries across Canberra?

Ms Little: Absolutely. We have two versions of it. We have the very famous giggle and wiggle. Giggle and wiggle is for children from birth to about two—and do not tell the parents—but it is really a program for the parents. It teaches parents and carers how to read to children, how to sing and do rhymes. It is all about language acquisition, which then goes on to literacy. Giggle and wiggle is extremely popular, so popular in some of our branches now that we have to run it twice on the same day, and we have to take bookings. It is a fabulous, fabulous program.

Then we do story time for the three-to-five age group. That is much more the traditional sitting down and reading of books. We still do some songs and rhymes and things, but it is very much about introducing kids to turning pages and listening to stories and then borrowing their own books. Very much, our core business is getting those readers early and getting kids on the literacy path as early as we can.

MR COE: I will say that my wife pounces on an event at seven o'clock in the morning.

Ms Little: We had to do that because we were so popular that last November, in Dickson, we had 400 people turn up to one giggle and wiggle. For all of the reasons that you would expect, we had to do something. We now split it in half.

MS LE COUTEUR: Clearly more funding is needed to run more of them?

Ms Little: The issue is that the more you run, the more people come to them, and they double up and triple up. You add more, but it does not mean you split the numbers. It just means people come more often.

Ms Fitzharris: I sense a recommendation coming.

THE CHAIR: I am struggling to see what the problem with this is when it is getting kids in front of books.

MS CODY: I was graciously given a briefing about our library services a little while back, and I was really interested to know that you do online borrowing for lots of different things. Can you just expand on that and how that works across the ACT libraries as a whole?

Ms Little: Sure. We have electronic books that you can borrow; you download those from our website and they come to your device. That is everything except Kindle, because Kindle is proprietary to Amazon. You can download the e-books from our catalogue straight onto your device and read them. When the loan period is over, they self-destruct, so you cannot keep them. The book industry does not like us giving things to people that can then be replicated, so they self-destruct.

Ms Fitzharris: It is like *Mission: Impossible*.

Ms Little: Yes. Up to the end of May, we have done about 350,000 loans of e-books. We also have e-talking books. You might be familiar with the old technology and the

old CDs that some of us still use.

MS CODY: And tapes.

Ms Little: And tapes. We do not have those in the library anymore. You can download an e-talking book onto your device and then listen to it. That is very good for when you have long trips in the car. Then we have the Zinio service, which is extremely popular. That is for a whole range of magazines, *Australian House and Garden*, *Wheels* and all of those very popular magazines. You can download those from our website and you can actually keep those. We pay the licence fee; once you have downloaded the magazine you want, you can keep it and it does not self-destruct. Similarly, we have something called Freegal, which stands for free and legal. That is the Sony playlist. Every week you can download three songs for free and keep them. If you so desire, you can build up your own music library using our library, and do so legally.

MS CODY: Libraries really are getting better and better, aren't they?

Ms Little: Yes, they are.

MS CODY: Thank you.

MS CHEYNE: Just going back to the percentage of population who are registered library members, you said we are one of the leaders. Are we the leader?

Ms Little: I can say that we are the leader when you look at the major jurisdictions. We are definitely the leader compared to South Australia and Victoria. I have not gone into the data about any individual library service anywhere else. I could not tell you about the City of Sydney; I could certainly take that on notice. Certainly in terms of jurisdictions we are way out there.

MS CHEYNE: Only take it on notice if it is an easy answer to find. Going to my second question, the target in this financial year was 62 and it was actually 65. Why is the target next year 62?

Ms Little: Because we always cleanse our database. With our new library management system, which we are also extremely excited about, we will be doing a big cleanse of our database. What we do is go through and take people off who have not used their library card for five years. That is standard across the country; that is what most library services do. So we are expecting that there will be some drop-off.

MS CHEYNE: So we do not have inflated figures from people who have registered but have then passed away or something?

Ms Little: No, not as far as we know. If you have not used your card in five years, we take you off as an active borrower. We keep data in case you come back, but we do not call you an active borrower.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I have a quick follow-up? Can you tell me more about what is happening in the new upstairs space in Woden? You talked about start-ups and CIT.

Ms Little: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is very interesting.

Ms Little: What we want to do is just make a very flexible space. What we are hearing from the community is that they want more technology. We want to set up an area where people can come and learn how to use the internet, how to use their iPhones, that kind of stuff. We just want to make it available to anybody who wants to book it and use it. We are hoping that CIT might come and use it. Private providers might come and use it.

We know that there are, as I said, people who often just have that spark of an idea about a small business. They will come to the library, and they will do their research in the library on whether that business is something they want to pursue. We often notice people who are running their businesses from the library—microbusinesses; I am not talking about big businesses. We think that what would be nice would be to give them some facilities, some tables and chairs and maybe a bit of quiet space, that they could use, rather than sitting in the body of the library and having to giggle and wiggle.

MS LE COUTEUR: Because you need the space for people—

Ms Little: And of course we have the free wi-fi, which is a big attractor to some people.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, okay. My substantive question, I am afraid, has nothing to do with libraries. It is about a topic which I raised in the annual reports hearings. It is about how we can make it easier for the community to get involved in maintenance, upgrading their local area. Minister, in response to a question on notice you said that work is underway to explore how land use permit and licensing processes can be streamlined and simplified, which was all about this subject. Can you tell me more about what work is underway on this?

Ms Fitzharris: Sure. I will hand to Mr Corrigan and Ms Flanery to talk more about that, but you are right; that is one aspect of the work. Another aspect of the work is the adopt-a-park scheme. We are looking into how exactly that will work, but that is another way that we hear from the community that they would like to be involved in helping to maintain their local area. Of course, we do not resile in any way from the very important role that the government plays in that, but it is about where we can bring the community into that, where they want to make a contribution to their local neighbourhood in particular. As to the specific issues about land use and permits, I mentioned before that there is work underway on a statement of intent on better city services. It is linked to some of that work as well. I will hand over to Ms Flanery.

Ms Flanery: It is an excellent idea, and something that we are really looking at in terms of how to engage with the community. We are working with different groups that have called us over the years and said, “Can we do this? Can we do that?” We are

thinking about how we might be able to expand that. There are some fantastic programs that you can look at: Landcare, Bushcare and all the citizen science. As the minister was referring to, we just need to look through some of the regulatory processes around that. We are a society where we are concerned about people's safety; we do not want people doing things that are unsafe. Engaging with people to do things is a wonderful idea, and, as I said, in many cases we have some communities of interest that are already doing that, but we are looking at how we might be able to roll that out through other areas.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would you look at things that are not even really large communities of interest? I am aware of a number of pop-up libraries in various locations, and they do not have an organised body "Friends of the Library on the Bike Path". They are the initiatives of one or two people which have then been used by the community around them. Can you look at ways that things like that could be legalised? I assume that basically they are just there.

Ms Flanery: Certainly that is something that we are looking at. There are different groups around shops and parks that have their own community of interest. They might say, "Can we plant a garden?" Curtin shops are an example of that, and there are many others. We work with the parks and conservation service. They have volunteers that regularly go through the park areas, picking up litter and things. I am aware of about five or six different groups that do work quite willingly. We might provide some of the equipment or something like that, or access to the site; then they go away and do their work. At the moment, it is not rolled out on a large scale; it is really working with communities of interest.

Ms Fitzharris: Can I just make a broader comment. One of the issues that we have seen over the last couple of years is that different organisations or individuals, particularly with a commercial interest, will come to the government and say, "We have got a great idea. We just want to use your space here. Is that all right? It is going to be pretty straightforward. It is going to be pretty easy." What we have found is that the government has said, "Yes, that is a good idea. That would be great. But what precedent does it set? What is the regulatory environment? In a sense, if we enable you to do it, what does that mean for equity for other people who might want to come in and do it?"

In the end, we have found that with the original proponent, with their idea, the government has a responsibility to consider all of those issues such as regulatory issues around public safety. They often expose a whole range of issues right across government that we need to think about. The original proponent might wait quite a considerable period of time before we come to a resolution on not just their proposal but what lots of proposals like that could look like. By the time we have resolved our issues, that person may have been waiting a very long time. We are trying to do a lot of work to close that gap, to be a lot more flexible.

The establishment of Access Canberra was in direct response to those sorts of issues that have been coming up. We see now that one of the issues coming up is land use and a range of different people, particularly commercial operators, wanting to access public land and having a range of arguments about why it should be fairly straightforward for government. There is a real issue for TCCS, as the maintainer of

public land, to make sure that (1) it is safe and (2) any new proposal does not require an ongoing burden for government to maintain, and, if it does, we are appropriately resourced to do that.

TCCS do a lot with Landcare. There are great local community Landcare organisations that spring up that are community led. TCCS will often go in and pick up the rubbish and take it away. That is a way that we can partner. We do need to think it through but recognise that there has been, in the past, quite a big and long gap for some proponents of particular initiatives, and they have had to wait longer than they originally thought before government came to a resolution. We are looking to be much more responsive and flexible in that. That is some of the work that we have got underway at the moment.

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked a minute ago about adopt-a-park. I recently went and talked to a bunch of people who live near and do some work on Point Hut pond. There are clearly eroded parts around the edge of that. They said that they really would like to plant it. Their problem is trying to find someone in the government who could tell them, "This is what you should plant." They said they have had a degree of correspondence and it just has not gone anywhere. They are happy to go out and plant, and clearly it is eroded, but they do not want to plant the wrong thing and find that in three or four years time someone is going to come and dig it all up.

Ms Flanery: I can follow that one up specifically. If they are having trouble getting responses, I can certainly follow that one up.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you.

Ms Flanery: I can draw on two great examples. I think you are familiar with one of them, Lyneham commons. That took a long while to get started, but now it is going great guns and they are making videos and things. More recently, the natural play space has been a terrific engagement, with parents, children and schools looking after the area. Some of those are really good examples, but, yes, we can do more, and we are looking at ways to do that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will this adopt-a-park cover nature reserves or just the urban open space? Or is it to be worked out?

Ms Flanery: It is still to be worked out, but the intention was for it to be local neighbourhood parks, not our national parks.

MS LE COUTEUR: Fair enough. And you will eventually publish some way that groups can interface with you, questions in estimates not being always the most timely way?

Ms Flanery: Certainly. We will look to make our points of contact much easier to find.

MS LE COUTEUR: The other thing I have to say, particularly as a member for Murrumbidgee, but I am sure it is throughout Canberra, is that an awful lot of groups, such as in Farrer and Waramanga, would like to have playgrounds immediately

adjacent to the local shops. Everybody in south Canberra would like to see Chifley playground at their local shops. What are the barriers? Presumably cost is a major one. What cost is a reasonable playground and, if a community really wanted one—there are two other members for Murrumbidgee here and we all know a number of communities within Murrumbidgee really would like something like that—what can they do to try to make this happen?

Ms Fitzharris: In a sense, the question about playgrounds is a really good question about the number of playgrounds we have across the city and where the city is changing. When suburbs were originally developed, playgrounds were probably developed away from shops, but that is changing. An example that comes to mind is Cook. There was not much happening at the Cook shops, but you get one local cafe that sets up, an IGA, the Friendly Grocer and a number of other little shops and all of a sudden they take on a new life and are revitalised. We see suburbs changing also. In Warramanga I know there is quite a community movement for a playground. It is probably fair to say that every community has a different usage of their existing local playgrounds.

MS LE COUTEUR: The other interesting thing with Waramanga is that you can see two playgrounds, but nowadays they have been fenced off. They were part of schools and when they were built they were never fenced, but now they are.

Ms Fitzharris: They were fenced because the cost to the Education Directorate was substantial in having to deal with vandals, which is a huge shame. We certainly look at them as they come in to us. I really respect the work that has been done, particularly locally in Warramanga. A couple of people have taken the effort to talk to us about a playground there. There are a whole range of issues: the right space, how much it would cost, how much it would be for ongoing maintenance, what sort of playground people might like. Different communities have different priorities in terms of the types of play spaces they might enjoy. Obviously parents with young kids at home during the day really feel that. I used to feel that when my kids were all young. Now they are at school they are not interested in playgrounds so much anymore. People's lives change and we are very conscious of that.

We are also very conscious that a number of playgrounds around the city have older equipment, and we are upgrading playgrounds all the time. The most important thing TCCS does in terms of playgrounds is make sure the play equipment is safe. There are thousands of inspections, I think, undertaken each year, and Ms Flanery can talk to that number. But there are some trade-offs. When you map the number of playgrounds in Canberra, there are an extraordinary number close to many residents. Some of them were built at a time when there was not a playground nearby at the local shops or it was at the school and it is now not as accessible as it used to be.

MS LE COUTEUR: But this community is interested. I suspect they would be prepared to say, "Yes, where the playground is, over there, is not where there are kids anymore. We'd like it to stay as open space and the playground can move next to the shops." Certainly some people would see that as a reasonable trade-off.

Ms Fitzharris: At the moment we are responding to the community's calls to us on that sort of thing, and Waramanga is a good example of that. It is certainly the case

though, and we have seen it in the past, that where a particular group in the community says, “Well, we’d like a playground here, and we don’t really use this one anymore,” if we decommission that playground we will pretty soon find that there will be someone who will have something to say about that. It is on our mind about how we do that; it is a broader conversation in the community that we can have.

At the moment I am aware of a couple where communities are coming together and saying to us, “We would like to have something.” Sometimes the answer might not be a traditional playground; it might be a natural play space or it might be a new type of space. The directorate is really responsive to talking with local communities, and I know many members of the committee are also doing a lot of work with local communities.

My message would be to work with local communities on what sort of thing they would like to see. Most people will sign a petition to say, “Yes, I’d like to see a playground near the shops.” That is pretty straightforward. But we would like to do some more work around what exactly that means and what sorts of things they are talking about. Sometimes we will come up with a slightly different solution, but there is only ever so much money available to build new assets while at the same time making sure existing assets can be maintained. If they are not still being used, maybe there is an option to look at transferring one asset in a neighbourhood to a new location.’

MS CHEYNE: How many requests a year do you get for playground augmentation, like shade sails and things like that? I have heard people saying a little bit: “The playground’s great but it’s really hot in the summer months to touch and a little bit dangerous for small bodies.” Are shade sails really expensive, going to what the minister is talking about in terms of there being only so much available to do both?

Ms Fitzharris: We will have to take on notice how many requests we get a year, but last year’s budget invested quite a lot, with shade sails in 22 playgrounds. They will generally be the larger parks, so regional parks and town parks, because they are the highest use parks. It is certainly the case that you will get a peak of requests for shade sails in the summer months and none over winter. The natural play spaces that were spoken about earlier are a new way of delivering about natural play spaces. There was one that had been built and that probably was not as well developed with the local community as the ones we have done now in Telopea Park, O’Connor and Tuggeranong. They had really good community engagement and community design. All three of those are being completed with a lot of local input.

MS CHEYNE: Areas that do not have a large playground or a regional playground but have a high population of young children and a few smaller playgrounds, would they potentially be considered for shade sails?

Ms Flanery: Shade sails are one thing. We certainly look at usage. Where there are greater numbers you put your infrastructure there because you have the ability to protect the greatest number of kids that use it. But we also do shade monitoring. Trees provided wonderful shade in Canberra for a long time before shade sails and they have many other environmental benefits. Shade sails include cleaning them, taking them back and all those maintenance considerations. In some cases it is more

appropriate to have trees because they let light in during winter, so frost does not settle.

Playgrounds are quite tricky to manage because you want shade on them in summer but you do not want them to be shaded in winter. I know there are different types of fabric that can be used for shade sails but, in essence, we monitor shade, and in most cases there is a playground with some form of shading pretty close to people's houses. There is a playground within a radius of 400 metres of everyone's house, so if it is not 200 metres that way it is 200 metres the other way.

MR PETTERSSON: How much does a shade sail cost? I know there is a wide range, but what price scale are we talking about here?

Ms Flanery: I have to take that on notice. It would depend on size, material.

MR PETTERSSON: I understand that.

Ms Flanery: I do not even know if taking it on notice will be that helpful.

MR PETTERSSON: If you could take on notice, how much is the smallest one and how much is the biggest one, so that I can get an understanding of how much it actually costs.

Ms Fitzharris: It is the sail, but it is also the structure and supports. Can I say to Ms Cheyne's question around high usage parks, particularly in town centres, we see a lot of young families now living not just in suburban houses but closer into town centres. That means town centres can start to provide a more active space for kids. We know that where there are a lot of young children—I mean Belconnen and the Gungahlin town centre that I know well—we see a lot of other services that are really great for young kids. Our library is in the town centre, there are child and family centres, community health centres and soon to be a walk-in-centre all in the Gungahlin town centre. We have to slow down traffic and remove traffic from parts of the town centre, but that also means you have good places where kids can play.

One of the things behind the natural play spaces is that there is thinking that play spaces are not necessarily just traditional slides and swings. Kids can play in all sorts of environments. One of the ones I think about in the Gungahlin town centre is a piece of public art that the kids play on. Kids will find different ways to play; it does not have to be necessarily contrived play through a playground. That is where the natural play spaces come in and provide a different type of play environment for kids.

MR DOSZPOT: Coming back to where we left off—and I thank Ms Thomas for her explanation of how priorities are decided—the issue that I was looking forward to asking about was the fact that there are 27 priorities listed in budget statements H, and a lot of them are very good priorities. Priority No 2 is “expanding the domestic animal shelter to care for stray cats”. Item 15 is “continuing to support animal welfare services for the city”. The headline states, “A customer perspective”. There is a lot of information that shows the community is complaining about dangerous dogs. Where is the addressing of this issue by this government? When we look at the priorities, it does not figure anywhere.

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Doszpot, it does figure. I know you and I have had a number of conversations about this, and it certainly does feature under supporting our animal welfare services for the city.

MR DOSZPOT: That is animal welfare, minister. We are talking about human welfare, and that is the problem that I think you need to address. Out of 27 priorities, welfare services comes in at item 15, but that is animal welfare. While we are obviously concerned about animal welfare, I am a little bit more concerned about the welfare of people who are hospitalised or having to seek emergency treatment at hospital—155 people last year. Where is the concern to address what you are calling “a customer perspective” in prioritising what people are concerned about?

Ms Fitzharris: I will take your point that perhaps we could have been more explicit in the priorities, but you will understand that in the broad animal welfare strategy that we have put out, which I know you have read, there are a range of actions which go to management of animals right across the territory but principally domestic animals. One of the most important factors in that, which I have been saying for some time and which the directorate has been working very hard on, is responsible pet ownership. You cannot address the issue of dangerous dogs in the territory without addressing, first and foremost, the issue of responsible pet ownership.

I am also concerned about a range of issues in this broad policy area. One that we are working on right now is a broader campaign on responsible pet ownership. The first thing that we will be focusing on within that, and we will be doing that very soon, is to remind people of their obligations to have their dogs on a leash when they are walking around our city. There are a number of reports—whether it is increasing or not, I have certainly noticed an increase in it recently—of people walking their dogs off-leash in areas that they should not be. The first thing that we will be tackling is people walking their dog on-leash in areas where they should be. I think there are too many people around the territory who are probably not fully aware of the range of different dog behaviours and the implications of having dogs off-leash, both for other pets, other dogs being walked, and for people walking around parks, walking through nature reserves, going on a daily run, taking their kids for a walk, having kids in prams. That will be the first part of a broader campaign around responsible pet ownership.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I appreciate that. What I cannot come to grips with is the fact that there have been a number of attacks on dogs by other dogs, and that touches on all the things you have mentioned—owner management, owner responsibility. Can you tell me how many dogs over the last 18 months have been declared dangerous dogs?

Mr Alegria: In 2015-16 there were 12 dogs that were declared dangerous in the ACT.

MR DOSZPOT: One of the prime cases that we have been talking about, one of the most highlighted cases, is what is called the Toscan case, I think. Those two dogs attacked another dog and killed it. I believe representations have been made to the minister by the owners, and nothing has happened there. Those dogs—

PROOF

Ms Fitzharris: That is not true, Mr Doszpot, and you know that. Those dogs have been put under very serious conditions which I read out in the Assembly.

MR DOSZPOT: Have they been declared dangerous dogs?

Ms Fitzharris: No, they have not, and there are reasons for that. They have had, I think, 15 or 16 conditions put on their continued ownership. Those conditions have been put on their owners. I have read out those conditions in the Assembly. I would be happy to read them out again today.

MR DOSZPOT: How much more information do you need? A dog is ripped apart by two dogs, and those dogs are still not considered dangerous dogs. How do you account for the fact that, in the case of the young man who was nearly killed, or who was very severely injured, at the very least—but it could have been far worse—those dogs were reported to DAS for two years prior to that happening, and those dogs—

Ms Fitzharris: It is a very different issue, Mr Doszpot. I understand—

MR DOSZPOT: It is the same issue about—

THE CHAIR: Let the minister answer.

Ms Fitzharris: I disagree, Mr Doszpot. I certainly understand that these issues are ones that have caused great distress, particularly in the Hartigan case. I know they caused great distress to Mr Toscan and his family. In Mr Toscan's case there was a review of that particular case and all the circumstances surrounding that case, and, as I have said, there have been a number of conditions put on those dogs—very severe conditions put on those dogs. The fact that they have not been declared dangerous under an act does not mean that there are not now serious restrictions on the owners in terms of the dogs—

MR DOSZPOT: Why was the owner not even charged, not even given a penalty, in the Toscan case?

Mr Alegria: The carers of the dog at the time of the incident were the ones that had the dogs under their care.

MR DOSZPOT: They are the carers. What about the owners' responsibility?

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Doszpot, the other aspect is that I have asked, in relation to our existing regulations, about penalties, and I have committed to come back to the Assembly in September with a review of whether that case has thrown up any particular issues that we could change. It could be that one of those that could be changed is about the owner not being present at the time. Currently, under our regulation we could not charge the owner, but that is one that I will be looking at, as to whether or not that meets any sort of common-sense test. I have committed to come back to the Assembly in September with that.

MR DOSZPOT: You mentioned a number. That does not include the last fiscal year; is that correct?

Mr Alegria: That was the 2015-16 year. We have not finalised the figures for the current year.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you give us an indicative figure for this year?

Ms Fitzharris: We could take that on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: How many dogs are involved in multiple events of processing? In other words, they have committed something in one instance and—

Mr Alegria: Again that is something that we would have to take on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, please take it on notice. What is the average number of events processed?

Mr Alegria: Could you please explain?

MR DOSZPOT: What is the average number of events that you are processing at the moment?

Mr Alegria: Again, I do not have that exact figure. However, in 2015-16 we had 360 reports that were all investigated. I would expect that that number would be similar in the current year. I would have to come back to you on that one.

Ms Fitzharris: But that is all—

Mr Alegria: That is all incidents.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, and that could be a whole range of different issues.

THE CHAIR: So the year-to-date figure will be taken on notice?

Mr Alegria: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you also take on notice dogs returned to owners if the dog is not registered?

Mr Alegria: No, the dog must be registered.

MR DOSZPOT: What happens if the dog is not registered?

Mr Alegria: If the dog is not registered, the owner, depending on the circumstances, will be required to register the dog. That is one of the key tests of responsible pet ownership—that your dog is registered, desexed and microchipped. That is a basic benchmark by which we judge the capability of the owner to actually be responsible. Clearly, if they refuse to register their pet, they would not be considered responsible and their dog would not be returned.

MR DOSZPOT: How many of the dogs that are declared dangerous are rehoused; in

other words, if the owner does not meet the expectations? Are the dogs rehoused away from the owner in that case?

Mr Alegria: No, in no circumstances. With a declared dangerous dog, the owner could apply to keep the dog under strict conditions. That may or may not be agreed to by the registrar or the deputy registrar. If the owner was not granted a licence to keep the dog, the dog would basically be euthanased.

MR DOSZPOT: What is the process for a dog to be declared dangerous?

Mr Alegria: For a dog to be declared dangerous, it requires consideration by the registrar, through our regulatory advisory committee. That is a group of subject matter experts that review each individual case and the individual circumstances and make a recommendation to the registrar about the process which is set out in some detail in the Domestic Animals Act.

MR DOSZPOT: What is the worst offence that a dog can do and still not be declared dangerous?

Mr Alegria: There is no particular threshold in the legislation. It is really a matter of considering the circumstances of each case.

MR DOSZPOT: Killing another pet in a public place: would that suffice for—

Mr Alegria: It would really depend on the circumstances of the case.

MR DOSZPOT: Kill another pet in someone else's private residence: would that be cause?

Mr Alegria: I know where you are coming from. The important thing is about the risk of harm, what the actual incident is and what the circumstances are. So a small dog that attacks a mouse is technically harassing and killing another animal. It may be a pet mouse. However, in that situation, depending on the circumstances, it may not be appropriate to declare that dog a dangerous dog.

MR DOSZPOT: Seriously injure a person: would that be sufficient cause?

Mr Alegria: Again it depends on the circumstances of the case.

MR DOSZPOT: Why were the dogs that attacked the young Hartigan boy not declared dangerous?

Mr Alegria: I am not familiar with that case, to be honest.

MR DOSZPOT: I think you should be, because that was a very serious case.

Ms Flanery: I can answer that question. The Hartigan case was a matter before the courts recently, and it is a very emotive one and one that we who look after animals and people feel very strongly about. In that situation, and it goes back a number of years, there were reports that the dogs were aggressive dogs. The rangers came out to

look for them.

MR DOSZPOT: Neighbours were complaining two years prior to that.

Ms Flanery: Yes. As I said—

MR DOSZPOT: You are agreeing with that?

Ms Flanery: As noted, Mr Doszpot, it went through the courts. I am not a member of the court; I am just telling you from a regulatory aspect—

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that, but something was reported to you for two years. Why was nothing done about the complaints from the neighbours, who were very much aware of the danger of the dogs?

Ms Flanery: Mr Doszpot, I do not want you to think I am being rude, but rangers did attend those events. They did go there. The dogs were not present. They were hidden. They were taken away. The rangers went there a number of times. That is on the record, that the rangers did attend that matter.

MR DOSZPOT: When the child was injured, why was no further action taken by your area regarding the injuries suffered by that child?

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Doszpot, as Ms Flanery said, this is a matter that has gone through the courts.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that, but I am talking about the departmental responsibility here, not the court case. I am asking why, when something has been reported for two years by concerned neighbours, nothing was done about that dog until the child was injured, and still the dog was not declared dangerous?

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Doszpot, this was a number of years ago, at least going back seven years. This happened seven years ago, Mr Doszpot. I think that, as Ms Flanery has said—

MR DOSZPOT: What has changed since then?

Ms Fitzharris: it is not the case that nothing was done. I do not think we are in a position to be answering questions right now about something that happened seven years ago, but if there is anything—

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, minister, if I can just answer that. Seven years ago, certain things happened. Have we learnt anything from those circumstances?

Mr Alegria: Absolutely. I think the process that we have gone through, particularly in the last 12 months, is around continuous improvement. It does relate back directly to that customer service that the minister mentioned in her opening statement. In what we have focused on, the priority has always been on investigating the particular circumstances, doing a thorough job of investigating and taking action as appropriate. But we also increasingly realise that the victim of the attack and the people involved

need to be communicated with. That process of communication is key. In many circumstances that I have seen in the relatively short time I have been here, the complaints or the shortcomings that have been identified by the community are more about the communication process and the closing of the loop, which, again, the minister alluded to, than the actual actions.

Action is taken. It is taken seriously. Then there is that communication back to the customer to say, “Look, we have done this or that. With your particular circumstance, here is where it is at.” It is also about providing support to the victim. We now actively provide counselling support to victims of dog attacks, because we understand that they have a huge impact on everybody involved. Rather than just focusing on the perpetrator, we also focus on the big—

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

Mr Alegria: There are a number of other improvements.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. Minister, when the child presented at ED with horrific head injuries, having been savaged by a dog, which of the various government agencies, and some of these agencies come under you—DAS, police, Housing, child welfare or emergency department—took action to ensure that action was taken to investigate the cause of that attack? We are talking about the child being attacked.

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Doszpot, I am very sympathetic to the case of the Hartigans, but I would note that this is a matter from many years ago. You are asking about actions right across government, which I am very happy to take on notice, but I was not in the Assembly at the time.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, you are not being accused of it, but what I am asking—

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, I think we can home in on this.

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Doszpot, this is the 2017-18 budget estimates.

THE CHAIR: Minister, not dealing with the specifics of this case, given its age, more broadly, there is an incident of someone being attacked by an animal and there is a presentation at the hospital. Which area of government is responsible for the reporting of it, and then the further and subsequent investigation of that injury? In this instance, it was a child. If we use that as an example, a child that has been attacked by a dog presents at the ED at Woden. What are the processes for staff at the hospital calling in other agencies?

Ms Fitzharris: I would just note a couple of issues around the presentations to ED and the number involved where a dog may have been mentioned in that presentation. It could be at home, with the child playing with their own dog. As I said in the Assembly, I would not classify as a dog attack every presentation of someone to an ED where a dog may have been involved. It may be in a family’s backyard, in their living room. In the event that there has been a major incident, I would expect that it would be reported potentially to the police. I know that police and DAS have an ongoing relationship.

More broadly, I can say that one of the reasons that we have developed an animal welfare strategy is precisely to give some overall policy framework to a whole range of issues that have been raised in this area. There were a number of complaints around the operations of DAS a couple of years ago. That did result in reform, quite significant reform, of DAS, and included the renewed focus Mr Alegria talked about in terms of working with victims. That reform process involved input from people who had been subject to dogs attacking other dogs, in some instances stray dogs attacking a family dog. There has been significant work, both in our operational response and in our strategic policy response. There is also significant work underway with ACT Housing, because there was recognition that there were a high number of presentations by DAS rangers to ACT Housing properties.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, my final question to you, and I would like you to take this on board, is this. The incident we are talking about happened seven years ago. That should have no impact on the way we should look at it. Seven years ago something serious happened in someone's private residence. A child was severely injured and taken to hospital. As Mr Wall explained, we would like to know the process and what should have happened, if it did not happen. I think it is incumbent on you as the current minister to take this on notice and let us know what agencies are meant to take the lead in this. Is it DAS? Is it the police? Is it the hospital? Somebody has to take the lead.

Ms Fitzharris: Certainly. What I was saying, Mr Doszpot—and I said a number of times that I have enormous sympathy for these situations—is that we did not come prepared today to provide you all with the answers you are looking for on an incident that happened seven years ago and which has been quite thoroughly investigated. I will take those points on notice.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I just wanted to ask this. It seems that there is no threshold as to when a dog is declared dangerous or not, which was the answer that we got previously.

Ms Fitzharris: I think that is probably not the case. It is probably that when we are presented with hypotheticals like that we cannot—

THE CHAIR: The question I have is: is there no firm line to say, “Has the dog crossed this line? Yes: it is dangerous. No: it is not; it just needs other management rules put around it.” If I assault someone or even if I injure or intentionally hurt another animal within the law, there are fairly strict thresholds as to what processes, punishments and repercussions might occur. Why is it, then, that with the ownership of animals it is much vaguer and it is, as we have just had explained this morning, examined on a case-by-case basis as to what needs to be looked at.

Ms Fitzharris: We can probably go through the process of the declaration in response to your comparing it to if you assaulted someone. In that case, there would be a whole range of circumstances that may or may not all be publicly available as to why you should or should not be charged or sentenced at this level, this level, this level or this level. It is similar in this process. I have undertaken to come back to the Assembly in September. That work is ongoing about how we can potentially improve public

awareness and improve the public information that we provide. Each case is looked at in its own circumstances. The case in question with the Toscons was reviewed and all the circumstances were taken into account. Perhaps someone can run you through the process of it.

THE CHAIR: In the interests of time, if that is incorporated into your statement in September, minister, it can be looked at more broadly through that guise.

Ms Fitzharris: Sure.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, you mentioned that one of the things that you will be looking at is cracking down on people who are walking dogs that are not on a lead. I know there was quite significant work done reviewing dog exercise areas, where a dog can be on a lead or not on a lead. The ACTmapi website has for some time had information on dog exercise areas. It says:

These maps are currently being updated and the onus is on the individual to follow the designations displayed on signage.

When will that be updated definitively? Not everywhere that you can take dogs has signage, like ovals, for example.

Mr Alegria: That very topical issue is one of the key things under this whole idea of responsible pet ownership. We have got a group of external and internal stakeholders together to look at that issue of dogs off lead, including exercise areas, and how we can better encourage people to keep their dogs under control. I cannot put a time frame on it, I am sorry, in terms of the review, but we are actively looking at that as one of the key things, one of the first cabs off the rank, if you like, in the responsible pet ownership approach.

MS CHEYNE: Is this an extension of the review that was started about 2½ years ago?

Mr Alegria: No. It is really a fresh look at it in light of the animal welfare management strategy that we have launched and, as I say, the push for responsible pet ownership. We are taking that as our highest priority at the moment.

MS CODY: Hopefully this will be quick. I noticed the percentage of saleable stray and abandoned dogs rehomed. I am the proud owner of a dog that I rehomed from DAS, Ben the dog. Your targets were 90 per cent, and I see that your estimated outcome for 2016-17 is 92. You have reduced that back down to 90 per cent for the 2017-18 year. I personally know that there are a whole bunch of reasons why dogs cannot always be rehomed, but is that the reason you only look at a 90 per cent rate or are there other contributing factors to keeping it at 90?

Mr Alegria: Ninety is really a level that we have found over the years is a reasonable target to seek. If we can get above 90, that is fantastic. We have done some quite interesting things recently in giving all of the dogs that are able to be rehomed a bit of extra training so that when a potential new owner comes in, for example, the dog will sit, maybe shake hands and basically present as a well-trained dog. That has had a

really positive impact. I think 90 per cent is realistic; above that we are very keen to achieve.

MS CODY: Okay.

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

Hearing suspended from 11.08 to 11.26 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back. We are running a little bit behind schedule. In this session we are supposed to be spending 15 minutes looking at the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority and their statement of intent, before moving on to output class 2.1, which is roads infrastructure, community transport and transport reform. We might run through the cemeteries very quickly.

MR PETTERSSON: Could someone please tell me about the continuing work at the Woden Cemetery?

Ms Fitzharris: We can talk about Woden Cemetery. There has been work underway for some time on expanding Woden Cemetery so that there is further capacity. What that really means is further capacity on the south side. The government did some consultation with the Woden community in 2015, including with the Woden Valley Community Council, around the expansion of the Woden Cemetery within, broadly, Eddison Park, adjacent to the existing cemetery.

Over the last couple of years, and particularly over the last six to seven months, the government has made a number of significant commitments to upgrades and improvements to the Woden town centre, most notably stage 2 of light rail, and an expansion of the Canberra Hospital. So we do require some further thinking about that expansion and its time frames, given that we are looking to encourage further development in the Woden town centre. That will happen commercially, anyway, but there will be a lot more residents living in the town centre. Members of the Woden community have talked about the use of and access to green space.

We are currently thinking about the timing and the longer term commitment to increasing access to burial sites in particular. We note that at the moment Woden Cemetery will effectively run out of space in 2018. There is considerable space remaining at Gungahlin Cemetery. That is some thinking that we are currently doing.

MR PETTERSSON: When you say that it will run out of space in 2018, is there scope to expand the site before 2018?

Ms Fitzharris: That is the work that was consulted on in 2015, the expansion of Woden Cemetery, but we are now reconsidering that in the context of further commitments the government has made to other investments in the Woden town centre.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, further to the expansion there, when you say you are reconsidering, does that mean that you may not want to expand the Woden Cemetery?

Ms Fitzharris: I cannot answer that definitively at this point. I am just saying that, given that the government has made subsequent announcements around major investments in the Woden town centre—light rail, expansion of the hospital—we know that there is a lot of commercial interest in investing in the Woden town centre, and a lot of new residential development. But we are also very conscious of balancing that with the requirement that the government has for the cemeteries authority to be able to provide the appropriate amount of space within cemeteries right across the territory. That is something that we are looking at at the moment.

MR DOSZPOT: In light of the recommendations that were made for expansion, will there be further opportunity for people to put a counter point of view? Should you decide not to extend, will you still consult after you explain what it is you are going to do?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: People who may have a different point of view will have an opportunity to state their case?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, I would expect so.

MR DOSZPOT: Regarding staffing, on page 63 there is an indication that staffing has decreased from 18 to 14, and in the long term you are looking at reducing further. What is the reason for the reduction in staffing?

Ms Fitzharris: I will hand over to Mr Horne.

Mr Horne: In essence, our staff has not reduced to 14. Our FTE will be 17, but 14 is the actual number of permanent staff we have on the site. We have used contractors to maintain staff levels as and when required.

MR DOSZPOT: On the use of contractors, do you have specific contractors that you have a direct contract with, or is it a general company that will supply contractors?

Mr Horne: Essentially, it is a body hire pool that we draw from, depending on the skills we need at the time.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any issue with continuity of information that those people may need to have?

Mr Horne: Not generally. Generally, most of the staff that we are hiring—not all, but most—are field staff. There is an initial training and induction period. That is under supervision, and it is relatively straightforward.

THE CHAIR: While we are on cemeteries, minister, I guess the alternative to a further expansion at Woden is bringing on the southern memorial park sooner. What is the current time frame expected for that?

Ms Fitzharris: There is no current specific time frame about that. I invite Mr Bartos, as the chair of the board, or Mr Horne, to talk more broadly. As I mentioned, any

subsequent discussion and decisions around the expansion of cemeteries or having a clearer time frame around southern memorial park also have to take into account not only the government's broader objectives and initiatives but the objectives of the authority itself. We see broadly across the community changing preferences for burials or cremations.

There is a whole range of work underway on the management of cemeteries, and that is constantly factored in by the board in terms of their longer term operations. I know that they are very cognisant of the fact that their capacity at Woden reaches its full level in 2018, and they have been planning for that for some time. Subsequent decisions by the government have meant that we are now having another think about that. Perhaps Mr Bartos or Mr Horne could talk about some of the challenges in this space.

Mr Bartos: The issues with ACT cemeteries are quite complicated, and, longer term, there is a series of issues to be dealt with. The first is that community preferences are shifting away from ground burial to cremation, and also to other forms of memorialisation. What the authority aims to do is to meet the whole of the community's needs for appropriate memorialisation. We are seeing a growing community from the Hindu, Sikh and Jain populations who have religiously a preference for cremation. They do not have ground burial as part of their religious observances. Longer term, these are some of the pressures we have to take into account.

We also have to look at the issue of the south side of Canberra, the fact that if you are at the bottom of Tuggeranong, you are looking at a 60-kilometre round trip to get to Gungahlin, which, if you are a recently bereaved family, is quite a distance to have to haul yourself. So we want to look after the needs of all of the Canberra community. These are the longer term issues, and we are trying to put the whole of the services to the ACT in that longer term perspective. At some stage, we have been told by government—and this remains the position of government—there will be a southern memorial park, as budgetary conditions permit. That has been the position now for a couple of years. Longer term, that will be part of the mix, but exactly when has to depend on all of the other pressures on the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Is the shift in preference from ground burial to cremation a cultural change or is there a price imperative? What has been the issue?

Mr Bartos: No, it is a cultural thing, really. It is a community preference observed not just in the ACT but across Australia. It is part of a general shift in community attitudes, rather than anything else. It would be fair to say that the more traditional one's cultural religious observances are, the more likely you are to go for ground burial. As we have seen in the most recent census, some of those more traditional folks are diminishing; therefore it is not surprising to see that preference for cremation growing.

THE CHAIR: If there are no further questions on cemeteries, we will move on to output class 2.1, roads infrastructure, community transport and transport reform. Ms Cheyne, we are up to you for a substantive question.

MRS DUNNE: Ms Cheyne? You were actually up to me, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Sorry?

MRS DUNNE: We are up to me.

THE CHAIR: It was Mr Pettersson—

MRS DUNNE: Before the break?

MR PETTERSSON: It was Mr Coe that deferred his question to Mr Doszpot.

MRS DUNNE: Right.

THE CHAIR: Yes, so Mr Pettersson has had his.

MS CHEYNE: I have been waiting a long time.

MRS DUNNE: Have you?

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: I have not been waiting as long as Ms Cheyne.

Ms Fitzharris: Is this the biggest turnout? I should be flattered.

THE CHAIR: No, it is the second biggest. Mrs Dunne had to sit around the corner the other day. It is the hallmark of a larger Assembly.

MS CHEYNE: My question is on roads and customer satisfaction with roads. Page 21 sets out the accountability indicators as the percentage of customers satisfied with the road network. I see that we are aiming for over 75 per cent in 2017-18. How do you determine whether a customer is satisfied?

Mr Marshall: The outcome against this accountability indicator is determined from the results of a public survey.

MS CHEYNE: How many people are surveyed?

Ms Fitzharris: Perhaps we could talk more broadly. There is an annual customer survey that TCCS does. Perhaps Ms Thomas could talk about that in broad terms to give us some context.

MS CHEYNE: That would be great.

Ms Thomas: Yes. Every year, to meet our accountability indicators across the board, you will notice that there are a lot of customer satisfaction measures throughout the accountability indicators. We do that largely through a phone survey every year. We survey a number of Canberrans. I am not sure of the exact number. We will have to take that on notice. I think it is more than 1,000. I am happy to take the exact number

on notice. But we phone a number of residents throughout Canberra. They are asked a number of questions to rate our service across the board. The results are fed into the accountability indicators for this survey.

It is not just about road quality. There are customer survey measures for ACTION, libraries—the whole suite of TCCS services. That data is busy being collected currently in preparation for these measures for this year. I believe the surveys have actually finished. We are just waiting for the data collection survey company to pull all those results together so that we can feed that into our annual report every year.

MS CHEYNE: Is that survey available for viewing?

Ms Thomas: No, I do not believe it is an online survey. It is done through a phone mechanism.

MS CHEYNE: Performance indicator (d) relates to the percentage of territorial roads in good condition. What is the definition of “good condition”?

Mr Marshall: The measure here is a condition index that is an aggregate calculation of a range of indicators of deterioration of road pavement—things like cracking, rutting and surface texture.

MS CHEYNE: They were my questions; thanks.

THE CHAIR: We might go to Mrs Dunne since you have been waiting for a long time.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will preface this, minister, by saying that I asked some questions yesterday about the alignment of Kuringa Drive and Southern Cross Drive in the planning context of—

Ms Fitzharris: The alignment or the—

MRS DUNNE: Yes, and the interface between them in the context of the CSIRO development. Mr Gentleman said that he would take the questions on notice and consult with your department so that I did not have to ask the same questions twice. But it is a slightly connected question. My question is about the Tillyard Drive upgrade survey piece of work—the planning. How does that connect, or does it connect, with the other end of Kuringa Drive, which is sort of the country road end of Kuringa Drive?

Ms Fitzharris: So would you like me to—

MRS DUNNE: Generally speak about Tillyard Drive and the work that is being done in relation to the upgrade there. But my understanding is that the planning work on Tillyard Drive peters out when we get to Kuringa Drive. Is that the case? Is there any thinking about the treatment of Kuringa Drive as it runs along the north end of Fraser?

Ms Fitzharris: More broadly, I did not hear Mr Gentleman’s responses. But it is certainly the case that there are a number of significant infrastructure impacts from the

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commonwealth's decision to go ahead with the CSIRO's Ginninderra site. Kuringa Drive is obviously one important one. There are a number of others. TCCS works with the federal government in a number of different ways very frequently on a whole range of infrastructure-related issues, principally led through TCCS.

On Kuringa Drive, I am certainly conscious that a commitment that Labor made was to upgrade the intersection with Owen Dixon Drive. There has been work underway on Tillyard. I do not believe it specifically relates to Kuringa Drive or to the intersection at the other end. I will ask Mr Marshall to talk in more detail about that.

Mr Marshall: The work on Tillyard Drive is in the context of local area traffic management. There is a well-established process by which areas of concern are identified by monitoring indicator attributes, traffic volumes, accidents, crash histories, speed data and so on. That information feeds to a traffic warrant system that identifies areas that warrant more detailed investigation of the need potentially to install measures to manage traffic speeds and driver behaviours. That process applies at a precinct level. The detailed study looks at the way roads in a precinct interact. It is focused on, in this case, Tillyard, as opposed to Kuringa. As I understand it, there are no measures proposed or under consideration on Kuringa Drive itself.

MRS DUNNE: Are we looking at the interface, on Tillyard Drive, of Lhotsky Street and Ginninderra Drive as part of that process? Also, I am trying to remember the name of the particular street that comes out of Flynn.

Ms Fitzharris: My understanding, Mrs Dunne, is Lhotsky Street, yes.

MRS DUNNE: It is Spalding Street.

Ms Fitzharris: But Ginninderra Drive, no, not in that process. We are looking at it, but not as part of that specific consultation that was done earlier this year.

MRS DUNNE: Are we looking at any works at the intersection of Spalding Street in Flynn?

Ms Fitzharris: We might have to take that one on notice in terms of the work that has come out of the study. Just a general comment: often those consultations raise a number of issues. Not all can be implemented in one go, but they are prioritised and implemented based on priority measures that have been identified, both through the technical work and the community consultation.

MRS DUNNE: With your indulgence, Mr Chairman, could I move us a little east to Kingsford Smith Drive? Beyond the issue of the intersection with Kuringa Drive, there is a lot of increased traffic, it seems to me, because of the construction of Clarrie Hermes Drive. Is there any consideration of duplication of Kingford Smith Drive? It is quite a wide road. There is quite a wide road reserve. There are also black spot issues, which have been ameliorated to some extent by reducing the speed limit over time. But is there any consideration to the duplication of Kingsford Smith?

Ms Fitzharris: No, not to my knowledge. As a general rule—

MRS DUNNE: It is duplicated up to just before Spalding Street.

Ms Fitzharris: Duplication generally makes it less amenable to walking and cycling. Given those black spot issues, I do not believe there is—

MRS DUNNE: It is already a duplicated road for most of its length—from Drake-Brockman Drive all the way up to Spalding Street. It is only the last kilometre or so that is not duplicated. Constituents talk to me a lot about the increased traffic flow since the construction of Clarrie Hermes and those suburbs that are fed by Clarrie Hermes.

Ms Fitzharris: We can take the specifics on notice but, again, increased volume does not necessarily mean that the road is at capacity. An increase in volume may not mean that the road is at capacity. It just may mean there is more traffic on it.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I understand that.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, we will take those specifics on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

MS LAWDER: I have a question about staffing in the directorate. Specifically, when did you employ the speed hump fairy and what level is she on?

Ms Fitzharris: You may have to give us a bit more detail. I am not aware of the speed hump fairy. Perhaps you could explain it for us.

THE CHAIR: Why not come down to Tuggeranong?

MS LAWDER: A sprinkling of fairy dust and they magically appear overnight.

Ms Fitzharris: Is this a good thing, in your view?

MS LAWDER: I am specifically looking at some speed humps that recently appeared on Bugden Avenue. I have written on behalf of a number of constituents. I received a letter dated 19 October, which I did not receive until 26 October because it took me a little time to get back to the office after the election. There was some correspondence about whether traffic speed humps, speed cushions, were going to be installed. The letter I got from the directorate said that there were some traffic calming treatments to be implemented in stages, with high priority treatments installed that year—I presume that meant 2016 or the calendar year—following consultation with affected residents. Then I got letters from residents saying, “We got home from work today and magically there are speed humps.” They appeared to imply there was little or no consultation with affected residents that they were going to appear, other than a survey a couple of years ago about the whole area.

Specifically my question is about the location. They are on a straight stretch of Bugden Avenue. As a frequent user of that area as well and from my constituents’ feedback, the area of risk to me would appear to be more where there is a bend in the road and where Mullins Place comes in. I would have thought, not being a traffic

engineer, you would be trying to slow the traffic so that it is not as dangerous for people trying to come out of that street rather than further along on the straight stretch of Bugden Avenue. Can you perhaps run through the rationale? Is it about local traffic slowing down? Is it about safety of streets coming onto it? Is it about dissuading rat running because of the roadworks on Ashley Drive? Can you explain the rationale behind the speed humps in that area?

Mr Marshall: I cannot go to the specifics of the design in that area. More generally the answer is: the objectives will be site specific. It could be any of those that you have identified, depending on the particular circumstances at the site and the particular behaviours or patterns that were identified in the original appraisal of the site and that were then further explored, in consultation with the community.

In response to that understanding of the exact nature of the behaviour or other traffic condition that was identified as a problem, there is a design prepared by appropriately qualified and skilled traffic engineers. That design is then discussed in the public consultation process and implemented. Very importantly, the process does not stop there. There is ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness against the intended outcomes. The impact of the measures continues to be objectively evaluated over time, as statistics become available, to see what effect they have had and whether the effect aligns with what was intended. That process is ongoing.

MS LAWDER: What analysis was done of speeding along Bugden Avenue in that area?

Mr Marshall: The original selection of the site as a site that could potentially be improved would be based on general speed and volume surveying that takes place routinely across the network. All of those statistics feed into the traffic warrant systems and would have identified that site as having particular characteristics that potentially could be improved. More specifically than that I do not have information at hand.

Ms Fitzharris: My understanding is: this was a local area traffic management piece of work like we were talking about with Tillyard Drive and as there have been with other roads across the territory. That work was done a couple of years ago. They were identified.

My broad comment would be: many letters I receive from many MLAs and from constituents directly often say there is a perception that there is increased traffic or there is a perception that traffic is travelling more quickly. "There are people speeding. Please implement traffic calming measures." Then I get a whole range of other letters that say, "These traffic calming measures are now slowing me down and getting in my way." There is a balance here that I think we need to strike. On this particular one I am aware that I have received, in my period in this portfolio for 18 months now, both: "Please slow down Bugden Avenue," to: "You slowed down Bugden Avenue and it is not really working for me." The specific questions perhaps we could take on notice and get some detail for you.

MS LAWDER: I go back to the consultation and the letter I got from the director-general. I cannot recall the company, but there was a survey, maybe in 2015,

of the local area, Coyne Street and Bugden Avenue and all around there. Apart from that, what other consultation with affected residents took place?

Ms Thomas: I would have to take that on notice. As a general rule of thumb, when we are implementing traffic calming measures I ask the directorate to do consultation with the affected residents.

MS LAWDER: I have seen the letter on consultation signed by you on 23 September.

Ms Thomas: Again, I cannot remember the specifics.

MS LAWDER: You will take that on notice?

Ms Thomas: Yes.

MS LAWDER: That one and also if you could take on notice the measurement of speeds along there prior to the implementation. It is relatively recent. I presume there has been no follow-up monitoring of speeds. Do you know when that might take place?

Ms Thomas: I will take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: The feeling from some residents is that the speed bumps there are so wide apart that people are reaching above peak speed anyway between them. They feel they have been slowed down and they want to make up time before the next one.

Ms Fitzharris: Those specifics we can certainly find out. We will take those on notice and provide them for you.

THE CHAIR: From my recollection, minister, when those consultations were done, particularly in Fadden, Macarthur and Gowrie, speed humps on Bugden were seen as one of the least preferred options and in fact a realignment of Coyne Street was preferred. Why was the decision taken to simply install speed humps as opposed to the realignment of or the introduction of a roundabout at the Coyne-Bugden intersection, as was largely chosen by residents?

Ms Fitzharris: How about we take on notice issues around the original consultation, the range of issues that were raised, what has been implemented since and what may still be to come?

MS CHEYNE: Minister and officials, on the speed humps, over the last few years we have had a number of 40-kilometre hour zones around our town centres and group centres, which I think has largely been received favourably. As part of that we have also had the installation of some speed humps.

Ms Fitzharris: Traffic calming measures.

MS CHEYNE: Traffic calming measures.

Ms Fitzharris: If I could show you, the number of letters I get asking for traffic

measures is very considerable.

MS CHEYNE: I am sure that is correct. I quite like the concrete ones that have a pedestrian crossing and are much easier to go over. I am talking about these black plastic ones that do not go all the way across. In my opinion, living in a town centre encourages a range of interesting approaches to driving to avoid them. I am just wondering, now that people have got used to the 40-kilometre an hour zones, particularly in the Belconnen town centre but I am sure in others, is it possible that there could be some consideration given to removing some of these speed humps and relying on people to do the right thing by seeing signs alone?

Mr Marshall: Again, the measures are always, in all circumstances, subject to post implementation evaluation. There is ongoing evaluation to understand the degree to which they are effective. If the evidence suggests that they are either not effective or would not continue to be effective then absolutely consideration would be given to their removal.

MS CHEYNE: They are going to be effective because they will slow traffic down, but you have to be really slow, depending on what sort of vehicle you have, going over them. Is that potentially a false measure? Would it be easier to remove them and then check that people are doing the right thing based on signage alone?

Mr Marshall: The evaluation of how effective a given measure is, I guess, is a very science-specific question. The measures can be looked at in the context of overall compliance. You are right: in various circumstances it may be more or less difficult to determine what the exact contribution of one intervention against others is. Really all we can evaluate is the net effect. But we can monitor the contribution of a given measure against its undesired effects and weigh that up in looking at whether consideration might be given to a change. Certainly any scheme is implemented not with a view that on the day of implementation that is what will remain in place forever. There is certainly a very open attitude to evaluation post identification and modifying to improve and refine the outcomes.

MS CHEYNE: I know in the town centre there has already been at least one post-implementation evaluation. Is there another one planned?

Mr Corrigan: Sorry, is that Belconnen?

MS CHEYNE: Yes.

Mr Corrigan: I do not have at hand the exact detail of what is scheduled in Belconnen. I can take that on notice.

Ms Fitzharris: We are looking to expand 40-kilometre areas around town centres and group centres. It just shows that more and more people are living in all our town centres and will continue to live in our town centres, and we are looking to activate town centres. What is really clear is that if you make it a space for people to be comfortable and safe—walking, cycling, kids, older people—if it works better for them walking and cycling and being able to move more safely around a town centre then it adds to the vibrancy and it adds to investment in town centres. More people

want to live there; more people want to open businesses there. We are looking to expand them. We are building the bikeway in Belconnen, which we are very excited about. I know you are too. That will also have an impact on the town centre, as will ongoing implementation of the master planning process for the Belconnen town centre.

MS LAWDER: How much does it cost to install a speed bump—the materials, the labour and the signage?

Ms Fitzharris: We will take it on notice.

MS LAWDER: Could you provide a list, by suburb, of how many have been installed each year over the past five years?

Ms Fitzharris: We will take that on notice and see how much work is involved.

MR PETTERSSON: In terms of getting traffic calming measures in the first place, you get a request and then what is the process for assessing whether that need is genuine?

Mr Marshall: The process is essentially to look at the history of that site in terms of the indicator metrics, if you like, of traffic volume, crash history, speed data. That data is collected continuously and feeds into a traffic warrant system. A request for measures to influence one of those attributes can be a response to a perception that there is a problematic crash history or a perception that there is a speeding issue, and those perceptions can be tested against the statistical history, the statistical database for that location. That will statistically indicate whether there is a strong basis for the concern. If it is supported by the statistics then that is an indicator that there is potential benefit in further detailed investigation.

MR PETTERSSON: Going to the speeding one, I take it you put the black wires across the road to get a measure?

Mr Marshall: Yes.

MR PETTERSSON: Let us say you take that measurement and you come to the conclusion that there is not a speeding issue. How soon will you investigate that site again?

Mr Marshall: It is an ongoing program across the network of constantly monitoring those statistics. The exact recurrence interval varies somewhat, but it is a number of years; certainly no longer than that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the commitment in the budget, and an election commitment last year, was to improve road safety measures around schools in the ACT. Have the 20 schools been identified, and what process has been used to do so?

Ms Fitzharris: Great question, and there are two things, if I could just talk broadly. One is that in last year's budget a number of initiatives were identified to increase walking and cycling to school, which is the expansion of the active streets for kids program, which was originally rolled out in Belconnen, to another 20 schools, and

those schools were identified in last year's budget.

Since then the government has made commitments, and the parliamentary agreement also has a range of different initiatives both to improve safety around schools and to encourage walking and cycling. I come to this with both my Transport and City Services and my Health hats on. At the moment we are in the process of looking at all of that together. We know there are a number of complaints and issues that parents, teachers and students have around school car park management and management of the local roads.

THE CHAIR: I think almost every school in Canberra has an issue in this space.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, and each school is quite different. Each school is set in a different environment, with a different number of kids. Twenty schools identified for the active streets for kids program, and one of the common features for some of those schools was where there was a collocated school; for example, a public primary school collocated or very nearby a Catholic primary school in a lot of cases. We are about to hold a forum in July with a range of stakeholders to work through all of those issues, including what people know colloquially as a lollipop person program. We do not have the final detail of that. The funding in the budget was to roll out so that it will be ready to go in term 1 of 2018.

THE CHAIR: So the schools have been identified?

Ms Fitzharris: No, they have not yet, because we need to identify the criteria.

THE CHAIR: So you are revisiting that list from last year's budget?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. The 20 schools that will get the active streets for kids program will remain. That was in last year's budget papers. You could assume that many of those schools were identified for that program because they met a number of criteria already for traffic volumes around the schools, participation in the ride and walk to school program, reported incidents and a couple of other criteria. Those criteria will be very similar to which schools will get the lollipop program. But also we are working through the right model to deliver that program.

THE CHAIR: How does this program differ from the Labor policy commitment taken to the election last year?

Ms Fitzharris: It is the same one. There is also a parliamentary agreement item to do a traffic management plan for each school. I am interpreting that as a whole package of works about making it safer and easier.

THE CHAIR: Treasury costing number 49, which was released for the election costing commitments, was entitled, "Labor's election commitment for road safety around schools". This costing included higher expenses than what has been funded for in the budget. The budget papers for this year show, I think, total funding expenses of \$2,221,000, yet as it was costed by Treasury the capital is the same but the expenses were \$2,979,600. Why is there a difference in the expenses, if it is the same policy, and how has that change come about?

Ms Fitzharris: It is the same policy, and it will be some of the modelling that has been done to deliver it in a more efficient way, but I can take the specifics on notice. It may be that the costing—

THE CHAIR: You can just say treasury got it wrong.

Ms Fitzharris: I will take it on notice.

MS CODY: Community transport is very different, obviously, to our ACTION services. This is to assist people that cannot get around. I think I understand what we mean by “community transport” but I want to make sure, because I have a whole bunch of questions and I want to make sure I am in the right area.

Ms Fitzharris: Sure. It is still part of Transport Canberra. There are some commitments we made which are funded in this budget to expand the rollout of what is known as the flexible bus service to the inner north, which takes it city-wide. This is a highly valued service. We are doing quite a large piece of work; we had a session with the community organisations last year on providing better community transport to people in need across the community. The election commitment funded in this budget to expand it to the inner north is one, but we know we have a capacity that we could use much better. Mr Matthews may like to talk more about the work that is ongoing at the moment.

Mr Matthews: To answer your question, Ms Cody, you are right; community transport has very broad definitional terms across the country. Generally it is referred to as a range of different tailored strategies to deal with various different forms of transport disadvantage. That is the very broad term. In the ACT, as the minister said, we have a program that runs out of Transport Canberra which is a community transport service—in fact, we have a number of them. We provide the flexible bus service for our older citizens. We also have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bus service and Transport Canberra also provides special needs transport for children and young people with a disability. A range of different programs are in place to meet the needs of different target groups.

It is important to point out as well that there are community transport providers in the community sector. In the Community Services portfolio there is a community minibus program where a number of the key regional community services are allocated buses and some operational money to meet other transport requirements. We are increasingly working more closely with those providers to make sure we can provide complementary services and, as the minister said, to really optimise that investment and the outcomes for the community. In the disability area more generally and in the aged-care sector obviously there are a whole bunch of transport-related needs which are funded through a range of commonwealth funding sources. It is a very large and diverse sector.

MS CODY: You mentioned that the election commitment and the budget commitment is to roll it out in the inner north. Can you expand a bit on that? I have a follow-up from there.

Mr Matthews: Indeed, Ms Cody. That specific commitment is the flexible bus service, and it is provided between 9.30 and 1.30 every weekday. I can inform the committee that we have about 1,000 clients on our books, and most of those are between the ages of 70 and 80 years. They are elderly citizens in Canberra and, indeed, that is the focus of that program, particularly people with mobility impairments which would otherwise prevent them from accessing other transport. Our oldest client is 100 years old, and a number of those clients travel very regularly with us and very much appreciate and rely on that service.

The service operates in a number of zones across the territory. The inner north is, in fact, the last zone that is not currently covered. With the commitment by the government in the budget we will be able to expand to the inner north later in 2017. Alongside that, as the minister mentioned, we will continue to work in very close cooperation with the community sector so that we can make sure that where we have assets and clients that need services we coordinate our efforts with our partners and make sure we can meet the individual requirements of all of those people that are eligible.

MS CODY: The inner north will be the last zone, so it operates everywhere else across Canberra?

Mr Matthews: Yes. At the moment it operates in Tuggeranong, the Woden-Weston Creek area, Belconnen and Gungahlin. The inner north completes the set, and it means that from a territory-wide perspective the flexible bus service will be in operation. As I mentioned before, the community minibus service also covers the entire territory as well. Whilst we have not had the flexible bus service in the inner north to this point, we have had funding go to Northside Community Service for their community minibus program and they have been providing a range of community transport services.

MS CODY: During the many hours of doorknocking all of us did during last year's campaign, a lot of the elderly residents in my electorate of Murrumbidgee, in Woden, Weston Creek and Kambah, did not know this service existed. What are we doing to make the community aware that we offer these services for them?

Mr Matthews: It is very important that people know about these services, so we continue to work in close partnership with all of the community-based information services, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Carers ACT. We have a very strong partnership with the Council on the Ageing as well, and we use their publications and material to heavily promote the service. We are involved in things like Seniors Week and the Seniors Expo.

We have done a range of things to date to raise awareness of the service, but absolutely I think it is something that people might not clock on to until they reach a time in their life when they might need that service. They might have had their licence taken away or have surrendered their car or just be in a situation where they might have been a bus user and now need some extra assistance.

We need to make sure people are aware of the service generally and, specifically when they have a need, how they can access the service. That is why the ongoing

support has been provided for the coordination centre, because that is a single point of contact where people can make contact and inquire about services. If they are not eligible for the flexible bus service, for example, we can make very warm referrals to other transport providers so that people can have their needs met.

MS CODY: Is that a phone service or online or both?

Mr Matthews: It is a phone service. We obviously find with the client group we are talking about that they are looking to make face-to-face or phone contact—to talk to a real person and make sure we understand their needs and requirements. Part of the role of the coordination centre is to maintain that list of clients. We have a very specific understanding about things like whether they need support to access a vehicle, do they have a wheelchair or walker or will they be travelling with a carer? We also have next-of-kin and contact information, so we can make sure that if there are any issues or difficulties we know who to contact immediately.

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Matthews said that they are all fully accessible. In my conversations with some of the clients it has been said that they may not need it on an ongoing basis but they have had a particular operation or a fall and they perhaps need a wheelchair or just are not as mobile as they would normally be. They might not use it permanently, but they might use it for a particular time after being discharged from hospital to get to and from ongoing doctor appointments. I have spoken to a few people who use the service in that way as well. It would not necessarily be something to replace your ongoing needs, but it might be for those one-offs as a result of a particular health-related issue.

MS CODY: Canberra, like the rest of Australia and the rest of the world, has an ageing population. My parents, for example, are very tech savvy; my father is much more tech savvy than I am. Are you looking at doing online stuff for those that are more into that side of communicating?

Mr Matthews: There is certainly the potential to expand in that area. In terms of the sophistication of the software and booking systems that are increasingly becoming available for these kinds of on-demand and responsive services, we are seeing quite rapid change in that area. We have a good business system that we have used to manage the service to date. But in terms of the ability to take advantage of technological developments, over the coming period we will certainly keep a watching brief on and an active involvement in that. That is one of the things we are discussing with the community sector—that is, what do they understand about the way their clients wish to access the service and what can we do to make that as easy as possible?

MS LE COUTEUR: I want to talk about the additional funding for walking and cycling. You have gone through it a little bit with the schools, but if we move to “Building a better city—active travel—footpaths and cycleway upgrades” what are the footpath and cycleway upgrades going to cover? Will that include the \$1.5 million that was announced for the age-friendly project?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, a range of things. We will be expanding the age-friendly suburbs program.

MS LE COUTEUR: So that is in that money?

Ms Fitzharris: Which money?

MS LE COUTEUR: It is on page 151 of budget paper 3: “Building a better city—active travel—footpaths and cycleway upgrades”.

Ms Fitzharris: Are you asking whether the age-friendly suburbs program is included in that?

MS LE COUTEUR: I assume the answer is no, but I am just checking that that is—

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, and there is, in addition—

MS LE COUTEUR: The answer is yes?

Ms Fitzharris: The answer is yes. In addition to that, there is the Belconnen bikeway project, which I mentioned earlier.

MS LE COUTEUR: That has its own section, the Belconnen bikeway.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, that has its own section.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is on page 150, so that is clear.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, that is right. There is also some bike parking—what was referred to as the “funky bike racks”. There are a number of ongoing programs that also go to upgrading existing footpaths and cyclepaths across the territory. There is also the significant investment in the West Basin boardwalk in this budget, as well as any new road projects that we do, particularly major duplications. The most significant one in this budget was stage 2 of Gundaroo Drive. That will have significant active transport infrastructure. In addition to that, through the ongoing work broadly under the healthy weight initiative and the active streets for kids program, those changes in schools also fit into our active travel expenditure over the course of a year.

MS LE COUTEUR: I admit to not having a very good understanding of how the budget is presented, but if we are talking about additional spending on active travel and maintenance, I would assume that I would be able to find it all in budget paper 3.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am trying to work out how much has actually been additionally spent on active transport—on the walking and cycling.

Ms Fitzharris: We can take that on notice, on the specifics, adding in the programs that I mentioned.

MS LE COUTEUR: Presumably not the cycleway next to the new road, because that would have been required expenditure anyway. That is not really additional

expenditure.

Ms Fitzharris: It is additional expenditure in a sense, but I think I know—

MS LE COUTEUR: You know where I am coming from in that regard.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, I know what you mean. I think there was a recommendation, made over a number of years, about being more explicit in the budget papers on active travel expenditure. In last year's budget, major road duplications did have the amount separated for active travel infrastructure. My intention would be to have a clearer statement on that in next year's budget, so that it is very clear.

MS LE COUTEUR: If you could take this on notice, but for this year's budget, particularly bearing in mind that it was a parliamentary agreement item to spend an extra \$30 million, and, apart from anything else, I am trying to work out—

Ms Fitzharris: We will get there.

MS LE COUTEUR: where we are, and it is incomprehensible on that.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. I omitted to mention the town centre upgrades, and the group centre in Kambah's case. Tuggeranong, Gungahlin and Kambah also have active travel components in that \$8 million worth of upgrades. From that you can take it that there are a range of different projects across a number of different directorates that have that. We will provide you with, on notice, the specifics. I am also looking towards next year's budget and having a clearer statement on that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. That would be really good. The other thing I wanted to talk to you about is road and community path maintenance. As you would be aware, the Auditor-General recently did a report basically saying that there should be more of it. How can we get more of it? I would suspect that she is correct. As someone who, as Ms Cody said, spent a lot of last year walking on these paths, the number of people who complained about the safety of the paths near them was one of the things that really surprised me after last year's doorknocking.

Ms Fitzharris: I said when the Auditor-General handed down her report that we welcomed it. There will be a formal response from government to that report over the next couple of months. There are some things in there that we are already well underway with. In terms of her recommendations about prioritisation and funding, that is certainly something that the government will be considering.

One of the recommendations that she made was on community feedback when issues are raised through Access Canberra, through fix my street. The work that I mentioned earlier on fix my suburb will look to provide that better feedback mechanism to the community. So some of the recommendations that she made are already underway and we will be providing a formal response to her report in the coming months.

MS CODY: Thank you, Ms Le Couteur, for bringing this up. Minister, you mentioned on-road cycling. In budget statements H, on page 21, you talk about the increase in length of on-road cycle lanes. We are going to increase our on-road cycle

lanes by 25 kilometres in the next year. Am I reading that correctly?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS CODY: That is going to be across Canberra?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. She made recommendations on the measurement of this as well, so we will be looking at all those recommendations and taking them on board. As I say, some of them are issues that we are already very well aware of and looking into anyway. Certainly, looking at the range of different ways to make it easier and safer for people to walk and cycle is very much on my mind, across my two big portfolios, health and transport and city services.

We have a pretty good sense of where the gaps are, and we want to fill them. We have seen some incredibly good figures come out recently on the ACT community's participation in cycling in particular. We want to increase that, as we do with all of our transport investment, to give people a better, more convenient option than using their private car every day. The other thing that the Auditor-General found is that it is very expensive to build and maintain roads. We cannot keep doing that for infinity. We cannot keep using up valuable space on more asphalt.

The more that we can encourage people, we do. The question about whether or not this city was built for the car has been answered. It is certainly a city that can support, and our government's intention is to strongly support, investments in public transport and walking and cycling. One of the things that I am very excited about is the Belconnen bikeway, because it will connect with surrounding suburbs and it will give separated paths for pedestrians, cyclists and cars. It will be built on the success already of what we have seen around the city with the city cycle loop.

MS CHEYNE: You mentioned the Belconnen bikeway, minister. Will there be consultation with the community to determine the route?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, there will be. I think the route has been built on the work that has already been done on the master planning process and what we already know about movements around the town centre. There will be a number of opportunities for consultation on the specific route.

MS CHEYNE: Is it likely that the route will go through the old Joynton Smith busway?

Ms Fitzharris: Absolutely. It will become the Belconnen bikeway. Ben McHugh can talk more about that. Would you like some more detail?

MS CHEYNE: No, that is plenty. The chair has been very indulgent with me.

MR COE: I have a question that is really in response to a question that I put to you on notice as part of the environment and transport and city services annual reports hearing. I asked: "Please provide an update on the status of the backlog of resurfacing works throughout the ACT. Please identify key reasons for the backlog, including a lack of resources, cost, length of time." Your response was: "There is no specific

backlog of resurfacing. All road segments are considered in each year's analysis and treatments are prioritised to achieve the optimum net effect." Do you stand by the fact that there is no specific backlog of resurfacing?

Ms Fitzharris: There is always a program of work to do resealing. How you interpret that as a backlog is a question that I answered in that question on notice. There is always a program of work. Whether or not you interpret that as a backlog of work that has not been done that should have been done is a different question.

MR COE: You were quite explicit. "There is no specific backlog of resurfacing." Whereas when you go to the Auditor-General's report, it states:

While Roads ACT reported in their 2015-16 annual report that 90 percent of territorial roads in the ACT were in good condition, there is a significant maintenance backlog for road pavement. This backlog has increased by more than 400 percent since 2010-11 and amounts to approximately two million square meters of road pavement needing maintenance (equivalent to 9.0 percentage of the total road pavement) ...

They are quite specific that there is a backlog. It is a pretty common word, so I was wondering why you would be so explicit in saying there is no backlog when obviously the Auditor-General has found a very specific backlog within the records of the territory.

Ms Fitzharris: There is always a program of work to do. In any directorate, there is always a program of work to do. I will accept that the Auditor-General has called it a backlog, so I suspect that when we present the government's response we will acknowledge that there is work to do. I have never not acknowledged that there is work to do, and that is why there is such an extensive program of monitoring the road network and its condition so that we know that each year we are making investments.

MR COE: I would ask that you review the *Hansard* of the committee hearing, because we went into this in some detail with regard to program maintenance and the like. Especially given the information from the Auditor-General, would you please check to see that the evidence that you gave is accurate?

Ms Fitzharris: Certainly. I recall saying that there is always a program of work that we need to do. In terms of resurfacing roads, there is a target each year, and we have been meeting that target, so—

MR COE: Sure. There are numerous other things that we discussed that I think have been covered in the Auditor-General's report that might be relevant regarding the evidence that you gave back in March.

Ms Fitzharris: Okay.

THE CHAIR: The committee will now adjourn for lunch.

Hearing suspended from 12.32 pm to 2.04 pm.

THE ACTING CHAIR (Ms Cody): Welcome back. This afternoon we are continuing with the Minister for Transport and City Services. We are focusing on Transport Canberra output class 1.1 and ACTION output class 1.1. Mr Edghill, could you ensure that you have read the privilege statement and that you accept it.

Mr Edghill: I do, thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIR: On that note, I think we should get started. We will start with a very quick question, I hope, from me, on active travel.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

THE ACTING CHAIR: It is a big deal in this year's budget. We have been working on making sure that we are doing a lot more to ensure that people in the community are able to be active. What are some of the initiatives being funded through this year's budget?

Ms Fitzharris: In addition to the ones that we mentioned earlier in the previous hearings, the principal ones we are looking at are the very exciting Belconnen bikeway; a range of community park upgrades, which include the age-friendly suburbs program; the upgrades at our town centres, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and Kambah; a couple of specific ones, with more bike racks in Braddon and the Stirling Avenue walkway in Watson; and major work on our major road infrastructure projects. The notable one there is stage 2 Gundaroo Drive. As well, there is ongoing work from previous budgets across a whole range of active travel measures and important work around schools and school settings.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I note in the accountability indicators on page 19 of budget statements H, we talk about customer satisfaction with access to cycling and walking paths. We have been sitting at about 85 per cent. Why are we looking at 85 per cent? Why not 100?

Ms Fitzharris: If we could please 100 per cent of people 100 per cent of the time, that would be fantastic.

THE ACTING CHAIR: It would be.

Ms Fitzharris: Again, this will be measured through the survey that the director-general talked about previously. It is both access to and—probably another indicator in another portfolio—participation in. Walking and cycling are other important outcomes that I am looking towards. I do not know if anyone wants to comment more on our 85 per cent target?

Ms Thomas: The type of survey that we are doing at the moment is still a subjective and quite qualitative survey, so 85 per cent is considered to be quite a good measure. It is an excellence measure that we are looking at getting to. One of the things that we are pretty keen to do in the directorate is find ways of measuring customer satisfaction other than just that qualitative survey so that we can be a bit more specific and point to what elements of cycling and walking people are really happy about and which bits they want more information about or more investment in. Although this is the target at

the moment, and it is a good qualitative target that we have used for a number of years, we are always looking at ways to get more information on what the customer satisfaction index is.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Absolutely. Minister, I am super-excited to hear about the Belconnen cycleway. It is fantastic. However, I am from down south, and I represent a lot of people who live down that way who love cycling, love getting active. Are we eventually looking at how we can interact better with our south-side paths?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. One of the things that is important about the Belconnen bikeway is that it will be a demonstration of how we can build something like this in a town centre where more people already live, where more people are working, where we have access to the lake. We have the learn-to-ride facility on the shores of Lake Ginninderra. It is really a town centre ready to go, and the master planning work had been underway.

We know that there is master planning work that has been done in Woden. There has been work done in Easty Street in the Woden town centre and work is about to start on Matilda Street, with some cycling upgrades as well. We know that the strategic cycle network shows that the connection between Molonglo Valley and the city is also really important. We have a sense across the city about where those connections are and where we need to do some work. Perhaps Mr McHugh might be able to provide a bit more detail around Woden and Weston Creek?

Mr McHugh: Yes, absolutely. In 2015-16 we completed feasibility studies on active travel in the town centres of Tuggeranong and in Woden. The work that is being delivered currently in Woden is the first tranche of capital works in that space. Anketell Street, with the commitment this coming financial year to improvements, is the first tranche of improvements in active travel in the Tuggeranong town centre. There will be future programs for rolling out the remainder of those improvements over time, as well as in our current major construction projects. In Cotter Road, for example, a major shared path connection between Weston Creek and Curtin has been constructed as well as improvements along Ashley Drive, on that north-south connection, for active travel. There are some current projects, but there are future programs that we are planning in those town centres as well.

THE ACTING CHAIR: That is good. I am just making sure that our friends down south know that we are not forgetting about them. Thank you for expanding on some of that. I really appreciate it. I am a keen on-road cyclist myself, so it is really good to see that we are focusing on all of that infrastructure.

Mr McHugh: Yes. In relation to the KPIs that were referred to earlier around the on-road cycle network and the extension of that, over many years we have been developing and implementing that on-road cycling network. We know that there are still some gaps in that network that we need to complete. There are over 3,000 kilometres of roads in the ACT. Picking up another 25 kilometres of those each year will go a long way to completing that on-road network.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Absolutely. Earlier this morning you mentioned the school safe riding—

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, walking and cycling.

THE ACTING CHAIR: That is it, thank you. How is that progressing?

Ms Fitzharris: There are a couple of different features of that. One is the walk and ride to school program, which is a program delivered out of ACT Health. Is that right?

Mr McHugh: That is correct.

Ms Fitzharris: They have all come together in one big important bucket for me. That delivers the program in schools; it is delivered by the Physical Activity Foundation, who go into schools and encourage kids to walk and cycle but also demonstrate for them important issues around road safety, the safe use of roads; how to ride a bike, if kids do not already know how to ride a bike; how to pump up a tyre; how to do some very basic bike maintenance; and how to navigate their way around their local neighbourhood. They work with the local schools to develop a map of the local neighbourhood as well, so that kids—and their parents, importantly—can easily see what is a safe route to walk or cycle.

The active streets for kids program, which is in TCCS, implemented some infrastructure upgrades and some basic signage on some of those routes around the school to further enhance safety and the way-finding ability of kids and their parents in using those routes. They are very simple things, like putting up a sign, painting a line on the road and doing minor infrastructure upgrades to make the routes safer. There has been real success with that in four schools in Belconnen. There were, as I mentioned earlier, 20 schools identified in last year's budget. They will be rolling out. But given that now we have this other package of work around traffic safety management plans at all schools, improved signage around schools and the lollipop program, all of that work is coming together into one overarching piece of work.

It goes across a number of different directorates, including TCCS and Health. There is work that I know Minister Berry is doing through the Education Directorate, working with school communities around both ownership and shared responsibility about what is good behaviour and being a responsible parent during pick-up and drop-off times at schools. Those three directorates are really important, and Minister Rattenbury has an interest in terms of road safety. It is a whole-of-government effort.

Mr McHugh: Absolutely.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Fantastic. It is really good to see those initiatives. Going to my final question, earlier this year I was lucky enough to help launch Canberra's first park-and-pedal facility.

Ms Fitzharris: Australia's first.

THE ACTING CHAIR: First official park and pedal; I am sure people have been unofficially doing that stuff for a while. How is that going? I think I heard that we are going to do a few more across Canberra.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, we have four.

Mr McHugh: Yes, four on the plan. We have been keeping an eye on the usage of the initial site. There was some finetuning to be done with some of the issues that we identified there earlier, but there has been pretty good take-up of that. On any day, 30 to 40 vehicles appear to be using it, which we think is very positive this early on with an initiative like that. We have identified three other sites which we are planning to roll out shortly. I do not have the details of each of those on me at the moment, but we are happy to share that.

THE ACTING CHAIR: If it is an easy task and we could take it on notice, that would be fantastic.

Ms Fitzharris: We will take that on notice, yes.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I use it to park and run, but park and pedal is also a good opportunity for people to—

Ms Fitzharris: Park and walk, park and run, park and pedal.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have some questions about the buses. What percentage of services have bike racks on them? I know you recently put out a media release which gave the percentage of buses but I am actually asking about the percentage of services as distinct from buses. If you want to take that on notice, do so.

Ms Fitzharris: We may have to take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am trying to make the distinction between a bus and a service.

Mr Edghill: I think we will have to take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have some more questions about bus services for new suburbs. I noticed in the land release program that the government is planning to sell land in Whitlam. For those of us, like me, who are not too sure where Whitlam is, it is basically on the other side of Molonglo. What is the plan for this? Is the 182 going over there? That would make it, I would have thought, very unattractive to the people who currently are pleased that they have the 182. How is this going to work?

Ms Fitzharris: My understanding is that the land release for Whitlam is some years in the future, which means that for residents living in Whitlam it is even a couple of years beyond that. Either Mr McGlenn or Mr Edghill can walk you through the broad issue around planning for new suburbs. I note too that transport for Canberra, the government's policy framework, is due for an update. We have early preliminary work going into that as part of our broad transport policy framework. That work is underway because it is, as I say, due for an update and a renewal. Specifically, Whitlam is many years into the future.

Mr Edghill: I can certainly say that, broadly, when we are looking at introducing new services, particularly to a new area, there are some key questions that we need to answer first. The minister has touched on one of them, which is: when is it actually

being developed? We will be working with our colleagues in EPSDD and the Land Development Agency to understand what the population growth will be there.

There are physical factors that would be taken into account as to where exactly the route would go, such as the road network through there and the most appropriate location of the bus stops. There is a process that we go through when we introduce new bus networks. Typically, we are probably running a refresh of our bus network about once a year. There are questions around how we build that into the broader network.

Typically, if we are bringing on a new bus route it does not affect just that particular area. The buses in Weston Creek, for example, their next run may go up to Belconnen. Then at the end of the day the bus will find itself somewhere else in the city. Of course, there are questions then around what that means for the fleet, driver numbers and so forth whenever we introduce a new bus route. Generally, the key question is: when is the bus route going to be needed?

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have some sort of commitment around how many houses are necessary before there is a bus route? I know that for Molonglo it was part of the agreement with the Greens in the Seventh Assembly to have bus services basically starting as soon as people started living there. Is that continuing?

Mr McHugh: Within Transport Canberra we are obviously strong advocates of public transport. Wherever possible our desire would be to bring public transport into new areas as soon as possible to encourage the behaviour of using public transport rather than becoming reliant on the motor vehicle. For each individual area, is there a hard and fast number of houses? No, there is not, because circumstances could vary depending on where exactly we are putting a bus route into. If there are commercial or other reasons to bring it in, notwithstanding that resident numbers may be a little smaller, we take that into account in introducing the new route.

MS LE COUTEUR: It would be great to have a sort of firmer policy than that; I mean, there are lots of other places. Strathgordon, Taylor and Moncrieff are all places where we clearly have imminent expansions and clearly no public transport provision.

Ms Fitzharris: I know that from my part of the world as well. Overall, our main objective is to increase patronage right across the board. I think that, even in the budget statement, one of the objectives is not only to increase patronage but also to increase the sense of excitement about public transport in Canberra. One thing that is broadly underpinning all of our work is to encourage patronage in public transport.

I am very conscious that in new areas if that public transport is not there right at the outset, it is hard to encourage patronage after a while. I think on day one when your first resident moves in might not be the benchmark but I think we can do better than we have done in the past. We are planning, and we will continue to plan, for that particularly with the new agencies. With transport planning being consolidated now within Transport Canberra as of 1 July it will give us also a much better connection between our planning and delivery as well as working with, particularly, the Suburban Land Agency in terms of future land release programs.

MS LE COUTEUR: On what page was the sense of excitement? Speaking as someone who normally catches the bus to work—

Ms Fitzharris: You are excited.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, actually, I do not want to have excitement. I actually want them to be reliable and calm. I do not want to be, “Wow, exciting, the bus has finally turned up!” That is the last thing I want.

Ms Fitzharris: On page 13, transport strategic objective 3 is to “Drive innovation and a sense of excitement about public transport.”

MR STEEL: I have a supplementary, chair. In relation to patronage on the western line, what has the patronage been like over the past year since the service was established in August last year?

Ms Fitzharris: It has been really good. We have some specific figures about the western line, which we will look up for you.

Mr Edghill: Bear with me for a second while we find the right number. The patronage has actually increased quite substantially since we introduced the service.

Ms Fitzharris: Patronage doubled from 901 in the first week to 1,996 in the week of 22 May 2017. The other aspect of that is also the north-western park and ride. It has put a bit of pressure on the north-western park and ride. Weekly boardings at that stop have gone up from an average of 100 per week to as high as nearly 300 per week.

ACTING CHAIR: Sorry, minister, before you go on, can you confirm that the north-western park and ride is the one near—

Ms Fitzharris: The RSPCA.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes. Sorry, Mr Steel.

MR STEEL: What level of patronage would be required to justify a future rapid route in the future?

Ms Fitzharris: We have one and I think it would be orange.

ACTING CHAIR: It was an election commitment.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Edghill: Yes, I think from memory it is the orange line, the orange rapid, which is 2018.

MR STEEL: Is there a particular level of patronage that you would need to go ahead with that sort of rapid route? Are you going to be doing trials on the black and green rapids as part of the trial?

Ms Fitzharris: They are not trials, no.

MR STEEL: Okay.

Ms Fitzharris: They are permanent rapids. There is a trial—

MR STEEL: It is the free service.

Ms Fitzharris: It is the free service for the first two months.

Mr Edghill: Again, there is not a magic number that we use, but certainly that was identified as a potential rapid route for two reasons. One, we are seeing that the patronage has been increasing quite substantially through there. It also ties in with our previous conversation about encouraging public transport use. It is a little chicken and egg-ish but given that is really going through some greenfield areas of Canberra, having a high frequency service through that area will hopefully be an important step towards encouraging public transport usage.

MR COE: I have a question with regard to the maintenance costs of the bus fleet. It is obviously huge at \$20-odd million a year. I think against any benchmark that is right up there at the very top of Australia, maybe second top. What is the reason for that very large maintenance fee issue?

Mr Edghill: There are a few reasons. Just in terms of the absolute cost of maintenance, our bus fleet travels—I apologise if the number is not exactly right—about 22 million kilometres per year. Looking at the nature of Canberra, which is a more dispersed city, our buses tend to travel further than may be expected elsewhere.

MR COE: True, but kilometres in Canberra are easier on the fleet than kilometres in a built-up area like Sydney as well.

Mr Edghill: There are still a lot of kilometres to be covered.

MR COE: That is true but they are not stopping and starting anywhere near as much as a service would in Sydney, Brisbane or Melbourne.

Mr Edghill: Our buses do start and stop quite a lot.

MR COE: Yes, but not as much; that is the point.

Mr Edghill: I think if you look also at the age distribution of our fleet, it is no secret that there are a number of orange buses still on the road, which we are going through the process of retiring. But it is a combination I think of having a large city geographically and having a number of buses that are nearing the end of their useful life over the coming years. That contributes to the cost of our workshop.

MR COE: Going to that point, the Renaults are obviously breaking down a huge amount per 100,000 kilometres. What assessments have you done about whether it actually stacks up to keep these buses on the road as opposed to biting the bullet and replacing those as a matter of absolute urgency, because the immediate return is going

to be pretty solid?

Ms Fitzharris: You have made a number of assertions in all your questions which I think we would probably challenge to some extent—"a huge amount". They certainly are older; so they will break down more.

MR COE: 18.9 times per 100,000 kilometres? That is getting out there.

Ms Fitzharris: But the—and we certainly recognise—

MR COE: It is getting out there. To put it into perspective, the other ones are breaking down 1.9 times—

ACTING CHAIR: Mr Coe, could you let the minister answer?

Ms Fitzharris: I think you are also probably referring to an answer to a question on notice.

MR COE: Yes, that is right.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, which I do not have in front of me.

MR COE: You did sign it.

Ms Fitzharris: That would be helpful but, yes, again you made a number of assertions around buses stopping and starting and around the number of breakdowns. Yes, there are more breakdowns with older vehicles. That is the case.

MR COE: This is all in the MRCagney review.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, but a huge amount is your description, which I am challenging. They do break down more than others because they are older. We have a fleet that has some older buses in it. We are in the process of making significant investments in our new bus fleet as well as our depots. We also have a new depot in Woden, which will mean that some of those buses will not have to travel as far as they might to get to the Tuggeranong depot, for example. We certainly recognise that the overall age of the fleet needs to be improved and that is exactly why we are making new investments in a new fleet.

MR COE: Sure, but what assessments have actually been done about whether it is cost-effective to hang on to the Renaults right now as opposed to replacing them as an emergency?

Ms Fitzharris: They are the ones that are retiring as the new ones come into the fleet.

MR COE: How many Renaults are in operation at the moment?

Mr Edghill: Ninety-three.

MR COE: How long are they going to be in use for before they are fully replaced?

PROOF

Mr Edghill: We have the commitment to 80 new buses over the next two years. Subject to future decisions of government, that would then leave approximately 13 to be retired thereafter. So one would expect that those orange buses would be the first to go. We are also conscious of the need to update our fleet to meet disability requirements. That is part of our thinking that goes into retiring the orange buses with level-access new blue buses, which are the ones that you see on the road now.

MR COE: That obviously assumes no growth in the fleet. That assumes that if you have 93 and you are getting 80 in, you will have 13 left. That means you are retiring them one for one. Is that the current practice? Is that going to be the plan going forward?

Ms Fitzharris: No, we obviously have new routes that need new buses. There will be additional buses, yes.

MR COE: That is right, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: In terms of the ins and outs, I suspect that there will be a range of in and out numbers over the next couple of years. There was an opportunity recently under the contract to bring forward the purchase of a couple of buses for a variety of good reasons. We will always look for every opportunity to do that.

Obviously, in expanding the fleet and expanding the network and re-looking at the overall network with the operation of light rail as well, there will be a number of buses that will be able to service Canberra in a different way. We spoke about a million kilometres of bus travel that will now no longer need to be done by a bus. Those buses, with light rail coming into operation, can be redeployed to other parts of the network. It is not quite as simple a case as in and out.

MR COE: Sure. How many buses have been sort of resurrected in the past year, that is, come out of retirement?

Mr Edghill: I think that at one of the last hearings we perhaps spoke about the Dennis Darts. I am not sure if “resurrected” is the right word, but they were—

MR COE: They are a special case, are they? In every way they are a special case from what I gather.

Mr Edghill: They are a special case and doing the city loop. I am not aware of any that we have taken out of retirement. Typically, once they are retired we do not have any great appetite for hanging on to them. We will try to move them on as quickly as possible.

MR COE: Thanks.

MR PETERSSON: I have some questions about the Nightrider service. I was wondering if you could start off by telling me how last year went.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Before we continue, can I remind everyone in the room that

Hansard does a wonderful job of listening and trying to give us a true and accurate reflection of what we say but it makes it very difficult when we all talk over the top of each other. Can I ask the committee, guests and witnesses to please try to talk one at a time. Thank you.

Mr Edghill: We were really excited by what happened with the Nightrider service last year, because what we were able to do was introduce a first of a kind service in Australia. We decided last year to try something a little different to see whether that would reinvigorate the Nightrider service. What we did was to have discussions with a number of market players and as a consequence of those discussions we were able to put in place an arrangement with Uber which was, as I say, the first of its kind in Australia. I am aware that it has been referenced in other industry discussions around what mobility as a service may look like in the future. It is a great representation of what we can do as a fairly nimble bus organisation.

What that Nightrider service effectively looked like last year was: we ran a trunk service and the arrangement with Uber was such that, utilising some of their software and smarts for a passenger who got off a bus and onto Uber within a tightly defined area of the bus stop and then got off the Uber within another geographically defined area, with the application of a code, one could travel from, say, the city to down south much more cheaply than an Uber by itself or a taxi by itself.

I think we had some feedback of students being able to travel home with their student voucher and effectively get from Mooseheads to wherever they lived in the suburbs for \$1.80. It was a fantastic—I do not want to say “experiment” because we went into it knowing what we were looking for—experience but it was certainly something where we could try something a little different. We were not going to destroy the network if it did not pan out. It was reasonably self-contained.

From memory—I do not have the figures in front of me—we did, over the three weekends it was running, see an improvement in patronage from the year before where we had more of a coverage Nightrider service. We would be looking to take our learnings from that this year and see what might be possible.

MR PETTERSSON: When you say “take our learnings from that”, does that mean you are looking at repeating that program this festive season?

Mr Edghill: Potentially. We are still a way away from Christmas. It was a good testbed last year. We are very interested to turn our minds to what we can do that will be even more interesting this year.

MR PETTERSSON: Nightrider runs in the festive season. What is the thinking on maybe expanding that service throughout the year maybe on Saturday nights? Has that been looked at?

Mr Edghill: Again, we are advocates of public transport, and what we recognise as important is running when people want to use the service. That ties into questions not just of reliability but frequency and span of hours. We are also conscious that not just in Canberra but around the world we are seeing an expansion of the night-time economy.

If you look at what is happening in London, for example, they are running night tubes. I think Melbourne is doing some stuff with the night-time at the moment. Certainly our predisposition is, as we are looking more deeply at the network, to expand the hours of operation. Certainly the introduction of rapid routes over time is an opportunity for us to do that also.

I think the short answer there is that we would look on that very favourably within the budget and fleet and other constraints that we have.

Ms Fitzharris: And there are additional services offered at special events such as Australia Day and obviously at a lot of the sporting events where we partner with either the venue or the home team that might be playing to encourage either subsidised or free travel to and from events.

Mr Edghill: And the Multicultural Festival is probably a great example of where we are running night-time services to support that event.

MS LE COUTEUR: You have touched on this already. Are you looking at expanding this service as some sort of integration between public transport and the Uber and taxi services out to, say, the weekends where in a lot of parts of Canberra the weekend service is woeful, would probably be a fair description?

Ms Fitzharris: Probably there are three part-answers to that question. One is the weekend bus service. We are looking to improve that through the regular network itself. Two, as great as the rapid services are too, light rail provides an even more frequent and longer coverage over a period of a day. We look forward to the second stage of that, being able to provide that to another key part of the city as well. Three, we are looking at a whole range of different partnerships and different models.

We recently attended an international transport conference where that very issue of how you integrate a range of different transport options to make people more mobile more often was very much on every public transport agency's radar. There are a lot of very exciting opportunities to partner with a whole range of organisations and use technology to do that.

Mr Edghill: It is certainly a key area of interest for us. It is not without its challenges. Mobility as a service to the end user might look like an app, which is what it should be. It should be simple for the end user. There are some complications behind it in terms of getting the backing systems for that. Your mobility user service is really about linking your public and private forms of transport. You need to identify what those private forms of transport are. You need to enter into commercial arrangements, or whatever the case may be, with those other providers behind the scenes. You also have to work through all that front end: how does it deal with journey planning, booking and ticketing?

Ticketing is the other important element that I would add. The ticketing system process that we are going through at the moment will take us from the card-based system that we have got, where effectively the smarts and the data are stored on the MyWay card itself, to something which is an account-based system, which means that

the calculations and whatnot sit on the system behind the scene. It means a couple of things: one, it is much more convenient for users. You could use a token, your phone or your Mastercard or whatever we come up with, to swipe to get on and off. The smarts are not held on the device. They are held behind the scenes.

But what that also can do is open doors to facilitate the introduction of mobility as service systems. I guess one of the key impediments at the moment is that, if you wanted to introduce it today, then if you were to use a single-ticketing system it becomes a little complicated when you have got the ageing MyWay card on an Uber or taxi or whatever. But the move towards a new ticketing system will facilitate that take-up in Canberra.

Ms Fitzharris: I do not think we have looked at systems like the one in which a gentleman in New South Wales has embedded his Opal card chip in his hand, which happened.

Mr Edghill: In his thumb.

Ms Fitzharris: In his thumb. We have not yet looked at the implications of that. That might be more like a decade down the track.

MR PETTERSSON: But it is coming?

Ms Fitzharris: Probably, as he has proven.

Mr Edghill: It is indeed coming. In fact, one of the stands that we recently saw was really cutting edge ticketing technology that uses facial recognition. Rather than even having to swipe through a barrier, you just walk through, it can recognise your face and debit your \$4.50 or whatever from your account in the background. There is some really, really exciting stuff happening in the ticketing space.

MR COE: Back to the Nightrider, it is hard to compare 2015 to 2016 because they are, of course, different services. But I think there were more people who boarded in 2015 than 2016. Is that right, or not?

Mr Edghill: I think the other way.

Ms Fitzharris: No, the other way. 2016 was higher.

MR COE: What were the total numbers?

Ms Fitzharris: We will take that on notice. I am sure that, of the hundreds of questions that have been put to us over the past couple of months, it was in there.

MR COE: But there were 140 Uber payments made, is that correct?

Ms Fitzharris: I will take that on notice.

MR COE: What is the success criterion? How do you determine whether you stick with, in effect—

Ms Fitzharris: More people were using it and it cost us less.

MR COE: If I might just finish the question.

Ms Fitzharris: Sorry.

MR COE: Give me a chance here—whether you actually put on usual route services late at night so that you have that certainty and that confidence of having the same bus number. It is also a way, I think, of getting people used to boarding that particular bus and therefore breaking down barriers for future bus use.

Ms Fitzharris: We know that more people used it and it cost us less in 2016. But as I said, too, the overall objective is to both improve the network as a whole and improve people's access to the network more frequently, particularly out of work hours, and increase the availability of public transport as part of the normal network itself, but also to look at how we might further improve a specific Nightrider service as well as other after-hours and special event services.

Mr Edghill: I think part of the answer to the question also from before was: not every Nightrider passenger would have used the Uber vouchers. Some of them would have.

MR COE: I understand that only 142 used vouchers. But I thought in total it was 2,100 or something that used the bus services and it was 2,300 or something the year before.

Mr Edghill: I think we can come back with the details but there were more passengers who used it last Christmas.

MS CHEYNE: Please say if you have answered this. I heard something about doors opening and closing, but I think it might be separate.

Ms Fitzharris: Back doors?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, the opening of rear doors for entry and exit. Speaking of getting people used to things, how is this being communicated to both drivers and passengers? I suppose it is probably only anecdotally but what has the take-up been like?

Mr Edghill: I will answer part of that question and pass to my colleague. There is a customer behavioural element with the rear doors. Every time I have been at Woden bus interchange and the bus comes in and the driver opens the front door and the back door, notwithstanding that the back door is open, the queue will still form and people will get in through the front door. I think there is still an opportunity for people to get used to boarding through the front door and the back door.

In terms of the communications—and that is where I might pass to Mr McGlenn—there have been internal communications about the policy and there have been advertisements on the buses alerting passengers that rear door boarding and egress is in play.

Mr McGlinn: In relation to how we have corresponded with our staff or have been getting that message to staff, we have put up driver notices and also we have monitors in each of the depots. From time to time our communications centre also makes all-call broadcasts, to remind drivers to make use of the rear doors where it is safe to do so, because that is an important factor. Personally, I have caught buses on the past few mornings—not that I normally do, because I am an interstater. I witnessed people this morning at Westfield Belconnen boarding through the rear doors, as well as exiting through the rear doors there. There were people boarding several services through the rear doors. So the message is slowly getting through to help expedite people not having to stand out in the cold.

MS CHEYNE: Do you know what the percentage awareness is with drivers? Are there any complicating factors for drivers in terms of where their mirrors are? I can imagine they might be used to and can easily see people getting off, but they might not necessarily be able to see people getting on. Maybe they are in that blind spot getting on. Are there any augmentations that can happen?

Mr McGlinn: Certainly, some of the newer fleet have rear-door cameras. The drivers can actually see the doors from the driving cabin. Across the older fleet, we are relying on the fact that they do have the ability to use the mirrors. Obviously, the external mirror on the near side is one where you can see if people are boarding or exiting. One of the other things we are experiencing is that some of the all-over bus wraps sometimes block the drivers' ability to see who is there. They do leave those doors open a little bit longer so that they can check through the left-hand side mirror, just to be sure there is nobody trying to board through the back door who cannot be seen.

MS CHEYNE: The first part of my question was: is there any way that you are checking that all bus drivers know that this policy is now in place?

Mr McGlinn: We have eight transport officers on at any one time. They are allocated to the bus interchanges and respond to incidents for us. We have asked them to continually remind the drivers about what is required in relation to the rear doors.

MS CHEYNE: I have noticed that on some buses, even on some of the new fleet—maybe not—on the rear-entry doors there are “No entry” signs, which I suspect confuses many people. Are they being progressively removed?

Mr McGlinn: We are having those removed. They come in on a loop cycle. Over a three-month cycle, we get every bus through, and we will have those pulled off.

MS LE COUTEUR: I thought they were for real.

MS CHEYNE: Were you following the instructions, Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I have been following the instructions where it says “No entry”.

Ms Thomas: Just to clarify Ms Cheyne's earlier question, this was only introduced,

the back and rear boarding and exiting—

MS CHEYNE: Three months ago.

MS LE COUTEUR: In March.

Ms Thomas: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: So we are only just starting to get a fair chunk of buses through. I do not expect it would be, but is it expensive to remove those signs or do they just come off with a bit of detergent?

Mr McGlinn: A bit more than detergent. They will scrape them off and lift them up.

MS CHEYNE: But that is happening progressively?

Mr McGlinn: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: When do you expect all of the signs to be removed?

Mr McGlinn: I would think within three months from now I will have had all the fleet through for their service and will have that removed.

MS CHEYNE: Finally, have you received any complaints from people who have had doors shut on them?

Mr McGlinn: I do get complaints, obviously, but the complaints also refer to when people have gone to the front doors and the doors have been shut on them. It is an education process. The complaints I have received to date are, “I’ve followed your new process and I went to go through the back door and unfortunately the door was shut.” But then they have boarded through the front and the driver has said to them, “I didn’t realise that you were going to board this bus.” Normally it happens at an interchange or a busy platform like city platform 8 in the afternoon, where we have all of that fleet coming through and they are trying to get back out.

MR STEEL: I have a question about the blue rapid service, minister. I drove past the current construction of new bus stops on Athllon Drive near Wanniasa shops, and the park and ride. I was wondering what the time line for construction was, particularly for the completion of the construction there.

Ms Fitzharris: A good question. It looks well advanced. I was near there recently. We will be able to give you a date. It is one of our infrastructure projects, so Mr McHugh will answer that question.

Mr McHugh: The construction of the Athllon Drive park and ride project is progressing well. It is looking like the end of July for the infrastructure to finish. Hopefully, we will have that in operation in August.

MR STEEL: How will pedestrians cross the road from Kambah over to the other side of the road to catch the bus down south to Tuggeranong?

PROOF

Mr McHugh: Included in the scope of the project is a new set of pedestrian signals which will safely provide access to both bus stops for pedestrians travelling in either direction.

MR STEEL: In the future, should Athllon Drive be duplicated between Drakeford Drive and Sulwood Drive, how will those works be accommodated with the new lanes?

Mr McHugh: There has not been a lot of detailed thinking about how that duplication might occur in the future. Obviously, some of the works at the moment would need to be relocated to allow for a new carriageway and extension of the pedestrian signals to cross the new carriageway as well.

ACTING CHAIR: I am actually looking at light rail. Does anyone else have some ACTION questions? Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: I am happy to ask about light rail, but I will ask the standard question about bus bunching. Is there anything we can do about this, or do we just say that when we get light rail, we will not have light rail bunching?

MS CHEYNE: Do you mean why do the buses come in threes?

MS LE COUTEUR: Threes is doing well. As someone who catches the 300, we get six buses—

MS CHEYNE: I have a great mathematics book that actually answers this question. I will have to bring it in.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have read about queuing theories and random numbers. Do you have anything new to add on bus bunching?

Mr Edghill: Perhaps not to what has been spoken about before. We are conscious that throughout the ACT there are a number of construction works happening which are having an impact upon the bus network at present. That may contribute to some of what is happening.

MR COE: Have you considered, especially on the busy services, having services leapfrog each other or having more non-stop services, to avoid the bunching issues?

Mr Edghill: Wherever we have full services, and if there are other services that are not full which are replicating it in some way, we are always open to trying to tweak the network to provide the best service that we can to our passengers.

MR COE: I will ask a supplementary that might well lead on to light rail. It is with regard to how the bus network will operate following light rail. Obviously, the integrated 300 series will be broken, after the light rail segment is in the middle. What will the bus network look like when you do not have an integrated 300 service?

Mr Edghill: That is a piece of work that we are working through now. We are

conscious that the introduction of light rail will significantly alter public transport in Canberra and will introduce a new form of public transport that has not been here before. I cannot provide specifics about what that may look like because there would be a process that we go through beforehand of internal approvals and speaking with—

Ms Fitzharris: Are you talking about the 200?

MR COE: No, the 300, following stage 2. The whole bus network is based on integrated 300s. What will the fundamentals of the bus system look like when you do not have an integrated 300?

Mr Edghill: If we are talking about buses and light rail stage 2, it is far too early to speculate what that may look like. We do not even know exactly what route will be chosen.

MR COE: It is a fundamental issue. You have buses that go from suburban Tuggeranong, the 300, to suburban Belconnen. Without that integrated service, the whole thing looks very different. It is a fundamental question on the future of public transport in Canberra. I am wondering what thinking has taken place.

Ms Fitzharris: Plenty of thinking has been underway over many years, even prior to the transport for Canberra policy work that was undertaken: all the work that has been done in terms of stage 1 of light rail; planning work that was done around the policy to introduce new rapid rail right across the city; the work that is now going on in terms of the introduction of stage 1 of light rail; and what happens to not only the 200 but other bus services, both those that currently run along the light rail route and those that intersect with the light rail route. That is the work that is very much underway. We will see what that looks like when it is partly introduced at the beginning of next year, in the network refresh, as well as what happens when light rail starts operating later in 2018. The preliminary work around modelling is obviously underway with stage 2 of light rail, but, as we have seen from the previous exercise around stage 1, it will take many years to develop and refine.

MS LE COUTEUR: This will basically be part of my substantive question. Without giving me frequencies et cetera—obviously, you have not done that—how are you planning to make this work? For the people who live in the inner north, will the buses go to the Dickson bus stop? Is that the plan? And will the people who live in Gungahlin go to the Gungahlin town centre or EPIC, depending on where they live? Will there be a couple of tram stops that provide the interchange stations? I assume that is the basic plot?

Mr Edghill: With light rail stage 1, yes, we will have some key interchange stations along the route, and Gungahlin and Dickson are the two. With the two key points there, one is about making use of those interchange services, and the second is that there will not be buses running in direct competition with light rail on Northbourne. There may be some odd exceptions, but that does not mean that there will not be buses going from certain northern suburbs to the city. What we are saying is that there will not be buses running in competition with light rail. It is not an efficient use of our finite public transport resources. We want to redistribute the assets that we do have to make the best use of them.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said Gungahlin and Dickson. I assume it will be the Gungahlin town centre. If you live in southern Gungahlin, will you be getting a bus all the way to Dickson and then hopping on the light rail?

Mr Edghill: Possibly; possibly not. If we are talking about individual routes, there are some internal processes that we need to go through first.

Ms Fitzharris: There are really only, in a sense, two suburbs south of the town centre at the moment where people would be catching a service that might be directly on the light rail route. It is a reasonably short distance for people in those suburbs. For people in the other suburbs of Gungahlin, many do come to the town centre and use the existing park and ride there. I think the controls around that park and ride will need to be strengthened with light rail stage 1 starting operation. Part of the other work is looking at more frequency in the surrounding suburbs to bring people in to the town centre to connect with light rail.

ACTING CHAIR: Can I remind people that we are discussing light rail after the break, and I think we are all heading down that path. Maybe we can come back, Ms Le Couteur, to this line of questioning at 3.15.

MS LE COUTEUR: Sure.

MS CHEYNE: I will ask one quick bus question, if I may. If you do not have the answer, that is fine, and do not take it on notice; I can ask later. With the new black rapid service between Belconnen and Gungahlin, do you know what the expected travel time is between the two town centres?

Ms Fitzharris: There is an existing route there that it will largely replicate. It will just be a more frequent service. I note that, as Mr Edghill said, there are a number of roadworks around the region, particularly in Gungahlin, and also Cotter Road, for example, that are having an impact on times. It is making more frequent the existing service between Belconnen and Gungahlin.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. We will adjourn for an afternoon tea break.

Hearing suspended from 3.02 to 3.20 pm.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I welcome everyone back after the afternoon tea break. We are picking up, under output class 1, Transport Canberra, light rail.

MR COE: I was curious to hear: what was the thought process for choosing to go with city to Woden for stage 2?

Ms Fitzharris: I think you will recall that there was extensive work done over a long period around future frequent public transport corridors in the city as well as what mode of transport would be used along each of those corridors. In 2012, you will recall, government made a commitment to build stage 1 of light rail. Notwithstanding your opposition to it, the government proceeded with that over the course of the last term. In the broader context, there was always discussion that this would be part of a

light rail network as well as an integrated public transport system across the city.

As a result, the government then went out for further consultation on the light rail plan in 2015-16. It identified future light rail network corridors and asked the community for feedback on which of those routes would be their preference. We brought that together, with a range of some technical work that had been done within government, and found that there were four short-listed routes. Those routes were city to Woden, the parliamentary triangle, the airport and Belconnen.

The government then made a subsequent decision that it would build stage 2 of light rail on the community's preferred route and a route that would also provide an extensive north-south connection of light rail and also undertake probably what is likely to be one of the most difficult aspects of building a light rail network, that is, getting across Lake Burley Griffin. The government then made that announcement, from memory, in August last year, took that commitment to last year's election and has subsequently begun work on the early parts of the business case which we expect to be considered formally by government before the end of this year.

MR COE: Part of that in the middle where you said you considered four options and based on the community's views you went with—

Ms Fitzharris: I said based on the community's views and a range of technical work that had been underway.

MR COE: Could you please advise: what is that technical work and what technical work was done for the other routes that were not chosen?

Ms Fitzharris: It was undertaken not by Transport Canberra and City Services, I am reminded, but by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. In a sense, Minister Gentleman is probably the best person to ask those questions of.

MR COE: True in a sense but also in another sense there is a lot of expertise here. I imagine there are some people who can field the questions.

Ms Fitzharris: We can certainly talk broadly to it. To be clear, it was a piece of work undertaken as part of the transport planning which, I note, will change things.

MR COE: All that work has been handed across, though, has it not?

Ms Fitzharris: Not yet.

MR COE: But the work, though?

Ms Fitzharris: That is right.

Mr Edghill: Some of the factors that we looked at in addition to the community consultation process were some of the real fundamentals. We did not undertake a feasibility design but there were pre-feasibility works that occurred. An initial review included: is it technically feasible to put light rail on each of those routes? As part of

that work we considered at a high level your potential route options but from a view of just identifying some of the challenges or some of the opportunities that may be encountered further down the line, for example, questions of gradient and road width and can the trams get up the hill, are they wide enough and so forth; and then there was additional analysis around identifying the obvious engineering challenges that may have been encountered on each of the routes. There was also in the EPSDD context consideration of the land use features along those corridors, the areas of attraction, what might light rail along each of those routes do and what purpose might it serve for the communities it travels through.

MR COE: What patronage uplift is likely to occur in stage 1 as a result of doing stage 2?

Ms Fitzharris: We have not had the opportunity to do that detailed work yet. That is the work that is currently underway at the moment.

MR COE: But was that work not done when you were trying to make the assessment of which stage 2 to go with?

Ms Fitzharris: Broadly, yes one or the other, in addition to the broad umbrella of technical work that was done. That also included obviously population growth and not only future land use but existing land use as well as the number of people who will be living, working, studying along the corridor. It is very clear that we have looked at where people travel around the city. Knowing what we know from our current bus data and also looking to update that each time that we get a major update like we have just recently around the census data—we have not yet seen that; I do not believe the census data has been handed down on the travel to and from work—all of those factors were considered in the government's consideration of stage 2 of light rail.

A key one again, and also a very important part of the network itself, is that we recognise that one of the more difficult parts of building the network will be getting across the lake. Therefore, the work to get across via either Commonwealth Avenue or Kings Avenue bridges was also looked at.

MR COE: When you look at the bus patronage, are you actually looking for patronage that is not as high as it should be, given the demographics and geographics of the area, or are you actually looking for areas that are well patronised and, therefore, you have got a customer base on day one?

Ms Fitzharris: A bit of both. We are doing that work right now, building the business case that we always said that we would do, as we did with stage 1 of light rail as well, following a very similar pattern in terms of development of stage 1 of light rail. I think you could expect to see similar opportunities for engagement, similar forms of analysis done at different stages of the process, as you saw during stage 1 as well.

MR COE: Did the government actually rank all the options in terms of potential stage 2?

Ms Fitzharris: From memory, no, but I will take the question on notice around whether or not we ranked them. It is obvious that the number one priority was Civic to

Woden.

MR COE: I am just wondering why that is obvious. Why isn't Belconnen to the city obvious?

Ms Fitzharris: Because that was the decision that was taken. We spoke at length about it at the time that it was announced last year. We also spoke at length about it during the election campaign.

MR COE: I understand that but I am more interested in how you got to that point before you announced it, before you said, "This is stage 2."

Ms Fitzharris: The reasons that we spoke about it publicly were the reasons we made the decision, which is that we wanted to build a network across the city. We wanted to particularly build a north-south spine for it. There were opportunities to do some of the more difficult parts of the route, which is getting across the lake, and the government made the decision based on a number of criteria that that was our preference.

MR COE: Why is that north-south spine so important or more important than an east-west spine?

Ms Fitzharris: That was the government's decision, based on a number of criteria around the nature of the city, the planning of the city, linking one town centre to another, and the government made the assessment at the time that Civic to Woden was the preferred second stage corridor.

MR COE: In light of that importance of the spine, going back to the earlier question just before the break about how it integrates with the bus network, if that spine is so important surely there is a really decent body of work that shows how that spine is actually going to interact with 95 per cent of Canberrans and who will not be within walking distance of it?

Ms Fitzharris: If we are going to—

MR COE: It is a legitimate question.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes it is. In regard to the east-west spine, in a sense, of a public transport network, it is important to think about the network as a whole and it being integrated in terms of not only public transport use but also private transport use.

MR COE: But it is the integration that I am looking for. I am curious to know how you are going to integrate it.

Ms Fitzharris: That is exactly the work that we are doing at the moment.

Mr Edghill: I think the first step for us is to actually determine what the light rail route exactly will be and that, in turn, will drive the thinking for stage 2, which will drive some of the thinking around how the system will look.

MR COE: Are you looking at it being a commuter service or are you looking at it more as being, in effect, a route service?

Mr Edghill: That is part of the analysis that we are working through at the moment. There are two route options which have been put to community consultation. Both of those routes do slightly different things. That is part of the analysis we are undertaking.

MR COE: Will both those options be considered as part of the business case or will you make a decision on one of them and then put that through to the business case?

Ms Fitzharris: That is a decision that we still need to take. The consultations closed a couple of weeks ago and we are looking at all the analysis that has come out of that. In the meantime there is a parallel process of the advisers that we have on board looking at various aspects of the route itself and the alignment and a whole range of issues there. We will bring those two pieces of work together and make further decisions over the course of the remainder of this year and obviously when a business case is finally presented to government later in the year.

MR COE: Finally, are you looking for a service that is faster than the existing blue rapid between Woden and the city?

Ms Fitzharris: We remain open to all options and that is why the community consultation included a number of options to get feedback and why the analysis that we are doing at the moment is leaving as much open as we can in terms of building on our commitment to deliver light rail from Civic to Woden.

MS LE COUTEUR: We did not quite finish the bus and light rail before afternoon tea so I will just quickly ask you this. You are obviously going to have a new timetable, a light rail timetable or whatever you are going to call it. When is that going to come in?

Mr Edghill: Effectively there will be potentially a couple of iterations of bus timetables between now and light rail commencement. On day 1 of light rail commencement, there will be a change to the bus timetable, because the bus that is in direct competition to light rail will need to change at that point in time. Our intention at the moment, though, is to make the day 1 transition to light rail as simple as possible, which means that we would be looking to make a network change in the first half of 2018, which is effectively a stepping stone to the seamless day 1 of operations of light rail.

MS LE COUTEUR: And that would be the network that is going to be in operation minus the ones directly down Northbourne Avenue on day 1 of light rail? Or are you going to have two staging moves into it?

Mr Edghill: Effectively. There are a few things happening between now and then. We spoke earlier about the introduction of the green and black rapids later this year. That would involve introducing those into the timetables. In the first half of 2018, we would look to have what is effectively the new bus network which will be operating with light rail. Then, when we have light rail operations commencing on day one, that

would involve the removal of the buses that have replicated the light rail route. And there may be some other changes as we are able to redeploy those buses elsewhere into the network. At the moment, our thinking is potentially three iterations between today and light rail starting.

MS LE COUTEUR: Light rail buses or whatever you are going to call it.

Mr Edghill: Correct.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. I assume there will be some community consultation in part of this. It will be quite exciting for the people in the relevant part of Canberra.

Mr Edghill: We think so.

MS LE COUTEUR: To use one of your objectives.

Ms Fitzharris: I agree. Certainly the excitement is already building, given that the construction is very obvious along the whole route now. There is significant construction underway. It is terrific.

MS LE COUTEUR: There is. Can I move now to light rail stage 2? We have already spoken a bit about the fact that there has been consultation. What are the major sorts of themes? What are people concerned about with that consultation?

Ms Fitzharris: I have been to only one of the sessions, I am afraid; I did not have an opportunity to get to more. People were raising a whole range of issues. I think the most significant interaction we had was online and also there were the dozen or more face-to-face interactions that people had. I have not seen the final report yet. I know that there were some concerns raised. There was a lot of excitement raised around the different aspects of the route. The key things that I think people were interested in were which way around Capital Hill it went; which side of Northbourne Avenue it went, east or west; and where it went within the parliamentary triangle. That was probably the one issue that captured people's attention and imagination the most. The third issue was about whether or not there is an extension from the Woden town centre to the hospital.

In addition to that, all sorts of other questions were raised that really go to what this looks like in 2021 when it starts operating, which is a question that we simply cannot answer now. What I can guarantee is that if you look at the huge range of specific targeted and broader consultation that was done for stage 1 of light rail, you will find that there will be significantly more opportunity for the community to have input as we work our way through the process. That will be matched with the important work that is going on with the variety of advisers and internally within Transport Canberra.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will there be a public summary of the issues?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Great. What are the next steps from here to starting

construction? What happens next?

Ms Fitzharris: There are multiple different steps along the way. They very closely mirror the steps that were taken during stage 1. Mr Edghill can run you through them, having been lucky enough to go through both stages.

Mr Edghill: Both projects. There are a number of community facing steps, but there are also a number of steps that need to happen behind the scenes. The immediate step that we are in at the moment is developing the business case for light rail stage 2. Within that there is a whole heap of technical, commercial and other issues that we are working through.

As part of developing the business case, one of the first ports of call is to develop reference designs for the routes that we are looking at. There are a lot of interlinkages between each of these. As well as undertaking that reference design, there is also a very strong ongoing dialogue between us and the NCA, particularly as to what happens through the parliamentary zone, which, of course, they are keenly interested in.

Once we have the reference design developed, that will allow us to work through the steps that we need to take. The financial and economic analysis in the business case will involve creating high-level cost estimates. That can feed into other analysis, the financial analysis and the business case. The other key question that we are working through as part of the business case process is the appropriate delivery model and procurement approach. There are a few different options there that we can consider. Once the business case has been considered by cabinet, the next step would be to work through the procurement process. There are two things that would happen. We would move through the procurement process but we would also move through the planning process. That would involve both the NCA and the local planning authority.

Depending upon the delivery model and the procurement approach taken, if we use stage 1 as a fairly broad guide, the first step would be to issue an expression of interest to market. If it is a delivery model, that will involve consortia coming together. That allows the market to inform those consortia. We would then short-list and do RFP, interactive tender process and preferred bidder, and go through the final contract, the finalisation process leading to contract close and financial close. I went over that very quickly, but there is a lot in there that I could happily unpack.

The other thing that makes stage 2 a bit different from stage 1, where we will have to focus some of our attention and resources, is that stage 1 was a greenfields project. That has its own challenges, but in some senses it has its advantages. Obviously there is an incumbent light rail provider in stage 1 here, so part of the procurement thinking and part of the contract negotiations will be in creating that interface between the existing light rail system and light rail stage 2.

There are some things which are, this time around, a little easier for us as we go through this process. With stage 1, the ACT government had an existing relationship, for example, with the NCA. One of the things which is a little easier for us now is that, at least within the project team, we have those officer-to-officer relationships developed with the NCA. We are already in very close dialogue with them as we

work through. In that sense, that is one of the ones that fall into the easier bucket.

What may also fall into the slightly easier bucket, on the assumption that there will be a similar look and feel from stage 2 to stage 1, is that with some of those very early questions from planning authorities as to what this may look like, what the stops may look like, we will have a pretty good idea, because that has been developed as part of stage 1.

We have also developed a lot of the relationships with the utility companies, regulators and so forth, so they fall into the easier bucket.

There are some things that will be more challenging for stage 2. The very obvious one is going through the parliamentary zone in particular. The closer we get to Parliament House, the greater the interest of the NCA will be. And of course we are still working through the process of what is the optimum route to take. So there is more work happening on that route analysis for stage 2 than previously. And then, as I mentioned, there is the interface with stage 1, which did not exist before.

So stage 2 is very similar to stage 1, but the dynamics are slightly different for stage 2 than for our first project.

MS LE COUTEUR: What sort of criteria are you going to be using to decide between the different options?

Ms Fitzharris: Options for the route? Options for procurement?

MS LE COUTEUR: It could have been procurement. I was thinking more in terms of the route and where it will end up, whether it will end up at the hospital or at Woden itself.

Mr Edghill: There will be a range of factors, but the key ones, depending on which area of the route we are talking about; if we are talking about the parliamentary zone and for the hospital, the community consultation that we undertook will no doubt play into some of the thinking there. Cost is an obvious one: how much and what is the cost differential between the two.

Particularly where we are talking about areas where the NCA have their jurisdiction, for stage 1 we are thinking of them not simply as a stakeholder but effectively as a partner in the process, so the NCA's views will be important as we work through this. And then there is the traffic modelling, patronage modelling and other transportation analysis that we are undertaking which will always feed into the decision.

MR PETTERSSON: I want to talk about some of the measures you are taking during construction. I want to know what actions you are taking to reduce the inconvenience for cyclists during construction.

Ms Fitzharris: Of stage 1?

MR PETTERSSON: Yes, stage 1.

Ms Fitzharris: Any particular part of the route?

MR PETTERSSON: Broadly would be best.

Mr Edghill: I might ask my colleague to come up in case I forget something. There are a range of measures which have been undertaken. One of the obvious ones is in Flemington Road; there is a temporary bikepath there to minimise the inconvenience to cyclists and pedestrians. As a general comment, and this applies not just to the cyclists but across the entirety of the project, we are doing our best to minimise the disruption to the community. That means, for example, that where we have to close intersections or where we come onto the road space to do that, we try to do it at times of the year, times of the day and so forth that will minimise disruptions as best possible.

Also, Canberra Metro has traffic management arrangements in place throughout the entirety of the corridor. Those traffic management arrangements apply not just to vehicular traffic but also to diversions and whatnot that are occurring on cyclepaths. Hopefully, I have covered off some of the key issues there. I am not sure if there is anything more?

Mr McHugh: I think that is all. There has been ongoing consultation through the project team with advocacy groups as well to ensure that any issues are identified early—any issues associated with the temporary arrangements and those sorts of things. All the technical traffic management arrangements go through detailed assessment by a range of different parties and are consulted on with advocacy groups such as Pedal Power and others.

Mr Edghill: Sorry, I was reminded of two other important points. One is just in terms of keeping open as many mid-block crossings as possible as construction is taking place. That is one thing. I am also aware that Canberra Metro have their supervisors actually walking bikepaths so that there is a management view within Canberra Metro of what the impact is upon the cycling community as they build.

MR PETTERSSON: Excellent. And a quick supplementary on behalf of Mr Steel: will these same concerns be replicated for stage 2?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. It is probably fair to say that on some aspects of the route at the moment there has been some feedback that the temporary arrangements actually make it easier for cyclists. I know, for example, that on the southern end of Flemington Road there is now what is close to a full lane that cyclists can use. It is really segregated from the vehicle traffic as they travel southbound along Flemington Road. There are obviously a few other parts of that route that make it a bit more difficult, but my observation has been that the traffic management and the signage have been very good. It is very clear, considering how many changes are being made, and it is very safe as well.

MR PETTERSSON: Thank you.

MR COE: Sorry, a quick supplementary. With regard to the Mouat and Antill street closure which is happening this weekend, was any consideration given to or

interaction had with the organisers of the Kanga Cup and the impact this will have?

Ms Fitzharris: Extensive. Yes. Part of the reason for the shutdown was that it was during the school holiday period. We were obviously very conscious that it occurs at the same time as the Kanga Cup, so there have been extensive discussions with the Kanga Cup organisers. They have lots of information to share with the teams participating in the Kanga Cup about impacts on Southwell Park and potentially up at Harrison playing fields as well.

MR COE: When was this clash discovered? Was it known throughout?

Mr Edghill: In terms of a precise date, I am not entirely certain. So there is a—

MR COE: When you were planning something like this a year or 1½ years ago, you were not necessarily factoring in all these local considerations. When did it become apparent? Was there any opportunity to say, “Why don’t we do the Ipima Street intersection now and we’ll do that one later on?”

Mr Edghill: In terms of the opportunity to move elsewhere, the timing was really dictated by two things, as I understand it. One is the timing of the school holidays. Secondly, part of the works that are happening through the intersection closure relate to water main movements, so partly it was a matter of coordinating the works with Icon Water.

I am not a hundred per cent certain it is right to say that there is a clash, in the sense that the intersection closure finishes at 4 am on Monday so the intersection will be back up and running. We are not taking any of the parking spaces. I think there is a very limited lane movement closure. The turns will still be available. I think one of the right-hand turns onto Northbourne Avenue will be closed. But out of an abundance of caution, we have liaised with the Kanga Cup organisers and suggested that people attending there allow more time.

In terms of precisely when the conversations with the Kanga Cup organisers on this matter commenced, I do not know the date off the top of my head. I would need to take that on notice.

MR COE: You do not need to take it on notice; that is fine.

Mr Edghill: Okay.

THE CHAIR: I will just that say if the Kanga Cup came back to Tuggeranong we could have avoided all of it.

Ms Fitzharris: I will leave you to advocate for that one, Mr Wall.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I want to ask about the local industry participation on stage 1 of construction. Are you satisfied with Canberra Metro’s local engagement to date? How many local businesses are actually working on construction at the moment?

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Edghill can provide the specific details, but yes, it was an

important part of the government's objective with the project that it also provide significant local industry participation and jobs for Canberrans as well, which we have certainly seen taken up. We have the relationship with the Canberra Business Chamber, which is a close partner in terms of delivering the light rail business link program and is one of the main connectors between Canberra Metro, Transport Canberra, and the local business community to take up those opportunities. That does not just mean with the work packages that have gone out—I was at one release of a range of work packages last year at the Canberra Business Chamber where there were over 100 representatives from local businesses—but also in effect being a translator between local businesses and Canberra Metro about the requirements and needs of both parties to make sure that local businesses are best placed not only to be aware that contracts are going out but also in terms of responding to Canberra Metro's needs.

Mr Edghill: Sorry, I have too many bits of paper; I wanted the precise figures in front of me. Generally speaking we carried a few key aspirations through the procurement process and into the project itself. On day one or at EOY we very clearly articulated to the market and to all the participants in the process what we wanted to achieve through this project and what our aspirations were. There was one around customers, there was one around urban design, there was one around affordability and there was one around the community and local industry participation.

From within the project team we always wish we were doing more in the local industry space. We have set a high benchmark for ourselves. We think some of the targets that we put into the contract by comparison to similar projects elsewhere emphasise the importance we place on local industry participation. We are seeing good take-up from the local region with Canberra Metro. This is a new project for Canberra in that we do not have a hugely long history of mega-infrastructure projects involving tier 1 D and Cs who have their own bar they work towards, but what we are seeing is pleasing and we are very happy that we are leaving a good industry legacy for Canberra through this project.

THE CHAIR: So what are the numbers, Mr Edghill?

Mr Edghill: Sorry, that was the bit of paper I was looking for.

Ms Fitzharris: We will take that on notice; I do not have it.

THE CHAIR: If you do not have them at hand and you need to take it on notice, can you also take on notice the works that have been let on capital metro to date?

Ms Fitzharris: The number of contracts?

THE CHAIR: Yes, the number of contracts and which company has won each of those contracts.

Mr Edghill: We can certainly provide you with the numbers. But because those are commercial arrangements between us and Canberra Metro I would need to check whether that is something in our domain to make public.

THE CHAIR: At an absolute minimum, the numbers of local businesses that have

been awarded contracts.

Ms Fitzharris: Sure.

THE CHAIR: And ideally—I cannot see why it would be commercial in confidence—what the works package has been and who has been awarded it.

Ms Fitzharris: We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: What role has the Canberra Business Chamber had in facilitating? You touched on that briefly. Is that work still ongoing or has their involvement in trying to drum up local industry interest ceased?

Ms Fitzharris: No, it is still ongoing, and we are talking with them about what that may look like for stage 2 as well.

THE CHAIR: Will there be further funding allocation from the ACT government to the Canberra Business Chamber to continue that work going into the future?

Ms Fitzharris: That has not been decided yet. But, like I say, we think there has been benefit to the government, Canberra Metro and the local business community out of the stage 1 process and project. As Mr Edghill said, principally because this was the first of a very large infrastructure project, we were very clear that we wanted legacy for local industry as part of that. Of course, stage 2 looks a little bit different; we now have some of that knowledge already within local industry.

Ms Thomas: The relationship with Canberra Business Chamber is not just about attracting local business and creating those opportunities and helping local business interact with Canberra Metro the consortium; it is also looking at helping businesses along the corridor to remain sustainable during construction. They have been very active in working with those businesses and talking to us and talking to Canberra Metro about helping businesses throughout the construction process and also talking to businesses about the future opportunities that light rail creates from being there. The role of the Canberra Business Chamber is across a number of different facets of business and its interaction with light rail; it is not just a single dimension.

THE CHAIR: Has there been any requirement of the Business Chamber then to acquit the funding that was provided to them by government on how they have spent it and where?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Are you able to provide that to the committee?

Ms Fitzharris: We can provide you with an overview of that.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR COE: Can I ask a supplementary? Is the government happy with the quality of engagement of Canberra Metro, including the physical material they are producing

and letterboxing and the like and also their level of interaction with stakeholders, especially those on the route?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, that is the feedback I have had. I am very happy with that, but I am always open to any feedback or input about how that could be improved. Much of what Canberra Metro do we also do a little bit of ourselves. Certainly at this stage if there is anything specific, I am happy to take it on board.

MR COE: I have just seen some stuff in the past that I do not think was necessarily putting the project's best foot forward and was wondering—

Ms Fitzharris: I am really pleased to know, Mr Coe, that you want the project to put its best foot forward. I am so pleased to hear that.

MR COE: We all need it to be a success now it is happening.

Ms Fitzharris: I am glad you think that, because the success of—

THE CHAIR: We have all got skin in this game now.

Ms Fitzharris: I will be very interested in further discussions on your position on stage 2.

MR COE: Surely some concern has been raised with you?

Ms Fitzharris: No, there has been very low level of complaints, to my understanding.

Ms Thomas: Something we always strive for is continuous improvement. If we ever receive any feedback—and it probably has only been minor—along the way we are in continuous consultation with Canberra Metro about whom they are consulting with and what actions we are taking and they are taking correspondingly to be better at what we do. I think we can always be better at our consultation and community engagement.

MR COE: I am not talking about the government's role here; I am talking about the consortium. I realise there is a lot of discretion in this space and a lot of subjectivity, so it is hard to force the consortium to do something that might require going the extra mile, but it just seems to me that there has not been a huge presence by them. I do not think their interactions have been, quite frankly, as professional as what the government's interaction has been with regard to the project.

Ms Fitzharris: I will take that as a compliment.

MR COE: It is a fact.

Mr Edghill: I am not sure if that characterisation is entirely right. If measured just by the number of complaints we are receiving for a big infrastructure project—

MR COE: No one is going to call you up and say, "Look, I don't like the formatting of this," or, "This looks ordinary." But I am just wondering whether you, as

professionals, are happy with how the consortium is portraying the project in its stakeholder engagement?

Mr Edghill: In general, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, but they do a lot of very targeted work with businesses and residents along the route.

MR COE: That is actually what I am talking about, to be honest.

Ms Fitzharris: You may not see some of that because, to my knowledge, you do not live directly along the route.

MR COE: No. You do. But believe it or not, we have quite a few people who send in the stuff as it comes in.

Ms Fitzharris: Are you talking about night closures and impact on local residents?

MR COE: Yes, all that sort of stuff.

Ms Fitzharris: Given the scale of the project and given the amount of ongoing work on weekends and overnight with closures and night works, from the level of complaints or correspondence to me, for example, and to the directorate, it clearly has an impact. In everything we say regarding construction on the project, we understand that it is having an impact; we are not shying away from that. We thank people very much for their patience, because we know—

MR COE: Yes, I am not talking about the government; I am talking about the consortium and how you are able to hold them to a desired standard for something that cannot be quantified.

Ms Fitzharris: We can have a look at that and the type of correspondence they are sending out. They have a community engagement team that are out doing a lot more. They are door-knocking and they are also in schools, for example, talking to young girls about STEM careers and all of that.

MR COE: I know; they were at Merici a couple of days ago.

Ms Fitzharris: We will have a look into it and satisfy ourselves that the quality of the work is what we think it should be.

MR EDGHILL: We have a very close relationship between the stakeholder engagement team and the Canberra Metro stakeholder engagement team.

MR COE: From what I gather, they have stepped up in recent weeks or so.

Mr Edghill: If there have been instances where a flyer has gone out with a wonky picture or with a logo not quite right or something like that, we have not been shy in providing feedback about the standard we require.

MR COE: So you have?

Mr Edghill: There is constant dialogue between us.

MR COE: But that feedback has gone to them on occasion?

Mr Edghill: Yes, absolutely; and that is what we see as our job at this stage in all aspects of the project, that is, trying to deliver the best project possible.

MR COE: It is your job. I am just inquiring as to how you hold them to that standard.

Mr Edghill: Through multiple mechanisms. At the day-to-day level there is engagement between our stakeholder engagement teams. There are different officer-level engagements, there is project director to project director engagement; it might be me phoning up the project director at some point. We have project groups and the senior management group set out under the contract which means that we are in there talking in front of their board members. We are on the senior representative group meeting, which involves the board members and project director and senior management from our side. Communications and stakeholder engagement are standard agenda items at the very highest level. We are quite conscious of what this means for the community, and we provide ongoing feedback—good and bad—as to what they are doing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you looked at where the next depot will be for the light rail? Will there be a southern depot, and could I recommend Woden, which could be an excellent location?

Ms Fitzharris: Woden town centre?

MS LE COUTEUR: Possibly not Woden town centre but there is some area south of the town centre where you might be able to sneak one in.

Mr Edghill: It is a good question. Until we have gone through the procurement process, I would not want to be definitive. When we put together the specifications for stage 1, part of the specification was to enable expansion of the existing depot at Mitchell to house an extension of the light rail route. Our current thinking is that there would be some comparatively minor works that need to be undertaken. The work that we are doing on stage 1, the depot at Mitchell, means that it is the logical place for us to also have the trams housed for the entire north-south spine. So it may well be the case—in fact it is most likely the case—that a separate southern depot would not be needed for stage 2.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would that change if there were a different service provider for stage 1 and stage 2? Could they share a depot? That leads to the other question: how can this work if there is another service provider? Is that even possible?

Mr Edghill: It is a very good question. It is one of the key questions that we are working through at the moment. The starting point for us is: what does it mean for the user of the system and what does it mean for a customer? When you use that as the starting point, getting off in the city and changing to a different train to go north is not

really what we are looking for, which is a one-seat journey. The question then is: if that is your starting point, what are the operational and contractual arrangements that can help facilitate that? There are a few different options, from having one operator going across both stages or having two operators that both go across both stages, and with a myriad of procurement options underneath that. But the starting point is: what does it mean for the end user?

MS LE COUTEUR: I am surprised to hear the possibility that there could be two operators going along the whole route, because I thought the contract for stage 1 was around availability and supply on that route. You would have to change that; I suppose you can renegotiate.

Ms Fitzharris: It would be a new contract. Stage 2 will be a new—

MS LE COUTEUR: No, but if you—

THE CHAIR: You are talking about a stage 2 operator on the stage 1 route.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes; it would require renegotiating, presumably, the stage 1 contract.

Mr Edghill: There are elements of the stage 1 contract that we would need to look at. For example, the stage 1 contract talks about the 24-minute journey time between Gungahlin and the city, and then contemplates that you turn around and come back. That would obviously not be the case if it is a one-seat journey. There are elements—and this is what I was getting to before, about something which is a bit different for stage 2 from stage 1—of the stage 1 contract that we would need to look at and figure out, predominantly the payment mechanism and regime, and some of the operational specifications at the back. What needs to be tweaked to those to make it work across the entirety of stage 1 and stage 2? There is a bit of work to do.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. It is very challenging, it would seem to me.

MR COE: With regard to the operation of Gungahlin town centre following light rail, what level of pressure will the road network be under with the number of bus movements that will be required to ferry people in from the various suburbs?

Mr McHugh: Obviously, we have been planning the relocation of the Gungahlin bus station for some time. That included some detailed transport modelling of the revised or possible future bus networks and the potential volumes of bus traffic that will travel through the town centre. Some scoping work has been included in the bus station works that are currently out to tender to upgrade a couple of intersections which will help facilitate the movement of those buses. The broader study looked at the impact on the surrounding road network, and at that stage the intersection works were all that was required to ensure that the network continued to operate at an appropriate level.

Ms Fitzharris: There will be, as Mr McHugh said, a couple of signalised intersections which will go in as part of the bus station upgrade. In addition to that, there are probably a couple of other pieces of work across government that are relevant. One was the Gungahlin east land release and associated estate development

plan, and then, more broadly, the Gungahlin town centre planning refresh work, which was done by planning late last year and into this year, with an extensive piece of community consultation undertaken earlier this year as well. That is currently in the process of being finalised.

In addition to that we are also very conscious of the road network around the region, as well as a future known development that will happen—notably, up at the corner of Gungahlin, Anthony Rolfe, Mirrabei and Gundaroo Drive, with a number of residential apartment development applications in at the moment, which spurred some of the more recent work on the planning refresh.

MR COE: It is the interface of Gungahlin Place with The Valley Avenue and Anthony Rolfe that I can imagine potentially getting very congested with bus movements.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MR COE: It is about how you can manage that load time.

Ms Fitzharris: We have seen the extension of The Valley Avenue to Manning Clark Crescent as well, which is where the buses are currently running, as the bus interchange—

MR COE: I am talking about following light rail, when they are going down Gungahlin Place.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr McHugh: The improvements at the intersection of Gungahlin Place and The Valley Avenue, with a new set of traffic lights there, and capacity improvements will help maintain the efficiency of the bus and traffic movements through that area. If you think of the extension of Ernest Cavanagh Street to the north of Hibberson, that will be progressed over the coming years. That will provide an alternative route for traffic around the town centre and around Hibberson Street as well. There is another signalised intersection at The Valley Avenue and Kate Crace Street, to help improve the efficiency of the network. There has been a lot of work done on looking at where those improvements are required and when, and a lot of that work is being delivered.

Ms Fitzharris: There are traffic lights at the corner of Gozzard and Ernest Cavanagh, as well as on the Hinder Street cross-section at Hibberson Street. Of course, there are already traffic lights in operation at the top corner of Kate Crace and Hibberson streets. Building new roads, increased controls around traffic signals, the planning for the centre refresh, and other work that is underway on the future of Hibberson Street, down at the lower end as well, have all been factored into this. All parts of the government have come together to think about this in totality, with the increased bus movements and the reduction in car movements around the town centre. Access particularly to the new Marketplace extension will change back again once the bus station works have been completed.

MR COE: In terms of the operation of light rail, especially in the morning peak, and

the afternoon peak to a lesser extent, do you think there will be a need to supplement the trams with buses, either non-stop to the city or perhaps non-stop to somewhere like Russell or Woden, to relieve some of the pressure between Gungahlin and the city, especially in that hour peak?

Mr Edghill: No. There is capacity for the light rail system to increase both capacity in terms of the fleet size and capacity in terms of the electrical network which is supplying the system. If light rail is even more of a success on day one than we are anticipating, there is capacity for us to increase frequency and movement capacity within the light rail system. But we are not anticipating replicating buses.

MR COE: You cannot see any need for buses to go from Gungahlin to the city or Gungahlin to Russell?

Ms Fitzharris: From the town centre to—

MR COE: From Gungahlin town centre to the city or Russell in any circumstances?

Mr Edghill: Down Flemington Road and Northbourne, no, we are not anticipating that.

MR COE: Or the back way or through Majura?

Mr Edghill: There might be; not at this point.

Ms Fitzharris: Not at this point, no.

THE CHAIR: We might stop there, since we are bang on time, for a change. Thank you, minister. Just a reminder: any questions that have been taken on notice are due back with the committee secretary within five working days, day one of the five being tomorrow.

Ms Fitzharris: Could I make a suggestion, Mr Chair, around the very specific questions on the detail of the Bugden Avenue works. We might offer both Ms Lawder and you a face-to-face briefing about that, if you would be interested, rather than perhaps having a back and forth through questions on notice. If you would like to have a think about that, that might be—

THE CHAIR: For the ease of the committee secretariat, could you provide the basic answers through questions on notice and we can then take up the other option separately.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

ACT Audit Office

Cooper, Dr Maxine, Auditor-General

Stanton, Mr Brett, Director, Performance Audits

Sharma, Mr Ajay, Principal, Professional Services

THE CHAIR: We now welcome Dr Maxine Cooper, the ACT Auditor-General, as the committee examines the functions of the ACT Audit Office. Can you please acknowledge that you are aware of the pink privilege statement that is in front of you and its implications.

Dr Cooper: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Good. Everyone is a seasoned veteran for this one. Dr Cooper, I will pass to you for an opening statement.

Dr Cooper: Thank you. At last year's hearing to consider the ACT Audit Office 2016-17 budget, I advised the committee that a high priority in 2016-17 would be given to three key things: developing a planned program of performance audits, completing the planned program of performance audits and financial audits, and responding to public interest disclosures and representation.

As noted on page 9 of the budget estimates under 2017-18 priorities, these areas will continue to receive a high priority in 2017-18. We plan, though, to present eight performance audits to the Speaker for tabling in 2017-18. This is one more than we presented in 2016-17 and more than we have achieved in other recent years. Our intention to do an initial performance audit is disclosed on page 10 of the budget statements under "Business and corporate strategies". While eight performance audits are planned for 2017-18, in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, we plan to complete seven performance audits.

Mr Des Pearson, in the 2016 strategic review, recommended that we try to achieve an even spread of performance audits across a year. To do this, some audits in the performance audit program for 2017-18 have already commenced, and others will commence early in 2017 so that it is possible to have an even spread throughout 2018-19 and beyond.

We estimate that the Audit Office will incur an operating deficit of \$114,000 in this financial year. This is lower than the budget deficit of \$213,000, as it is mainly due to salary cost savings being generated by the departure of financial audit and performance staff in this financial year. These cost savings are partially offset by higher than expected supplies and services costs, with performance audit contractors being engaged to replace departing performance audit staff and commence a number of performance audits early, as just mentioned.

We estimate that the Audit Office will incur a deficit of \$659,000 in 2017-18, due primarily to expenses increasing by \$606,000, which is around eight per cent. The expenses reflect the budget assumption that the budgeted number of staff will be

maintained, resulting in higher salary costs as the budgeted number of staff were not maintained, as I have just said, in 2016-17. The estimated 2017-18 operating deficit of \$659,000 will be covered by the Audit Office's accumulated funds. We have \$1.3 million in accumulated funds. Therefore, importantly, no additional funding from the ACT government is required.

Incurring an operating deficit for 2017-18 has the support, as is required, of the Speaker and the Treasurer. As disclosed in the budget balance sheet on page 13 of the budget statements, incurring the deficit of \$659,000 means that the accumulated funds are estimated to reduce from the \$1.3 million as at 30 June 2017 to \$660,000 by 30 June 2018. Therefore, the Audit Office is expected to retain our capacity to meet our financial obligations after incurring the deficit of \$659,000 in 2017-18.

Accumulated funds also allow unforeseen circumstances to be effectively managed or new initiatives progressed without seeking additional funding from the government. Unforeseen circumstances could include completing an additional performance audit or other investigation or providing, from the financial perspective, additional whole-of-government accounting advice.

Initiatives could relate to the disposing of archived records, upgrading our time recording system or updating our policies and procedures. It gives us a bit of flexibility, and we think is a sweet spot in terms of the amount that we need to leave sitting in our budget for those situations.

As disclosed on page 12 of the budget statements, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 expenses are estimated to be lower than the expenses incurred in 2017-18 as the Audit Office returns to seven performance audits in those years, and the additional cost incurred in 2017-18 of transitioning to a more even spread of performance audits is not expected to have consequential financial implications. It will, hopefully, be achieved.

Smaller operating results consisting of small operating deficits, \$43,000 and \$22,000, are estimated for 2018-19 and 2019-20, with an estimated operating surplus of \$53,000 in 2020-21.

In the 2016 strategic review by Mr Pearson, he concluded that the Audit Office is operating efficiently and effectively in discharging its responsibility. However, to assist us he made 20 recommendations. Of these, 16 are for direct action by the Audit Office.

As mentioned on page 9 of the budget statements under the 2017-18 priorities, the Audit Office plans to continue giving a priority to addressing the recommendations of the 2016 strategic review. Good progress has been made on implementing the 16 for which we are directly accountable, with only one being outstanding as at 30 June. The one that is outstanding requires cooperation by the Head of Service. It is that a structured familiarisation plan be developed to engage with newly appointed directors-general, chairs and CEOs of agencies soon after their appointment and that an ongoing program of engagement with senior executives of the ACT government be developed in consultation with the Head of Service.

Implementation of this, as I said, requires the support of the Head of Service. The Head of Service was contacted on 5 May 2016. We have had a follow-up contact on 14 June, and on 22 June we were advised by the Head of Service that she has asked the deputy director, workplace capability and governance to consider both whether the executive induction material is relevant and whether she would hold a quarterly meeting that new appointees could attend as part of an induction process. Furthermore, I am attending the strategic board meeting on 16 August, and I anticipate that the issue of engagement with newly appointed D-Gs, chairs and CEOs will be discussed then.

The Audit Office 2017-18 internal audit program includes an audit of the extent to which the recommendations of the strategic review were accepted for implementation and how they have been implemented. The Audit Office plans to engage Mr Des Pearson to conduct this internal audit.

The Audit Office total revenue budget for 2017-18 is \$7 million, consisting of financial audit fees of \$4 million—58 per cent of the budget revenue, disclosed in the budget papers as user charges—and an appropriation of \$2.9 million, 41 per cent of the revenue budget, disclosed in the budget papers as controlled recurrent payments. The total revenue budget is expected to remain stable over the forward years, with revenue increasing from an estimated 6.9 in 2016-17 to 7.3 by 2020-21, an increase of \$0.4 million or 1.4 per cent per annum. The total revenue budget assumes the following: the size and the complexities of the financial audit program will not change materially and, as a result, financial audit fees are expected to be stable over the forward years; the planned number of performance audits I have just outlined, eight in the coming financial year and seven thereafter; and other activities to be completed within the appropriation.

Other activities I would like to outline for the committee's benefit are that the appropriation funds include the handling of public interest disclosures and representations; preparation of three of the results of the financial audit program, which are tabled in December; the provision of briefings and advice to the Assembly; attending internal audit committees; and the provision of whole-of-government financial audit and accounting advice.

The appropriation also contributes to other corporate costs, including production of the office's annual report; importantly, the learning and development program for staff; and other administrative expenses associated with the professional office, such as accommodation and IT costs.

Total expenses are expected to increase by \$0.6 million from \$7 million in 2016-17 to \$7.6 million by 2018-19, due mainly to the costs of completing the additional performance audit and achieving that even spread I have mentioned. However, as mentioned previously, total expenses are then expected to reduce in the subsequent years of 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, when the performance audit program returns to the seven per annum.

The three of the eight performance audits planned for tabling in 2017-18 that I previously alluded to are already underway. I thought that for the committee's benefit I would just let you know that they are the Land Development Agency

assembly of rural land in the ACT; the management of public art; and ACT government agency performance indicators. Yesterday our forward PA program was announced. It shows that we intend in the next financial year, 2017-18, to commence the following audits: educational support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; ACT Health response to misreporting of data; early intervention and prevention initiatives for children; protective security policy framework; an audit on carbon neutral government; an audit on ACT clubs' community contributions; one on stormwater management; one on affordable housing; one on ICT strategic planning; and one on crown lease variations. However, if other issues emerge, these priorities may change.

This program, for the benefit of people listening, is available on the ACT Auditor-General's website. Thanks for listening to me.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Cooper. Mr Pettersson, an opening question.

MR PETTERSSON: You have answered most of what I was going to ask, but there was something there that you left unanswered. The one outstanding recommendation you mentioned was a structured familiarisation program?

Dr Cooper: Yes.

MR PETTERSSON: Can you expand on what that is for me?

Dr Cooper: That is what we need to talk to CMTEDD about. I am not sure, for new CEOs, D-Gs or executives that come in, what is structured in terms of their induction program. We said we are willing to be part of giving some material or presenting at any seminar or supporting any of that. I would like to say for your benefit that every time I am aware of a new CEO, D-G or somebody as the head of an agency, I phone up and make an appointment and go and introduce myself.

MR PETTERSSON: That is very good to hear. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Probably their worst nightmare in some cases, and long may that be the case. Dr Cooper, I want to ask a question in relation to the performance audit you did in relation to the appointment of the commissioner for international engagement.

Dr Cooper: First of all, that was not a performance audit, if I may, Mr Chair.

THE CHAIR: My apologies.

Dr Cooper: That is all right. It was a report.

THE CHAIR: A report, right. What response has your office received from the Chief Minister's directorate in relation to your conclusions and recommendations from that report?

Dr Cooper: Have we got a formal response in?

Mr Stanton: No. Similar to performance audit reports, although that was not a

performance audit, we placed that report into the Assembly. There was a response from the directorate that was inserted into the summary of that particular report. Sometimes that happens. Then the report was put into the Assembly. Then it is a matter for the Assembly process and the government response to that in due course.

Dr Cooper: I had heard that it is before a committee. Is there a committee looking at it?

THE CHAIR: I understand that the public accounts committee normally looks at all of your reports, and it may well still be there. I am not privy to the inner workings of that committee.

Dr Cooper: It may be with them. We have given them a fair few reports of late.

THE CHAIR: Following that review, have you developed any draft guidelines on how significant appointments such as that should be conducted going forward?

Dr Cooper: In the way the system works, that is the accountability of the government agency or somebody involved in the minister's office. We normally do the audit and put the recommendations out. As part of the system, we do not develop the actual guidelines. We have stopped with our report.

THE CHAIR: So it is "There is an issue here" or "Some further work should be done." Then it is over to the directorate or the executive to do something.

Dr Cooper: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Has your office considered doing a follow-up review to assess the work of the commissioner to ascertain whether the position is required or if it is achieving its outcome of developing further connections for local businesses overseas?

Dr Cooper: You are really testing me here. I would have to go back and read what we have written in that report. I do recall that we said that some accountability indicators were needed; we recommended that. We highlighted whether that commissioner should do some form of annual reporting through some mechanism. I would imagine that should be justified, if they take up those recommendations, through that process.

For the work of the commissioner, we were after clear transparency around what is expected and what they are delivering. Giving an analogous situation, we have performance indicators and we publish those each year. We do not have to, but we think it is better practice. We would assume that for anyone in any role like that there would be transparency in how they are being held to account.

THE CHAIR: More broadly, following the reviews, performance audits and the like that your office carries out, how often do you, further down the track, revisit those areas to determine whether sufficient change has been made or whether improvements or recommendations you have put forward are being adopted or implemented as suggested?

Dr Cooper: We have one in the outyears, a follow-up audit that we have proposed. It is always an incredible, challenging balance between whether you go back over old ground or whether you have provided that catalyst for the changes that will help everybody. I generally have taken the approach that the whole system, as with everybody else, is that we try to assist by being a catalyst to help agencies identify areas for improvement. The PAC has a role, too. It can inquire; it can look; it sometimes, I believe—I would have to refer to someone who has been on the PAC—can ask for a status update on all the recommendations. I do not; I keep on focusing, in a small performance audit program, on the key priorities. I am assuming that the Assembly and the community would rely upon the agency to address it and the minister in charge of the agency to follow up, especially when the government has agreed to the recommendations and therefore I have pushed one potential one to look at that way out.

Mr Stanton: To support Dr Cooper there, I point the committee to the forward PA program for 2018-19. A potential audit there has been identified in relation to the implementation of Auditor-General audit report recommendations. That is potentially for 2018-19. It is listed at No 10 on that list of audits. Come more or less this time next year, or perhaps throughout this year, we will give consideration as to whether that audit merits consideration for next year's program.

Dr Cooper: We question them, and we put a lot of emphasis on making sure we try to get the right recommendations. We notice it as a trait. They can read findings and go, "Well, I think we should do X.Y and Z." But we think it is more constructive to have recommendations in terms of giving them clearer help and assistance in terms of, "We have indentified this problem. This should be done." They usually are quite clear whether they agree, agree in part or note it. You are never sure whether it is agree in part or not, or disagree.

THE CHAIR: Sometimes it is a polite way to disagree.

Dr Cooper: It might be; the step before disagreeing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Dr Cooper, I understand your office did not provide a detailed submission to the committee into the independent integrity commissioner but you have offered to provide advice once a model has been developed. Can I just ask a few questions: can the Audit Office undertake public hearings?

Dr Cooper: I would have to check legally. I do not think there is anything that would stop us, but I would like to get some legal advice on that.

MS LE COUTEUR: You do not have to go to that length.

Dr Cooper: No, I do not know.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. I understand, though, you can compel witnesses as part of your—

Dr Cooper: Absolutely, and absolutely they cannot not tell us something for self-incrimination. It is very powerful.

MS LE COUTEUR: How far back can you go in terms of investigating matters? Is there any limitation?

Dr Cooper: Not to my knowledge. But there is a practical element.

MS LE COUTEUR: Of people's memories, yes, sure.

Dr Cooper: Absolutely; and reliability.

MS LE COUTEUR: But if the practical issues can be—

Dr Cooper: Yes, absolutely.

MS LE COUTEUR: Not all but many other jurisdictions in Australia have an auditor and an integrity commissioner. Do you have any knowledge about how they interact and things we should be looking at?

Dr Cooper: I have a very scant knowledge, and one of the reasons why we did not put in a submission is because I feel my knowledge is too limited to offer really constructive comments and there was a practical issue of time and we were totally focused on delivering what we needed to. That is why I said it is often easier to respond once there are some options on the table, and I think I gave some principles about communication, so certainly open. Then, in terms of that integrity role, if we were to get anything that required police attention, we would refer it to the police. We would not hesitate. So where is the line between what my office might do, the police and the integrity person or people or entity in between? Clearly I have thought around it and Ajay has certainly got some information, and it was something of discussion when we were up in Brisbane at the recent ACAG broader meeting.

MR COE: This is a follow-up to that last answer: have you made any referrals to the police that you can recall?

Dr Cooper: I have referred something. Yes, I have, but it is a delicate one. Yes, I have. I have referred, yes, but it was not related to a performance audit that we were doing; it was related to something else.

MR COE: I realise that this is potentially a hornet's nest so, as succinctly as possible, can you talk us through how you interact with agencies during the audit process, especially a performance audit as opposed to a routine financial audit? Obviously the one that I have looked at a lot is the LDA audit.

Dr Cooper: We are happy to walk you through the process.

MR COE: The process as it is in best practice but also in reality. How much toing and froing is there is the main question, in terms of going back and forth finding additional information?

Dr Cooper: Lots.

MR COE: Are you interacting on a daily basis or is it far more structured where every month you go and say, “We want X, Y and Z”?

Dr Cooper: As a principle, we go back and get information that we feel we do not have immediately when we want it. It is not, “We’ll come this month,” or “We’ll come next month.” We source it when we need it. In the initial stages we try to get as much written material as we possibly can.

Mr Stanton: I also identify that it is an iterative process. To the best of our knowledge we develop an audit work plan and a program for activity to prosecute and conduct the audit and then we embark on the audit with our particular audit team. We always seek to have appropriate linkages, with the right people within the directorates and the agencies being the right people that can provide us with information in a timely way and also be conduits for broader access to other people within the agency as well.

MR COE: Does a request go to all staff in the agency saying, “Anybody who has got anything on this, let us know,” or how do you know whether people have relevant information; the unknown unknowns?

Dr Cooper: Our experience on this is that people will come forward pretty quickly, and we treat that with a great deal of confidence. When they come forward and raise any particular issue, as they might have in an audit as controversial as the LDA one, we then source relevant material. If somebody says something, if we have not got that material we will try to go get it. Sometimes we will actually put people under oath when we cannot find the documented material to try to get the information we are after. Does that help?

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Stanton: The audit process is always trying to identify evidence that is relevant, sufficient and appropriate. They are the key tests, I suppose, for our evidence. We use all sorts of mechanisms—meetings, documentation, review of other material—to try to form an audit opinion on the basis of relevant, sufficient and appropriate audit evidence.

Dr Cooper: It is enormously time consuming, but we do it because we think the audit deserves the investment of time when there are issues that require statements under oath or affirmation. We will sometimes go back more than once, maybe two or three times, to a person to have a conversation with them. Then we will say, “We’ve got this information. This was said. Can you remember this? What did you do?” So we do that, but we do not have more than one person talking to us at a time. We treat it quite confidentially. It is taped; we have three tapes. It is then transcribed and they are then given a copy. We will use it once we have sorted issues after that and then we keep it in an incredibly secure way.

MR COE: If somebody is giving evidence either in a more formal way or informally, especially if it is in relation to a superior, how can they do that in a way that is not going to prejudice their representation?

Dr Cooper: Can I answer moving away from the LDA audit, because I feel more comfortable talking generally?

MR COE: Sure.

Dr Cooper: That has happened. We will do things like meet with them away from anywhere in a secure sort of place, and we sit there and we will talk it through. So we listen. We so far have never had a breach of anyone being identified who has provided information on more senior people.

MR PETERSSON: How often do non-public sector audits occur?

Mr Stanton: That is a power under our legislation. We have formally used that power once, for an audit into Calvary Public Hospital which, I believe, was tabled in early 2016. We went through that particular process of reviewing the criteria associated with that audit and undertaking that audit. That is the only time that we have actually—

Dr Cooper: It was a cooperative response.

Mr Stanton: That is right. That was the only time we have formally enacted that piece of legislation. As far as non-public sector entities being involved in the audit process are concerned, on many an occasion, many an audit, they have cooperated with us. Calvary Public Hospital is a good example in that space. They cooperated in relation to the mental health audit that we have recently tabled, and they also cooperated in relation to an audit a few years previously in relation to the emergency department performance information.

Dr Cooper: And Spotless cooperated.

Mr Stanton: That is correct.

Dr Cooper: I was informed unofficially by the agency that that has resulted in some savings and a streamlining of what was occurring. The feedback from that was: sometimes when it is really working well, give us a call.

MR PETERSSON: For example, will the upcoming ACT clubs community contribution be invoking the same powers?

Dr Cooper: We are doing the scoping paper soon on that and we are looking at how we will approach it. I would prefer once we have designed it to come back and answer that question rather than try to guess it now, and I would only be guessing. Can I just say that I would hope everybody would be cooperative anyway.

MR PETERSSON: This is just from the point of my own interest: are there any practical differences between a public audit and a non-public audit? Is everyone equally forthcoming? You mentioned that these non-public sector entities were forthcoming. If they are not forthcoming, is the process the same for dealing with unhelpful characters?

Dr Cooper: No. Depending on who the unhelpful ones are, we would make it quite clear that they were unhelpful and we would also make it clear that if they legally have to assist us we will make that happen. That is non-negotiable. If they do not legally have to help us and we ask for help we certainly make sure that the Assembly members are aware that they have chosen, which is their legal right, not to engage with us. We certainly would not coerce them but we certainly would demand, if we had a legal right to their information, that we use that legal right. And sometimes people like a demanding letter because that, then, gives them, for their boards or whoever they might deal with, the fact that there is no ambiguity; they have to share that information.

MS CODY: I am not sure where we got to. I apologise in advance if it has already been asked. You do a lot of work, obviously, and great forward planning. I am just wondering how your benchmarking occurs. Do you benchmark against—

Dr Cooper: Absolutely.

MS CODY: Why not tell me about that.

Mr Sharma: Part of my role is looking after the benchmarking process. We have a benchmarking process that is undertaken by the Australasian Council of Auditors-General. In a way all the auditors-general get together and share information. And that group engages Olimar Research to undertake the benchmarking process. They have certain indicators in terms of audit quality, in terms of timeliness of audits, in terms of the costs of audits. There is a detailed questionnaire that we fill in on an annual basis and then we get the benchmarking information.

Some of that information is presented in our annual report. There are two indicators in particular. There is one on cost and timeliness that we have reported on in our previous annual reports. While there can be a number of indicators, there are some that can be more readily benchmarked and provide a bit more information in terms of how we compare with other jurisdictions.

At page 38 of last year's annual report, for example, the 2015-16 annual report, we talk about comparisons for the performance and financial audits. For the financial audit, we looked at the cost and we come out fairly favourably in terms of the other jurisdictions. We can only compare on an average basis. One of the things is that we cannot name the other audit offices. There is a protocol in terms of how we can share that information. For financial audit, our cost was about three per cent lower than the average, about \$76,000 per audit on average compared to the \$78,000 for the average of other jurisdictions.

In terms of timeliness, we come out quite well as well. We issued about 93 per cent of audit reports and financial audits within the three-month period of the end of the reporting period as compared to 69 per cent for other state and territory audit offices in Australia.

In terms of the performance audit—it is on page 28 of last year's annual report, that performance audit for 2015-16—our average was \$272,955 compared to the average for the other states and territories of \$292,037. Again, we come up really well in terms

of the average cost.

In terms of timeliness, our average period for the completion of performance audits was 9.7 months for 2015-16 and that compared to about 8.8 months for the other states average. It is slightly higher but that is dependent on separate audits and the complexity of audits and other things as well.

Dr Cooper: I would add that, with the performance audit program, one of the comments the reviewer for our strategic review made was: “Why don’t you just pick a whole lot more smaller ones?” You could do that. I then said to him, “Which ones of the bigger ones wouldn’t you do?” If you do a lot more performance audits, you will get that span across the big and the small. We tend to pick, if you like, the issues that we think, and we hope the Assembly thinks, are most relevant to the community. They are usually quite robust, needing a lot of analysis. We do not do the micro ones.

One of the smallest—and it was not a performance audit—was the one we did on the commissioner, the report on the commissioner. That was small but we did not then interrogate all the issues. We made sure there was transparency in the material that we were given.

MS CODY: That is quite detailed information. I did not expect to get all that. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. You spoke about not necessarily choosing big or small but it is making sure that you do the audits that work for the community and what would be in the best interests of the community. It would be difficult, then, to compare—

Dr Cooper: Absolutely. It is difficult but we try to do it so that we can all look and reflect. When the people do the review of us, we actually get information about their approaches. With the ANAO, for instance, I think they do 50 or 60 performance audits a year.

Mr Stanton: Fifty, I believe.

Dr Cooper: Yes it is. Everyone likes to get a bit of a feeling of where they stand relative to other areas. We acknowledge that it is difficult but we do it.

Mr Sharma: I just add that our strategic reviewer looked at the benchmarking process and in the report on page 11—this is the 2016 strategic review—the overall comment was that the ACT Audit Office performs at the level expected with no significant exceptions. This was after looking at the benchmarking.

MS CODY: I have a last question and you will have to excuse me for the way I phrase this. I am trying to get it out correctly. The audit of the public education service?

Mr Stanton: The policy information in public schools, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS CODY: This was quite interesting reading for me and I am sure it was for the

community and for other members. I want to double-check: in the audit, in the review, in the publication, you mentioned that NAPLAN was the benchmarking tool you used.

Mr Stanton: That is right. We had a look at what was available. At the front end, basically chapter 2, of that report we looked at and quoted some material from the Grattan Institute. I cannot remember the name of the report but it is quoted in our report. The Grattan Institute looked at NAPLAN and more or less came up with a conclusion or statement that it is the best information that we have got in Australia on which to actually compare educational outcomes in schools across jurisdictions. On that basis, we used NAPLAN data for much of that analysis in chapter 2 of the report.

MS CODY: But it would be great if we had better data?

Mr Stanton: It is information, it is data and it is widely collected across Australia and comparable through the use of ICSEA, the index of community socio educational advantage. Through the use of the ICSEA values you can compare like-with-like schools, and that is what much of our analysis was done on in chapter 2 of that particular report. Does that provide a comprehensive picture of a child's experience in the school? By no means at all.

Dr Cooper: Which is why our top priority is to start another audit. The forward program, particularly around education for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, is something we are going to definitely focus on going forward.

MS LE COUTEUR: I understand that the government is also committed to reviewing the audit of the community contribution scheme. Are you going to be doing it in any way in parallel?

Dr Cooper: I do not know. We are just going to be doing it. We do not necessarily coordinate with anyone else in terms of what they are doing at that particular time. We have looked at this. It seems like something that warrants the attention of the Auditor-General. We have put it in the program. We have not scoped it in great detail. We have got a general idea where we are heading with it. I am not sure whether you could do two or three reviews on it. Often when you do a review you scope things in particular ways and sometimes two or three might cover several areas.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would like to talk about the scope of your work. Is there scope for collaboration with, say, the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment to look at environmental outcomes and issues? Is that possible and is it desirable?

Dr Cooper: It is challenging because, at the end of the day, one of us has to be held totally accountable for the opinion that is put forward. We are more than happy for anyone to use any of the reports we put out. In terms of a collaborative approach, the commissioner has different statutory obligations from what we do. They do not have the same powers as we do. If you ended up having a dispute between two people over what was the appropriate opinion and if we had collected information using our powers of protective information and then somebody else had that, there would be an issue around why they had it and why would you not then give it to Human Rights Commissioner. It is problematic and I think we are not overlapping in terms of our work on issues.

My other philosophy is that there is always enough work in the ACT for all the commissioners, for the Auditor-General, for everybody. Just go and do what you are legislatively charged with doing and get on with it.

MS LE COUTEUR: Certainly there is always enough work. In that vein I am looking at the most efficient way of doing that work, because there could be some areas where there clearly is an environmental impact and other impacts as well.

Dr Cooper: I do not shy away from that. We do hire subject matter experts, and they have to remain confidential in what they say. We do have two performance audits that will have an environmental overlay in the next year. One is stormwater management, the other is carbon neutral government.

Mr Stanton: The August 2014 publication, and targets set by the government.

Dr Cooper: We do know that the commissioner for sustainability does the state of the environment report and also the action plans. We would very much try to focus ours to be complementary in supporting, if you like, what needs to be investigated. I have thought long and hard about those kinds of issues.

MS LE COUTEUR: You are doing another audit of the LDA's purchase of rural land. How is it going to be different from the last one?

Dr Cooper: It will be different.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is the difference other than just the name of the land?

Dr Cooper: Can I just say that, till we have done it, we cannot answer that question. But we have enough information to indicate that the issues may actually be different. Otherwise, we would have reflected and thought, "Are we just going through the motions of coming back?" We do not think so but we think in terms of the broader public interest, if it did end up in that space, on the information we currently have, we should go and really have a look at it.

MS LE COUTEUR: I had been thinking your next audit of the LDA—obviously the LDA is disappearing but disregarding that fact—would have been in a couple of years to say, "We had these recommendations. Please do it." But my understanding is that you will be looking at things before that.

THE CHAIR: That concludes the estimates committee's public hearings for today. I do not think in the session there were any questions taken on notice.

The committee adjourned at 5.03 pm.